Credibility at Stake?

News Representations and Discursive Constructions of National Environmental Reputation and Place Brand Image: The Case of *Clean, Green* New Zealand

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Abstract

This thesis explores news media representations and discursive constructions of a country's environmental reputation and "green" place brand image using the example of *clean, green* New Zealand. In particular, it examines Australian, UK and US press coverage of New Zealand's environmental performance linked to carbon emissions, and its branding, to determine the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of the country's *clean, green* and *100% Pure* global environmental positioning. The thesis follows the argumentation that, as calls for environmental responsibility are growing louder, the global competitiveness of nations and places increasingly depends on their ability to convince audiences both domestic and overseas of their environmental credentials and integrity. As a main carrier of country reputation and channel through which place image travels, the mass media play a crucial role with regard to the perceived legitimacy and credibility of a place's brand positioning.

Guided by a qualitative, mild social constructionist research paradigm and software-assisted discourse analysis and qualitative content analysis, the thesis establishes the background, context and meaning of *clean, green* New Zealand through a review of secondary data. It further examines the amount and nature of Australian, UK and US press coverage of New Zealand's environmental performance (*carbon emissions*) and branding (*clean, green* and *100% Pure*) during 2008-2012. Findings are discussed both with regard to existing theories on media representations and perceptions of places and national reputation, and the factors influencing environmental news coverage, such as news media's indexing

tendency, newsworthiness, journalistic norms, issue cycles and media attention spans. Particular attention is paid to the possible reasons for changes in coverage over time and differences across countries.

With regard to NZ's perceived environmental credibility, findings indicate that within the country there is growing unrest and uncertainty about the legitimacy of the *clean, green* and *100% Pure* brand positioning. Changes in political discourse from sustainability to economic growth built on measures not easily compatible with the branding, position the country at a critical juncture regarding the legitimacy of its global environmental positioning. In terms of overseas news coverage, the study shows that, contrary to a generally favourable perception at the beginning of the study period in 2008, ending the year 2012 NZ was no longer in the spotlight as an environmental leader with regard to carbon emissions, but instead had become a minor player the global community largely ignored in the climate change arena. Judging from Australian media coverage, NZ's environmental reputation was still largely intact there, while in the UK and the US isolated unfavourable articles could be first signals of a shift in perceptions. In the absence of both symbolic actions and the coverage needed to maintain the image and reputation, NZ's global environmental positioning has become more vulnerable.

Having said that, because unfavourable coverage of *clean, green* and *100% Pure* was found to be comparatively scarce, the study concludes that there is still an opportunity to maintain NZ's environmental reputation by backing it up with business and government leadership in the environmental arena.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AU .... Australia

ETS .... Emissions trading scheme

DA .... Discourse analysis

NZ .... New Zealand, New Zealander ("kiwi")

QCA .... Qualitative content analysis

QDAS .... Qualitative data analysis software

TNZ .... Tourism New Zealand (Government Agency)

UK .... United Kingdom, British

US .... United States of America, American

Chapter 1

Introduction

My first encounter with New Zealand was a six-month backpacking trip in 2003, which led me from Cape Reinga in the very north to Steward Island in the south, and many people and places in between. Back then, hardly could I have imagined that only seven years later I would return to the antipodes for three long years, and that I would be given the opportunity to refresh some of the fond memories of the country's places and people. Yet, things had changed and the more I immersed myself into the research conducted by the Marsden[1] team on NZ's environmental and sustainability credentials, the more I realised the many challenges faced by a country whose spectacular scenery and pristine environment as a traveller seven years earlier I had marvelled at.

1.1 Research Rationale

The rationale for the present research is based on several observations. First, in a world more and more interconnected, interdependent and communicated through endless flows of information (Cottle, 2006, 2009b), mass communication and the news media have become the "central nervous system" (Hachten & Scotton, 2007, p. xiv). In a society that is highly risk sensitive (Beck, 2009; Bergmann, 2002; Knight, 2011; Slovic, 2000) and increasingly precautionary about anything to do with the environment (Miles & Frewer, 2003), the media signal what "society and the policy should be concerned about and [set] the framework for definition and

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[1] This doctoral study was funded by and forms part of a Marsden research grant titled *Sustainability at the crossroads: Examining the vulnerability of New Zealand's global environmental positioning*, of which Professor Juliet Roper was PI and Associate Professor Eva Collins AI. A key research question of the project was: *How are sustainability issues framed by NZ policy makers, media, and business leaders?*

discussion of environmental issues" (Hansen, 2010, p. 19). Carbon emissions as a cause for global warming are a case in point. Since personal experience hardly exists, people's understanding of the issue is based on its discursive representation (Corbett & Durfee, 2004), not least in the media. Characterised by high uncertainty and global, cross-border implications, global warming has triggered a "new era of planetary macro-ethics of responsibility" (Beck, 2006, 2009). In such a scenario, the environmental performance of remote places like New Zealand can become areas of possible concern for consumers and citizens thousands of kilometres away (Chouliaraki, 2006; Cottle, 2009a). Particularly in the case of climate change, what a specific country does (or not) to help prevent global warming and to sustain the natural environment affects not only those living within that country, but the "civilizational community of fate" as a whole (Beck, 2006, p. 13; see also Beck, 2009; 2010). Global environmental expectations transcend into politics and public diplomacy in countries' attempts to win the hearts and minds of the international community (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). As Anholt (2010b, p. 70) stresses, "more and more people in more and more countries feel unable to admire or respect countries or governments that pollute the planet."

The second rationale for this thesis is based on the observation that the global competitiveness of countries and nations increasingly depends on their ability to convince people both domestic and overseas of their integrity as socially caring and environmentally responsible members of the world community (Anholt,

2010a; Morgan et al., 2011).[2] Remotely located countries in particular depend on a favourable image to overcome the distance barrier separating them from their key markets (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). Without a favourable image, their credibility and economic development can be at risk. Particularly for those without a first-hand experience of a specific place, the media are a main carrier of country reputation and one of the main conduits through which national image usually travels (Anholt, 2010a). Language plays an important part in social practices and people's perception of social reality. A country's image, how it represents itself to the world, and whether such national or place branding is perceived credible, authentic and as having integrity, are largely influenced by texts, with the consequence that discursive representations can have significant real life implications and consequences.

Little is known about the discursive constructions of a country's (environmental) reputation and its place brand image, and how international news media representations influence its ability to maintain a favourable national reputation and competitive position in the international marketplace. New Zealand presents a useful case to study those questions. Few places have managed to position themselves on a global scale as favourably as NZ, a country both admired for its *clean, green* image and the economic success of its *100% Pure* branding (Bowler, 2013; Oram, 2007; Tourism New Zealand, 2009; Yeoman & Mahon-Beattie, 2011). Both have become an important factor for its largely export-driven economy. However, increasing concerns about a growing gap between NZ's environmental branding and its actual environmental performance (for example,

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[2] Which is also demonstrated by the significance granted to environmental and sustainability factors in rankings, such as the Global Competitiveness Report by the World Economic Forum, available at http://www.weforum.org/issues/regional-competitiveness (accessed 3 January 2014).

Bell, 2005; Cumming, 2010; Everitt, 2009; Oram, 2007; Roper, 2010, 2012; Su, 2013) threaten to undermine the perceived credibility of its branding, thus putting its global positioning at risk.

Although growing environmental concerns and the need to balance economic growth with environmental conservation affect all countries to some extent, what distinguishes NZ from other places is that it has actively sold itself as *100% Pure* (The Economist, 2010). The apparent lack of connection between branding and practice has been brought to the fore most strongly by the issue of carbon emissions linked to global warming, where rhetoric no longer can prevail, but concrete and prescribed action is demanded of signatories to the Kyoto Protocol (Roper, 2010).

The intention of the present study is to gain some new insights into the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of NZ's distinctive *clean, green* global environmental positioning and, more broadly, to examine the role of international media coverage in the discursive construction of a country's environmental reputation and its place brand image. The following section presents the guiding research questions and objectives of this study.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

Fuelled by the rationale described in the previous section, this thesis serves two purposes. First, and in alignment with the key question that guided the Marsden research project, the study sets out to *determine the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of New Zealand's global environmental positioning.* Second, results from analysis of international press coverage of New Zealand's

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environmental performance and its branding are used *to explore the role and significance of news media representations in the discursive construction of a country's environmental reputation and its place brand image.*

The following questions guided the present study:

- What are the origins, meaning and economic importance of NZ's environmental reputation and its branding as *clean, green* and *100% Pure*?

- How is the *clean, green* NZ proposition discussed, contested and defended within the country, in terms of its perceived legitimacy and regarding NZ's actual environmental performance?

- What were the dominant discourses linked to NZ's environmental performance (carbon emissions) in the international press during 2008-2012?

- What were the dominant discourses linked to NZ's *clean, green* and *100% Pure* brand positioning in the international press during 2008-2012?

- In what way did the international press support or challenge the *clean, green* proposition?

- How and why did international press coverage of NZ's environmental performance and positioning change during 2008-2012?

- Were there any differences in coverage across countries?

- Are there any apparent links between the amount and tone of coverage of NZ's environmental performance and coverage of its brand positioning?

- What are the potential material and nonmaterial implications of international press coverage for NZ's environmental performance and brand positioning?

- More broadly, what is the news media's role in the discursive construction of a country's environmental reputation and its brand image?

To address these questions, the study draws on secondary data (case study) and international press coverage of NZ's environmental performance (carbon emissions) and its place branding over a five-year period (2008–2012). Focusing the analysis on this time period was useful because it covers some significant developments relevant for the discursive construction of the country's environmental positioning, as illustrated in chapter five.

Table 1 provides an overview of the specific research objectives set to find answers to the above questions, and in which chapter they are addressed.

Table 1. Research Objectives

Research Objectives		Chapter
1)	To review existing literature and to develop the theoretical and conceptual framework for addressing the research questions;	2 + 3
2)	To determine the origins and meaning of New Zealand's environmental image and brand positioning;	5
3)	To examine international press coverage of NZ's environmental performance (carbon emissions) during 2008–2012;	6
4)	To examine international press coverage of NZ's brand positioning as *clean, green* and *100% Pure* during 2008–2012;	6
5)	Based on findings, to determine the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of NZ's global environmental positioning;	7
6)	To discuss how and why press coverage of NZ's environmental performance and branding differed between countries and changed over time;	7
7)	To discuss news media's role in the discursive construction of a country's reputation and its brand image.	7

Further to the research objectives outlined above, the thesis also aims to make a contribution to existing academic literature on software-assisted qualitative research by exemplifying how software packages, such as NVivo, can be used for a qualitative content analysis of news articles, and how software tools can increase analytical flexibility and transparency of the qualitative research process.

1.3 Situating the Thesis

Following a qualitative research approach, this thesis draws on a range of theoretical perspectives, including discourse theory, media studies and scholarly literature pertaining to management and communication. It is essentially interdisciplinary, since the questions pursued involve both analysis of media texts and a discussion of place reputation and branding. Moreover, literature emanating from academic disciplines beyond media and management studies has also proven useful. For instance, literature from the natural sciences was used for the investigation of the food miles issue, discussed in chapter five, whereas publications pertaining to the fields of tourism and geography proved useful in conceptualising and understanding the nature of places, nations and tourist destinations. It is hoped that the interdisciplinary nature of the present study will make it a useful reference for researchers from a wide range of scholarly fields and professional avenues.

1.4 Situating Myself with Regard to the Research

Having situated the study in relation to the various academic disciplines that have added to it, the qualitative nature of the investigation makes it important to briefly address my own stance vis-à-vis the case study conducted for this thesis, particularly since it deals with an issue as topical and political as *clean, green*

New Zealand has become in recent years. Most importantly, as a native German who has come to NZ for the purpose of conducting this study as part of the Marsden grant, I engage in this task with the benefit and limitations of an outsider. On the one hand, this outsider role has been beneficial in that it helped me to examine the case under investigation from a certain cultural distance. On the other hand, many of the aspects related to New Zealand's colonial history, its cultural heritage and national identity, were new to me and therefore required compensation in the form of greater and deeper investigation. My journalistic training has certainly proved useful to master this task.

Lastly, while every attempt has been made to conduct the study as objectively as possible, I acknowledge that an entirely neutral stance might not have been possible. During my time in NZ I have come to highly appreciate NZ's natural environment and, as a consequence, have become sensitive to its degradation and political decisions threatening to damage NZ's environmental "treasures." Indeed, the study presented in this thesis has made me realise how valuable the country's environmental reputation really is and how vulnerable in the face of diverging political and economic ambitions within the country.

1.5 Thesis Outline

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Following this introduction, **chapters two and three**, by means of a review of existing academic literature, present the theoretical perspectives most relevant for the present investigation. First, chapter two reviews literature on the meaning and role of discourse and the mass media with regard to people's perceptions of social reality in general, and environmental issues in particular. The chapter further provides a review of literature on the

various factors and drivers that influence news coverage of environmental issues. Chapter three summarises existing literature and theoretical perspectives on discursive constructions of nations and places, national reputation, the branding of places and nations, and their news media representations. The chapter closes with a summary of the theoretical framework and the conceptual framework used to address the knowledge gaps identified through review of existing literature.

Chapter four presents the methodology and methods used to determine the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of *clean, green* NZ, and to investigate the role of the news media in the discursive construction of national reputation and place brand image. The chapter starts with an introduction of the qualitative, mild social constructionist research paradigm that informed this study, which is followed by an outline of software-assisted qualitative data analysis, discourse analysis and qualitative content analysis as used in this thesis. The chapter then presents details on the review of secondary data (case study) conducted to establish the historical and socio-political context for this investigation, and illustrates the step-by-step approach used for the qualitative content analysis of media texts. The chapter ends with an outline of the study limitations and an illustration how software packages, such as NVivo, can be used to enhance analytical flexibility and transparency.

Chapter five presents the results from the review of secondary data conducted to establish the historical, political and economic context of *clean, green* NZ, relevant for a discussion of news representations and discursive constructions of NZ's environmental performance and place brand image. This is followed by

chapter six with the result of analysis of media texts conducted to examine: 1) how during the five-year period 2008-2012 Australian, UK and US newspapers reported NZ's environmental performance in connection with carbon emissions; and 2) how they covered the country's *clean, green* image and the *100% Pure* branding campaign during the same period.

Chapter seven uses the key results from the review of secondary data and analysis of media texts for a discussion of the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of NZ's global environmental positioning (research objective five). Furthermore, research objective six is addressed by a discussion of the possible reasons for changes in international news coverage of NZ's national environmental performance and place branding over time, and the differences across countries. Lastly, section 7.3 discusses the role of news representations of national environmental performance in the discursive construction of country reputation and place brand image (research objective seven).

Finally, **chapter eight** concludes this thesis by outlining its contributions to theory, implications for policy and, in acknowledgement of its limitations, how this study on media representations and discursive constructions of country reputation and place brand image could be developed further.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Perspectives on Discourse, the Media, and News Coverage of Environmental Issues

This chapter presents an overview of relevant literature and theoretical perspectives on discourse and news media representations of environmental issues. First, the chapter conceptualises discourse as a constitutive force with both material and non-material implications, and introduces theories on the discursive construction of social reality (section 2.1). This is followed by a summary of existing literature on the role and influence of the media in the discursive construction process (section 2.2), and the various theories that have been developed with regard to the nature of news coverage of environmental issues and the factors that influence such coverage, including indexing theory, journalistic norms and ideals, newsworthiness, issue cycle and media attention span, news framing and the role of ideology (section 2.3). The complexity of environmental discourse is exemplified by the differing ideological standpoints characteristic of such discourse, which are summarised in section 2.4.

2.1 Discourse and Discursive Constructions

Depending on research context and discipline, the term discourse refers to:

> [a] linguistic (verbal, grammatical) object (meaningful sequences or words or sentences), an action (such as an assertion or a threat), a form of social interaction (like a conversation), a social practice (such as a lecture), a mental representation (a meaning, a mental model, an opinion,

knowledge), an interactional or communicative event or activity (like a parliamentary debate), a cultural product (like a telenovela) or even an economic commodity that is being sold and bought (like a novel). (van Dijk, 2009, p. 67)

Since the notion of discourse is invested with such a diverse palette of different meanings (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000), studies concerned with the analysis of discourse need to conceptualise it properly. The purpose of this section is to sketch some of the existing theorisations of discourse and how it is employed in the present study. Following Roper (2012), discourses in this study are understood as:

ideologically invested, shared ways of thinking, knowing and speaking about the world. They are, at the same time, both constituted by and constitutive of social practices. That is, our understandings and beliefs of what constitutes 'truth' will shape our behaviour, including our acceptance of policy decisions that we see to be in our interests. On the other hand, our practices will shape, reinforce or change, our discourses. (p. 3)

Perceived this way, discourses are more than text in context (van Dijk, 1977). As "a shared set of concepts, categories, and ideas" (Dryzek, 2006, p. 1), they influence, regulate and to some extent control people's thoughts and actions (Danaher, Shirato, & Webb, 2000). They provide a "framework for making sense of situations" (Dryzek, 2006, p. 1), and tell us what is, or has been out there, and hence reproduce a particular view of social reality (Fairclough, 1992). As Wodak (1996) noted:

> Discourse is socially constituted, as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. (p. 15, see also Fairclough & Wodak, 1997)

People's perceptions of the world are discursively constructed in the sense that discourses determine what we know about certain concepts or things, and what we consider true, real, good, legitimate, or acceptable (Chouliaraki, 2006; Danaher et al., 2000; Gold & Revill, 2004). Discourses are naturally productive (Tregidga, Kearins, Milne, & Byrch, 2007) in that they can have both discursive, or immaterial, and non-discursive (material) consequences and implications (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009; Fairclough, 2006; Roper, 2012; Saarinen, 2004).

In addition to being socially consequential (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) discourse and discursive practices are inevitably linked to questions of power, since "they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations...through the ways in which they represent things and position people" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). Taking this into account, discourse is much more than a linguistic concept since it is "not only concerned with what might be said or written about something, but also includes all the added rules, conventions and ideas that support those verbal or written statements" (Gold & Revill, 2004, p. 74).

In their discussion of the power of discourse, Jäger and Maier (2009) draw a distinction between single texts and discourse, proposing that, while the first have minimal effects as they will hardly be noticed, it is the recurring contents, symbols and strategies of discourse that have sustained effects because they "lead to the emergence and solidification of 'knowledge'" (p. 38).

According to Fairclough (1995), language is vitally important to the workings of power, its use being "always simultaneously constitutive of (1) social identities, (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief" (p. 55). In a similar vein, Fleming and Vanclay (2009) have noted that:

> Discourses are intertwined with issues of power because to know the necessary practices of a particular discourse and to have access to the discourses that have social legitimacy in society gives an individual power. Each discourse also enacts power by designating individuals who can and cannot participate, and by defining who, or what, is deemed powerful. (p. 2)

Having established the power *of* discourse, the question arises regarding the power *over* discourse (for example, Fleming & Vanclay, 2009; Gold & Revill, 2004; Jäger & Maier, 2009). As Jäger and Maier (2009) note, while "different individuals and groups have different chances of influence" no one person or group "has full control over discourse," since "everybody is coproducing discourse" (p. 38). Opinions differ regarding the extent to which people have power over discourse, or the other way round. For example, as Jäger and Maier (2009) write, discourse theorists following the teachings of French philosopher

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and social theorist Michel Foucault have argued that "discourses form individual and mass consciousness and thereby constitute individual and collective subjects" (p. 37). Following this argumentation, the very existence of the autonomous subject is contested, since "it is not the subject who makes the discourses, but the discourses that make the subject" (Jäger & Maier, 2009, p. 38).

However, not everyone shares this overt focus on the power of discourse, the denial of the self-determined individual, the insistence on limited individual power, and the understanding of discourses in hegemonic terms. As Dryzek (1997, p. 20) writes:

> Discourses are powerful, but they are not impenetrable...Foucault and his followers…often portray discourses in hegemonic terms, meaning that one single discourse is typically dominant in any time and place, conditioning not just agreement but also the terms of dispute...I believe that variety is as likely as hegemony.

Dryzek (2006) justifies his argumentation by pointing out that truly hegemonic discourse – discourse with "no serious rivals, such that it becomes ingrained in the understanding of all relevant actors, defining their common sense and conditioning their interactions" – would not even be recognised by those subject to them, but would be "part of the natural order of things" (pp. 7-8). A more likely scenario, according to Putnam and Fairhurst (2001; see also Henderson, 2005), is that power over discourse is contested, since multiple discourses and competing meanings exist, through which hegemony is negotiated. As Fairclough (1992) puts it, discourses shape and are shaped by society, which is also the position taken in this thesis.

While the main focus of this study is on the constitutive nature of discourse and the potential discursive and material implications of news representations of national environmental performance and place brand integrity, the question of power inevitably plays a role. The following discussion illustrates this by means of the mass media's agenda-setting power and its influence on people's awareness and perception of certain issues in what has become known as a "risk society" (Beck, 2009).

2.2 Media Discourse

Having identified the importance of discourse and discursive constructions of social reality, this section takes a closer look at the role of the mass media as a key player in the discursive construction of social reality. Ever since Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the 15th century, which paved the way for the circulation of ideas to a mass audience, the media of mass communication have undoubtedly had a central role and impact on the development and transformation of modern societies (Thompson, 1995). Numerous studies have stressed the media's influential role regarding political and social attitudes, and public opinion (for example, Carvalho, 2005, 2007; Cottle, 2009a; McCombs, 1992, 2004; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). As Boykoff (2009, p. 431) states, in a world crammed with information, people abundantly turn to the media "to help make sense of the many complexities that (un)consciously shape our lives." As "truth negotiators" (Bird, 2010) and "storytellers" (Richardson, 2007), journalists "construct meaning upon which the public can act" (Hallett, Hallett, & Kaplan-Weinger, 2010, p. 32; see also Morley & Robins, 1995). Not only people's moral horizon – what they consider fair or just (Chouliaraki, 2006) – but public opinion

in general is influenced by the way issues are framed and discussed in the media (Cottle, 2009a). As Corbett (2006) has noted:

> When the news media present this world to us, for the most part we believe what they say. That is, most people consider the mass media to be one of the most credible sources of information, a far more trusted source than advertising, salespersons, and even government. We put stock in the notion that the press is 'objective' or at least tries to be. (p. 215)

Linking back to the constitutive power of discourse, as discussed in the previous section, the media can exercise pressure on processes of public understanding and political decision-making (Cottle, 2009b; Hansen, 2010). As they not only reflect but also create and shape social reality (Corbett, 2006; Cottle, 2006, 2009a, 2009b; Jäger & Maier, 2009; Richardson, 2007), the media "are capable of enacting and performing conflicts, as well as reporting and representing them; that is to say, they are actively 'doing something' over and above disseminating ideas, images and information" (Cottle, 2006, p. 9).

The mass media not only contribute to the construction of a global public opinion (Fairclough, 2006), they also influence our understanding of the world (Dahlgren, 2010) and what we perceive as "true" (Weibull & Nilsson, 2010). In creating "a mediated version of reality" (Lester, 2010, p. 63), the mass media can influence people's awareness of certain issues, their attitudes, and at times even their behaviours (Corbett, 2006). Richardson (2007) summarises mass media's societal influence as follows:

Journalism has social effects: through its power to shape issue agendas and public discourse, it can reinforce beliefs; it can shape people's opinions not only of the world but also of their place and role in the world; or, if not shape your opinions on a particular matter, it can at the very least influence what you have opinions on; in sum, it can help shape social reality by shaping our views of social reality. (p. 13)

The role of media representations as a key factor in the discursive and social construction of social reality is particularly relevant in the world risk society, as explained in the following section.

2.2.1 News media in the world risk society

In a world where the circulation of capital and commodities, and some of the most pressing issues take place in the global context of today's political and economic relations, "whatever happens in one place has a bearing on how people in other places live, hope or expect to live" (Bauman, 2007, p. 6). This intensifying consciousness of the world (Robertson, 1992) has nurtured what German sociologist Ulrich Beck has called the *world risk society*. According to him, "incalculable risks and manufactured insecurities resulting from the triumphs of modernity mark the *condicio humana* [human condition, original emphasis] at the beginning of the twenty-first century" (Beck, 2009, p. 191). Risks, in this context, are essentially "man-made, incalculable, uninsurable threats and catastrophes that are anticipated, but which remain invisible and therefore highly dependent on how they become defined and contested in 'knowledge' and the media" (Cottle, 2009, p. 498).

News media not only provide the stage and arena for social and political conflicts in the world risk society (Lester, 2010), they also constitute and enact global crises by publicly defining, legitimising and determining their global reach and possible (political) responses (Cottle, 2009a). It is through mass media that perceptions of risk become an everyday conflict experience, leading to a cultural transformation in which "different understandings of nature and its relation to society, of ourselves and others, of social rationality, freedom, democracy and legitimation – even of the individual – are developing" (Beck, 2009, p. 15). Clearly, distinguishing between "hysteria and deliberate fear-mongering on the one hand and appropriate fear and precaution on the other" (Beck, 2009, p. 12) is not always easy. For instance, "alarmist predictions about the next apocalypse" (Heslop, 2005, p. 197) can generate a feeling of uncertainty and a perceived lack of control, such as in the case of the potential threat of climate change (Knight, 2011).

It has further been argued that in a world where people increasingly "experience themselves as parts of a fragmented, endangered civilisation and civil society" (Beck, 2009, p. 42), today's cosmopolitan citizens might well follow global voices of authority, such as the media, in demanding action for the suffering of "others," even if those are not part of their own community (Chouliaraki, 2006). Former US vice president Al Gore, well-known for his book *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), exemplifies the emergence of global voices of authority in the climate change context. Calling for collective action against global warming, he made people think about individual countries and what they do – or fail to do – to help prevent global warming and to sustain the environment. Suddenly, the

climate issue had become relevant not only for those living in a specific place affected by global warming, such as in the form of rising sea levels, but for the "civilizational community of fate" (Beck, 2006, 2009) as a whole. Without the media attention surrounding the issue, triggered to some extent by "voices of authority" such as Al Gore, climate change would hardly have become "the perceived 'global crisis' that it has in recent years" (Lester & Cottle, 2009, p. 921). News media's *agenda-setting function* (Lippmann, 1946; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2011) is explored further in the following section.

2.2.2 News media as agenda-setter

In the world risk society context, agenda-setting is evident by the fact that, "though conflicts for the most part originate in the social world beyond the media, it is through…journalism and the circulation of news that many of them become publicly known and…pursued" (Cottle, 2006, p. 185). Moreover, topics are given more or less significance depending on the amount and type of coverage provided (Hall, 2002). Therefore, by deciding which issues to report, or not, the media set the agenda for public debate (Chen & Meindl, 1991), which makes them a vital actor in the "battle for attention" (Lester, 2010, p. 53). The main postulation of agenda-setting theory, as developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), is that media coverage of certain issues raises the salience of these issues on the public's agenda with the consequence that "what is considered important by the news media is considered important by the public" (Jönsson, 2011, p. 122).

As Carroll and McCombs (2003) observed, agenda-setting effects of the media have been confirmed in hundreds of studies on a wide array of national and local issues, leaving little room for doubt regarding news media's important role in

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prioritising issues and in shaping public opinion (McCombs, 1992, 2004; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). News media's agenda-setting effect is particularly visible in the environmental news context, where it has been confirmed, for instance, by a recent study on audience perception of climate change in Sweden (Olausson, 2011). This and other studies have attested that the media has a powerful role in setting the agenda for public concern about and awareness of environmental issues (Hansen, 2010; Soroka, 2002; Uscinski, 2009).

The mass media have played a crucial role in bringing environmental issues to the attention of politicians and the public (Hansen, 2010). Again, climate change is a case in point. As "one of the most emotionally fraught social, political and economic issues of our time" (Bradley, 2009, p. 72), its perception is to a large extent constructed through media reporting (Cottle, 2006, 2009b; Hansen, 2010; Lester & Cottle, 2009). Its discursive representation determines people's understanding of the issue (Corbett and Durfee, 2004; see also Becken, 2007).

What is more, media coverage of environmental issues can initiate a social production and construction of reality that reaches beyond national boundaries (Beck, 2009; Cottle, 2009b). For instance, international news media reporting on carbon emissions as a cause for global warming can lead to a perception of remotely located places, like New Zealand, to be areas of possible concern for environmentally conscious consumers and citizens thousands of kilometres away (Chouliaraki, 2006; Cottle, 2009a). Even the absence of certain issues in the news can have implications, as the amount of media coverage can reveal the relative

salience awarded to an issue over time (Carvalho, 2005). News media can turn something into a non-issue through non-coverage (McManus, 2000).

Still, some delimiting factors of the agenda-setting effect have also been found. For example, one study revealed that both the type of media and the issue in discussion determine the strength of news media influence on political and public agenda, suggesting for instance that newspapers exert more influence than television and that media agenda-setting effects are stronger for environmental issues than for foreign policy or economic issues (Walgrave, Soroka, & Nuytemans, 2008). In addition, the agenda-setting effect was found to be strongest for "unobtrusive" issues (Zucker, 1978) and where direct personal experience or access to non-media sources of information is limited (Hansen, 2011).

Moreover, individuals' values and ideological convictions influence the degree to which the agenda-setting effect will take place. As Corbett and Durfee (2004) observed, those holding a strong environmental view tend to be less swayed by the way in which global warming is presented in news coverage than those without such strong views. Furthermore, Olausson (2011) points out that, while the agenda-setting role of the news media for citizens' meaning-making on climate change needs to be acknowledged, one should not neglect people's ability to weigh and oppose media information. As Macnaghten and Urry (1998, pp. 99-100) put it, "issues of trust are central to whether or not people believe media stories," such as those linked to environmental issues. To what extent the mass media and its representation of issues, such as climate change, should be trusted is discussed in the following section.

2.2.3 "Watch dog" or "guard dog"? A critical view on the media

Numerous scholars have voiced their reservation regarding the credibility and trustworthiness of the news media as a neutral and unbiased player in the discursive construction of social reality. For example, Corbett (2006) points out that "it is clear from the way that media choose and report news that they are not autonomous and independent" (p. 242). Rather:

> Through media gatekeeping decisions, through individual story framing, and through the use of official and expert news sources, media most definitely create a social reality – not an objective mirror of the world's events. This is not to say that journalists are…opinionated crusaders; they are humans, who necessarily rely on their professional norms and values to do the best job they can. But they are also creatures of a social institution that's a profit-making business that must sell subscriptions and audiences to advertisers. They are employees of a social institution that's very much interdependent on the rest of the social system and the powerful individuals in it to help them create a news product. (Corbett, 2006, pp. 245-246)

Rather than viewing of mainstream news media as a liberal "watch dog" and champion of social change, Corbett (2006, see also Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995) sees their role better described as "guard dog", that is, a protector of the established interests and the dominant power structure, of which media form an integral part. This perception is echoed in van Dijk's (1988) argumentation that the media, rather than acting as "a neutral, common-sensed, or rational mediator of social events" (p. 11), are more likely to implicitly promote the dominant beliefs and opinions of elite groups in society.

Clearly, the widespread perception that news media provide an accurate reflection of reality (Bird, 2010) is delusive, as news is – and has always been – a socially constructed account of reality, rather than reality itself (Lester, 2010; McNair, 2006; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Environmental news reports, for example, rarely emerge automatically but are the result of a complex set of interactions between claim-makers and media organisations, influenced by political, economic and cultural factors (Hansen, 2010). For Hansen (2010), news coverage of the climate change issue illustrates this point particularly well, having become highly political and dominated by competing claims-makers eager to persuade and promote a particular view, rather than inform the reader in a way that reflects current scientific knowledge linked to global warming and climate change (Hansen, 2010).

As the intersection between science, governance and everyday lives and livelihoods (Boykoff, 2009), media outlets soon found themselves in the middle of heated debates on climate change, often struggling to provide unbiased, objective reporting. For example, as Boykoff (2009) laments:

> Although media interventions seek to enhance understanding of complex and dynamic human-environment interactions, vague and decontextualized reporting instead can enhance bewilderment. Nonetheless, all too often, media reports conflate the vast and varied terrain from environmental science to governance, from consensus to debate, as unified issues. To the extent that mass media fuse all these issues into environmental gestalt, the collective public is not well served." (p. 440)

Hansen (2010) shares those concerns, stressing that while mass media has played an important role by bringing environmental issues to the attention of politicians and the public, the constructed nature of environmental news reporting does not go well with metaphors of news as "windows on the world" or "mirror of reality." On a similar note, Lester (2010) has argued that:

> The environment, more than many issues, brings to the surface some of the most persistent anxieties surrounding news media practices: the limited capacity of journalism to take a long-term view; the arbitrary nature of values and norms used to determine newsworthiness; restricted information gathering source access and form of story-telling; the role of journalists as 'objective' reporters of facts or advocates for action and change. (Lester, 2010, p. 59)

British journalist and political activist, George Monbiot, is particularly critical of the trustworthiness of environmental news reporting, lamenting that in countries such as the US "[t]he media, driven by fear and advertising, is hopelessly biased towards the consumer economy and against the biosphere" (Monbiot, 2007, as cited in Cottle, 2009b, p. 89). Having said that, judging from my own observation and experience as a media consumer, it seems questionable whether Monbiot's characterisation of the US media applies to an equal degree to the media reporting of environmental issues in politically more moderate and pluralistic countries, such as Germany. Nevertheless, his point is clear: media representations should not be blindly trusted but regarded with a healthy dose of scepticism.

What many news consumers fail to recognise is that news reports, by providing some facts and leaving out others, inevitably only present one version of reality at the expense of another (Corbett, 2006). As Rupar (2010) asserts, the news media hardly reflect social reality or empirical facts in a neutral manner. News as portrayed in the media therefore have to be seen "as a contested site, where 'truth' and 'reality'…are open for negotiation in the news-making process" (Lester, 2010, p. 65). Yet, as long as most discursive combat regarding controversially discussed environmental issues, such as carbon emissions and man-made global warming, is fought over within the media, the media will remain a vital actor in the "battle for attention" (Lester, 2010, p. 53).

2.2.4 Intertextuality

A number of studies have discussed the importance of intertextuality, the ways in which texts tend to relate to and build on each other (Fairclough, 1992, 1995, 2005). Fairclough (1992) describes intertextuality as "basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth" (p. 84). From an intertextuality angle, every text can be seen as a "link in a chain of texts, reacting to, drawing in and transforming other texts" (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 262). Intertextuality as apparent in international news representations of NZ's national environmental performance and place branding will be discussed in chapter seven.

In sum, academic literature reviewed in this section on the role and characteristics of the (news) media demonstrates that environmental news is not just something happening on its own but created, selectively reported, produced, manufactured

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and constructed (Hansen, 2010). In other words, there is always a reason for a news text being the way it is (Richardson, 2007). Several influencing factors of news coverage have been established in academic literature, including news media's indexing tendency, news norms, journalistic values, and media's limited issue attention span.

2.3 Factors Influencing (Environmental) News Coverage

Having discussed the power, role and characteristics of the mass media, this section presents a review of literature on the various factors likely to influence news media representations of environmental issues. Taking a closer look at the drivers of news coverage is essential in order to be able to address the research questions concerned with the reasons for changes in news coverage over time and the differences across countries.

Numerous scholars have offered their view on the potential drivers for news media coverage. According to Boykoff, media representation practices are influenced by external factors, "such as political and economic challenges associated with corporate media consolidation…as well as internal influences (such as contributions from the deployment of journalistic norms)" (2009, p. 450). Others have stressed that news representations are the result of a complex set of interactions between claim-makers, particularly public relations professionals (Lahav & Avraham, 2008; Manheim & Albritton, 1984) and media organisations, which in turn are influenced by political, economic and cultural factors (Boykoff, 2009; Hansen, 2010; Hesmondhalgh, 2002). One factor repeatedly confirmed both in political and environmental news coverage is news media's *indexing* tendency,

which is the first of the factors likely to influence environmental news coverage discussed in this section.

2.3.1 Indexing theory

First introduced by American political scientist Lance Bennett (1990), indexing theory "refers to the tendency of mainstream news organisations to index or adjust the range of viewpoints in a story to the dominant viewpoints of those in political institutions who are perceived to have enough power to affect the outcome of the situation" (Bennett, 2012, p. 15). Essentially, indexing theory supports what has already been noted in section 2.2.3, that rather than viewing mainstream news media as a liberal "watch dog" and champion of social change, their role is better described as "guard dog", a protector of the established interests and the dominant power structure, of which media forms an integral part (Corbett, 2006; see also Donohue et al., 1995). As Bennett (2012, p. 121) puts it, "even the best journalism in the land is extremely dependent on the political messages of a small spectrum of official news sources." Essentially, journalists "rely on powerful entities within the social system (whether respected government officials, industry spokespersons, or politicians) for cues as to the importance of environmental news" (Corbett, 2006, pp. 225-226).

Indexing theory has been used to explain news coverage of a range of contemporary issues, such as the threat of terrorism (Danis & Stohl, 2008) and climate change (Corbett, 2006). Studies agree that press coverage tends to follow governmental and political discourse (for example, Carvalho, 2005; Hajer, 1995; McCombs, 1992), often at the expense of alternative voices, such as environmental groups (Corbett, 2006; Craig, 2009). As Bennett (2012, p. 121)

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notes, "political activists and groups that are not established players in policy processes have much more difficulty making news." If they succeed, then it is "often in the context of negatively perceived events, such as demonstrations…and other protest activities that may offend the public and draw easy criticism from public officials" (Bennett, 2012, p. 121).

In terms of reasons for news media's indexing practice, Richardson (2007) has pointed out that all journalism striving to be objective needs sources to quote and to base stories on, which provides powerful institutions with an opportunity to exercise control over news reporting. Likewise, Corbett (2006, pp. 225-226) has noted that journalists "rely on powerful entities within the social system (whether respected government officials, industry spokespersons, or politicians) for cues as to the importance of environmental news." Therefore, the official institutional viewpoint is generally given preference in news representations, which is in line with the portrayal of the news media as a "guard dog" rather than "watch dog", as noted in section 2.2.3. A similar view has been offered by Gandy (1980), among others, who has questioned news media's agenda-setting power due to the growing influence of information subsidies, such as ready-to-use newsworthy information and press releases provided to the mass media by various institutions eager to promote their views.

That to some extent indexing also has its justification is highlighted by Bennett (1990). In his view, journalists have every reason "to grant government officials a privileged voice in the news, unless the range of official debate on a given topic excludes or 'marginalises' stable majority opinion in society, and unless official

actions raise doubts about political propriety" (p. 104). According to him, issues arise when "the images that flow from indexing [fail to] acknowledge any ills in the system" (Bennett, 1990, p. 123).

In an environmental news context, Bennett (2012) has illustrated the potential implication of such practices using the example of climate change coverage in the US news media:

> Even though few doubts existed in the scientific community about the seriousness or the clear human causes of global warming, the Republican Party generally adopted a public relations strategy during the early 2000s based on raising doubts about the scientific consensus. The result was that for a critical decade when much of the rest of the world was taking action to combat global warming, the news in the US was indexed in a way that 'balanced' those who urged reducing dependence on carbon fuels with another side to the story claiming that the science on the matter was not settled. (Bennett, 2012, p. 15)

What is more, environmental issues or "stories" are often highly scientific and complex, requiring very specific knowledge which few journalists have. To overcome this dilemma, most seek out "expert" opinion, securing answers that might follow entirely different agendas (Corbett, 2006; Dennis, 1991). Public perceptions and possible political non-action resulting from such news coverage demonstrate the media's power to turn something into a non-issue (McManus, 2000), as noted earlier.

2.3.2 Journalistic norms and ideals

In some instances, attempts to adhere to norms and ideals, such as fair, balanced, and objective reporting can influence news coverage in such a way that the very opposite effect, that is, biased reporting, is achieved. For instance, applying the ideals of fairness, balance and objectivity to an article on whether human activities or natural cycles are the main drivers for global warming can lead to a suggested balance between both arguments, even if scientific evidence speaks almost unanimously for the first (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007; Boykoff & Smith, 2010; Corbett & Durfee, 2004; Moser & Dilling, 2007; Stoehrel, 2012).

Furthermore, as mentioned above, entirely objective reporting is difficult to achieve in practice, since "every news selection involves a choice made by an individual, regardless of whether the person relied on professional norms for guidance" (Corbett, 2006, p. 226). As Bennett (2012, p. 216) has noted:

> Claims about 'objective' (or even fair and balanced) reporting rest on shaky foundations. For every source included, another is excluded. With each tightening of the plot line, meaningful connections to other issues and events become weakened. Every familiar theme or metaphor used in writing about an event obscures a potentially unique feature of the event.

Clearly, the human factor should not be underestimated. As Avraham and Ketter (2008) point out, journalists "are usually interested in advancing within the organisation's hierarchy…[thus]…tend not to 'rock the boat' and continue filling stories that fit the accepted pattern of reporting" (p. 39).

Put differently:

> Journalists are…humans, who necessarily rely on their professional norms
> and values to do the best job they can. But they are also creatures of a
> social institution that's a profit-making business that must sell
> subscriptions and audiences to advertisers. They are employees of a social
> institution that's very much interdependent on the rest of the social system
> and the powerful individuals in it to help them create a news product.
> (Corbett, 2006, pp. 245-246)

A similar stance is taken by Frost (2000) who notes that "journalists work in a field of conflicting loyalties and duties: to readers, editors, advertisers, proprietors, the law, regulatory bodies, contacts, themselves and other journalists" (pp. 61-64). Moreover, news is "produced by people who operate, often unwittingly, within a cultural system [that…] incorporates assumptions about what matters, what makes sense, what time and place in which we live, and what range of considerations we should take seriously" (Schudson, 1995, p. 40). As per Bowman (2008), the ideal of objectivity has become the "skeleton in the journalistic family closet of which no one must ever speak" (p. 11).

2.3.3 News values

Apart from journalistic norms and ideals, such as objectivity and balanced reporting, Corbett (2006) points out that traditional news values play a significant role in what environmental stories are chosen as news (newsworthiness): proximity, prominent people and places, human interest and drama, unusualness, trends, impact, importance, and "hot topic" (Corbett, 2006, p. 227). According to Dennis (1991), the media have always found it difficult to cover "the

environment," not only because it "cuts across all news beats and topics (business, outdoors, legislative, health, science, and so on)," but also because "environmental stories are viewed as 'a snore', pushed aside in favour of more exciting topics like scandal and celebrities" (Dennis, 1991, p. 62). Complicating things further, mainstream news media tend to be event-driven and with a strong focus on "human-interest" stories (Green, 2007), which is in line with news values listed above, whereas "environmental issues are on-going, omnipresent, and often too complex to present as two distinct 'sides' or as a single, dramatic event" (Corbett, 2006, p. 224). Consequently, preference is given to environmental issues that can be framed along simplistic and sensational story lines (Roper, 2010; Stoehrel, 2012).

A critical perspective on news values as a driver for coverage is provided by Gripsrud and Weibull (2010), and Dahlgren (2010), for whom traditional news values are more and more replaced by the logic of fast and high profits. Moreover, it has been suggested that in today's online media environment, editors and news agencies make decisions about newsworthiness quickly and instinctively, often without reflecting on the consequences of the chosen stories' immortality within news cycles (Boyer, 2010).

2.3.4 Issue cycle and media attention span

Among the great number of theories and scholarly work dedicated to explaining the reasons for changes in the amount and nature of news coverage of certain issues, such as climate change, over time,[3] Downs' (1972) article on the cyclical nature of media attention awarded to environmental issues stands out as among

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[3] For an overview see Liu, Lindquist, and Vedlitz (2011).

the most widely accepted and discussed (Brossard, Shanahan, & McComas, 2004; Hall, 2002; Kuttschreuter, Gutteling, & de Hond, 2011). Essentially, Downs' (1972) theory posits that issue-attention can be divided into five phases: pre-problem, alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm, realisation of the cost of significant progress, gradual decline of public interest, and establishment of the post-problem stage (pp. 39-41). Downs' theory was confirmed, for example by McComas and Shanahan (1999) in their analysis of climate change news coverage in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* between 1979 and 1996.

News reporting of carbon emissions and climate change has moved through discernible phases (Cottle, 2009b). Lester (2010) suggests that, while in recent decades news media interest in environmental issues has steadily increased (Lester, 2010), prior to that the topic hardly ever appeared in everyday news reporting. According to Lester (2010, p. 29), it was only with the appointment of the first environmental reporter for the *New York Times* in mid-1969 when the environment became recognised as a stand-alone newsworthy social issue in its own right. However, mass media interest in environmental issues remained limited, only to change with the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster and a wave of pro-environment and anti-nuclear protests (Lester, 2010).

More recently, news media interest in environmental issues has become more intense in connection with climate change and global warming, at last making it to the front page, recognised as a serious environmental crisis in its own right (Lester, 2010). Both in the UK and the US, media coverage on environmental issues has steadily increased since 2001 (Lester, 2010) providing "a continuously

changing, cultural reservoir of images, meanings and definitions, on which different publics will draw for the purposes of articulating, making sense of, and understanding environmental problems and the politics of environmental issues" (Hansen, 2010, p. 181).

Some of the key "critical discourse moments" (Carvalho, 2007) in the news career of climate change were the publications of Lord Stern's Review on the economic impacts of climate change[4] and IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report[5] in 2007. Both events significantly contributed to the recognition of climate change as a global crisis in most of the world's news media, thereby allowing it to enter a post-sceptical phase (Cottle 2009b), which eventually led to the transformation of a formerly purely scientific debate into a public debate (Lester & Cottle 2009).

Yet, some doubts regarding the universal applicability of issue-attention cycle theory exist. For example, Brossard et al. (2004) point out that, while the theory might have served well in a US context, it failed to explain coverage in other countries, such as France. Moreover, Boykoff and Boykoff (2007) concluded from their longitudinal study that Downs' model was not able to explain variations in US newspaper coverage of climate change over time. In their view, the model "is inadequate primarily because it does not pay enough attention to the crucial role played by the mass media, and more specifically to the journalistic norms that undergird news production" (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007, p. 1195).

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[4] Available from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http:/www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/ independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/stern_review_report.cfm (accessed 19 December 2013).
[5] Available from http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/publications_ipcc_fourth_assessment _report_synthesis_report.htm (accessed 19 December 2013).

In other words, "real-world issues, events, and dynamics must interact with journalistic norms in order to successfully translate into media coverage" (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007, p. 1195).

In contrast, Hilgartner and Bosk's (1988) reference to media's "limited carrying capacity" can be observed in the tendency of wars and major economic crises to push the environment off or down the media news agenda (Boykoff, 2009; Hansen, 2011). This, however, does not necessarily mean fading public or media interest alone, as climate issues might in fact be "diluting from screaming headlines to a ubiquitous background noise that is present in various sectors" (Lyytimäkia & Tapio, 2009, p. 731). In this case decline in media coverage of a particular issue may in fact just be a matter of "discursive diversification" (Hansen, 2011, p. 14), moving from the scientific into, for example, the economic or legal realm (Boykoff, 2009), ultimately "integrated into everyday cognition and discourse" (Olausson, 2011, p. 283).

In sum, while opinions regarding the most probable explanation and reasons for news coverage of a certain issue differ, literature reviewed in this section strongly suggests that news representations for example of climate change and carbon emissions are not arbitrary but driven by a range of potential factors, including news media's indexing tendency, attempts to adhere to journalistic norms and ideals, news values, and media's limited attention span. Additional to the factors discussed so far is the role played by ideology, as discussed in the following section.

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2.3.5 News framing and the role of ideology

Apart from its influence on news selection and language used, ideology[6] plays an

important role in the way news stories are framed. News frames provide a central

organising idea and set the context of a particular news story (Corbett, 2006).

They determine what is selected, excluded or emphasised (Hansen, 2010), suggest

certain connections between events or issues and offer interpretations, evaluations

and solutions (Entman, 2003; Murphy, 2010). Simply put, "framing is the

subjective act of selecting and ordering objective facts" (Corbett, 2006, p. 236).

The key point here is that apart from defining an issue, making out responsibilities

and offering solutions, news frames also "judge what's important and identify

'victims'" (Corbett, 2006, p. 237). This can lead to "critical misperceptions,

misleading debates, and divergent understandings, which are detrimental to efforts

that seek to enlarge rather than constrict the spectrum of possibility for

appropriate responses to various environmental challenges" (Boykoff, 2009, p.

450). Again, climate change proves a good example:

> The sceptics often speak…in short, simple sentences that everyone can
>
> understand and that rarely include any scientific explanations, a language
>
> which is simply excellent for the journalistic form. When consensus
>
> scientists and scholars set out to reply to the sceptics' claims, they find
>
> themselves facing a dilemma. They try to explain the mechanisms
>
> underlying some of the processes; yet, such explanations, combined with
>
> the use of complex concepts, do not lend [themselves] particularly well to
>
> the journalistic narrative form. (Stoehrel, 2012, p. 42)

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[6] In this thesis I follow Carvalho's (2007, p. 225) understanding of ideology as "a system of values, norms and political preferences, linked to a program of action vis-à-vis a given social and political order."

Corbett (2006) identifies two main news frames in environmental press coverage: status quo and challenger frames. Essentially, challenger frames according to Corbett (2006, p. 239) "support local change regarding current environmental practice" and can be identified by emphasis on loss of resources or species, entitlement and rights to resources, endangerment of ecosystem, human health etc., and calamity (pending doom, utter disaster). They are often advanced by environmental activists, but also occasionally by members of the power structure" (Corbett, 2006, p. 239). Status quo frames, on the other hand, tend to emphasise powerlessness, point out barriers impeding action, the advance of scientific or technological solutions, or avoidance and downplaying of issues (Corbett, 2006). They are "most typically utilised by those within the social structure, either in response to a challenger or to evidence that some kind of social change is needed in regards to the environment" (Corbett, 2006, p. 240).

Craig (2009) observed that media coverage was characterised by "dominant framing of the environment as an administrative or management matter that requires neutral administrative and scientific expertise" (p. 69). In addition, in her analysis of newspaper coverage of climate change in the UK, Carvalho (2005) found that coverage "remained within the broad ideological parameters of free-market capitalism and neo-liberalism, avoiding a sustained critique of the possibility of constant economic growth and increasing consumption, and of the profound international injustices associated with the greenhouse effect" (p. 21). Interestingly, in another fairly recent study, Dirikx and Gelders (2010) found that articles in Dutch and French newspapers covering climate change did so using a frame of global responsibility. Rather than reporting on the conflicting views

between individuals or parties, such as scientific consensus versus climate sceptics, those newspapers put the emphasis on the potential consequences of climate change, for example, how it might affect people's lives. This stands in stark contrast to findings of coverage in the USA and UK as pointed out above, exemplifying the importance of both cultural and ideological differences between news within and across different countries.

Overall, studies indicate that European media coverage of climate change grants more certainty to the scientific evidence of human actions as a cause for global warming and gives less access or credence to climate sceptics (Brossard et al., 2004; Dirikx & Gelders, 2010). To the contrary, US news coverage of climate change was found to put a greater emphasis on controversy and uncertainty, for example in comparison with coverage in the UK (Boykoff & Rajan, 2007). Indeed, numerous studies have found that media coverage of environmental issues can vary considerably across countries and cultures (Brossard et al., 2004; Good, 2008; Hansen, 2011; Mormont & Dasnoy, 1995). For example, Brossard et al.'s (2004) comparison of climate change coverage in *The New York Times* and *Le Monde* showed that, while French media heavily relied on opinion journalism, US coverage put more emphasis on sceptical views regarding human actions as cause for global warming, which the authors interpret as an attempt to ensure objective, balanced coverage. Paying close attention to the ways in which coverage of environmental issues, such as climate change, differs across countries is important considering that, as Hachten and Scotton (2007) note, news media coverage reflects prevailing national views and prejudices regarding global concerns.

Having said that, it has also been pointed out that the mass media tend to cover those issues deemed most relevant to the social, cultural and political context of their readers (Cunningham, 2005; Dove & Khan, 1995; Kuttschreuter et al., 2011; Sonnett, Morehouse, Finger, Garfin, & Rattray, 2006). Consequently, in order to be able to discuss ideology within news discourse, it is also necessary to take a closer look at some of the main ideologies inherent in environmental discourse. A characterisation of environmental discourse according to ideology is provided in the next section.

2.4 Excursus: A Characterisation of Environmental Discourse by Ideology

Having looked at ideology as a factor influencing news coverage, such as the way in which a news story is framed, this section takes a closer look at ideology as a means to understand and differentiate some of the key terms used in the context of environmental discourse, such as sustainability, sustainable development and ecological modernisation. As subsequent chapters will show, ideology plays a significant role in the discursive construction and representation of national environmental performance and place brand integrity.

Invested with meanings ranging from wilderness, harmony to ecology (Macnaghten, 1993), the terms *nature* and *environment* are used to promote "everything from national identity, nationalism, consumerism...to framing...what kinds of questions can and should be asked about…environmental issues and (sustainable) development" (Hansen, 2010, p. 156). Terms such as nature and the environment are socially and culturally constructed (Lester, 2010) in that different people assign them different meanings at different times (Hansen, 2010). Despite the fact that few people are capable to understand the complex systems that make

up nature and the environment (Hansen, 2010), the meanings we associate with those terms are nevertheless highly influential for our behaviour, practices and communication (Corbett, 2006).

Before the beginnings of the environmental movement in the late 1960s, which Roper (2012), among others, has linked to the publication of Rachael Carson's critique in *Silent Spring* (1962), concern for environmental affairs hardly existed on a global scale (Dryzek, 2005). Only then did people start to question the environmental consequences of industrialism, which most had taken for granted (Dryzek, 2005). Since then, issues such as ozone layer depletion, deep sea oil spills, biodiversity loss and climate change/global warming[7] have long brought environmental issues and consequences to the centre of public attention. As Roper (2012) argues:

> While levels of public environmental concern appear to have waxed and waned with high-profile environmental disasters – such as Chernobyl or Bhopal – current concern about environmental issues, especially climate change, appears to be growing consistently. That concern stems from the growing sense of risk that accompanies industrial and technological development (Beck, 1992) and is accompanied by increasing societal demands for environmental and social protection. (pp. 1-2)

Dryzek (1997) has suggested that environmental discourse can be distinguished according to its underlying ideology. For example, in most Western countries,

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[7] Climate change refers to "the average course or condition of the weather at a particular place over a period of many years" (Bostrom et al., 1994, p. 964), while global warming relates to climate change caused by human-induced emissions of greenhouse gases (Hulme, 2009).

children will likely have been raised and educated in a human-dominated belief system, where natural resources are viewed as "ours for the taking and creatures as justifiably below us in the pecking order" (Corbett, 2006, p. 24). However, differing environmental ideologies exist. The spectrum ranges from anthropocentric (human-centred, natural resources exist to serve human welfare, humans are separate from nature), to eco-centric (nature-centred, humans are an equal and interdependent part of a larger biotic community) (Corbett, 2006, p. 56). A particularly useful overview and categorisation of environmental discourses according to their underlying ideologies has been provided by Dryzek (1997). According to him, there are essentially five main ideological strands within environmental discourse: industrialism, or Promethean discourse, survivalist discourse, problem solving discourse, sustainability discourse and discourse of green radicalism. A brief characterisation of those strands within environmental discourse is provided as follows.

Promethean discourse

Dryzek (1997) uses Promethean discourse as the articulated version of industrialism from which all environmental discourse evolved. While for most of its history the assumptions and underlying values of industrialism were implicit and hardly discussed (Riedy, 2007), once critique emerged regarding its environmental consequences, supporters had to come up with an articulated discursive response to defend industrialism. Prometheans, according to Dryzek (1997, p. 45), "have unlimited confidence in the ability of humans and their technologies to overcome any problems presented to them …[, assuming] unlimited natural resources, unlimited ability of natural systems to absorb

pollutants, and unlimited corrective capacity in natural systems." Promethean discourse is evident in "a capitalist economy geared to perpetual economic growth, and a political system whose main task is to facilitate the conditions for that growth" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 53). In practice, pure forms of Promethean discourse have become rare in most places, its predominance having partly succumbed to green rationalist or sustainability considerations. Only Promethean hardliners will still hold to the conviction that there are no limits to the availability of natural resources, perceiving of Nature as a human-dominated "store of matter and energy" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 49).

Riedy (2007), in his extensive study of environmental discourse in Australian politics, found aspects of Promethean discourse represented in the "constant appeals to the national interest as opposed to wider human interests or those of other species" and the apparent lack of concern regarding "the environmental impacts of energy consumption, including climate change, except to the extent that these impacts might limit the availability of material inputs to the economy" (p. 334). Opposite to Promethean discourse stands survivalist discourse, described by Dryzek as follows.

Survivalist discourse

Inspired by the influential report *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows & Club of Rome, 1972), the survivalist message states that "human demands on the carrying capacity of ecosystems threaten to explode out of control, and draconian action needs to be taken in order to curb these demands' and avoid an apocalyptic collapse" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 34). While many environmentalists now favour more

cooperative and participatory solutions to the survivalist call for strong central regulation and expert elites (Riedy, 2007), the discourse is still alive in doomsday scenarios and warnings of the serious threat that climate change poses to humanity (Riedy, 2007).

Problem solving discourse

In addition to Promethean and survivalist discourses, Dryzek identifies problem solving as the third strand within environmental discourse. Unlike the survivalist sense of urgency and desperation, those adhering to the problem solving discourse strand are convinced that solutions to ecological problems can be found in the political economy of industrial society. They therefore see no need for systemic change or for abandoning economic growth. Within problem solving discourse, Dryzek (1997) makes out three sub-streams: administrative rationalism, democratic pragmatism, and economic rationalism.

Those adhering to *administrative rationalism* see the solution of environmental issues in rigorous public administration and scientific expertise rather than citizen/consumer action. Discussions following administrative rationalism typically focus on topics such as professional resource management, pollution control agencies, regulatory policy instruments, environmental impact assessment, expert advisory commissions or rationalistic policy analysis techniques (Dryzek, 1997). The emphasis is on top-down regulation and expert control with no questioning of the viability of liberal capitalism and its adherence to unlimited economic growth. Apart from ignoring that "relevant human knowledge is dispersed and fragmentary" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 80), the lack of long term, systemic

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considerations inherent in administrative rationalism discourse inevitably creates conflicts between policy objectives and reality, often leading to mistrust in bureaucracy and administrations as environmental saviours (Riedy, 2007).

Democratic pragmatism, according to Dryzek (1997), is the version of democracy which dominates today's world. It is dedicated to solving problems together with the population (though within institutional and systemic limits) instead of following the top-down administrative approach. Where administrative rationalism fails to adequately address complex environmental issues, democratic pragmatists intend to do better through public consultation, alternative dispute resolution, policy development through dialogue, public inquiries and right-to-know legislation (Dryzek, 1997). Essentially, democratic pragmatism follows the argument that:

> The most rational approach to problem solving, in life as in science, involves learning through experimentation. For problems of any degree of complexity, the relevant knowledge cannot be centralised in the hands of any individual or any administrative state structure. Thus problem solving should be a flexible process involving many voices, and cooperation across a plurality of perspectives. (Dryzek, 1997, p. 85)

In practice, institutional constraints and uneven distribution of political power mean that the ideals of democratic pragmatism are rarely achieved (Dryzek, 1997), both factors sometimes working against ecological values and the public interest (Riedy, 2007).

Economic rationalism is the third of the problem solving discourses identified by Dryzek. It is characterised by a commitment to "the intelligent deployment of market mechanisms to achieve public ends" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 102). The world, according to this stream within environmental discourse, exists of individual and collective economic actors, competing for self-interest. For economic rationalists the purpose of nature is to "to provide inputs to the socio-economic machine, to satisfy human wants and needs" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 113). Leaning on Promethean discourse, economic rationalists propagate market instruments and privatisation to solve environmental issues, but also acknowledge possible flaws within liberal economies, ready to accept "government-managed markets, and failing that quasi-market incentives" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 108), such as tradable emission rights and ecological taxes (Riedy, 2007). In reality, economic rationalism has had less impact on policy than the two other streams pertaining to the problem solving discourse (administrative rationalism and democratic pragmatism), attributed to the overreliance of economic rationalists on rational minds and markets, and a blindness to non-economic motivations and values (Dryzek, 1997).

Sustainability discourses

Further to environmental discourse influenced by Promethean, survivalist and problem solving ideological orientations, sustainability discourse stands out for having become a policy buzzword in the early 21st century (Renowden, 2007). Loosely defined in the *Brundtland Report* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, interpretations of the term vary. For example, Hattingh-Smith (2005) noted that,

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apart from "reflecting the more traditional concerns of environmentalism…sustainability in its strongest sense can be a highly bio-centric and ethical endeavour" (p. 342). What makes the sustainability strand unique among other environmental discourse is "its attempt to develop concrete institutions that reflect world-centric, relativistic, cooperative values" (Riedy, 2007, p. 341).

The idea of sustainability has been part of resource conservation management efforts for almost one hundred and fifty years (Gössling, Hall, & Weaver, 2009, p. 1). However, only recently, in the 1980s (Dryzek, 1997), has the sustainability discourse gained global prominence, representing an attempt "to dissolve the conflicts between environmental and economic values that energise the discourses of problem solving and limits" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 14).

Dryzek (1997) identifies two main strands within sustainability discourse: sustainable development and ecological modernisation. As he finds, both of them "remain reformist in their orientation to industrialism, but are more imaginative in seeking ways to dissolve familiar dilemmas and impasses" (p. 119).

Sustainable development is a particularly popular, yet enigmatic concept (Hattingh-Smith, 2005) that "is often interpreted with considerable variety to suit specific purposes" (p. 341). It "involves economic growth, but with equal attention to mitigating negative environmental and social impacts of development" (Roper, 2012, p. 4). Arguably the most integrative approach within environmental discourse, sustainable development aims to "combine ecological

protection, economic growth, social justice, and intergenerational equity, not just locally and immediately, but globally and in perpetuity" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 121).

Putting such an ideal form of sustainability into practice is tricky, however, if not impossible, which in most cases confines sustainable development to the level of discourse and rhetoric, as Dryzek (1997) laments. In addition, the ultimate objectives attributed to sustainable development very much depend on who defines it and based on which values. It is a contested concept (Dryzek, 1997; Roper, 2012) "engaged by people across the whole spectrum of values" (Riedy, 2007, p. 342). Arguably the key strength of the sustainability discourse lies in promoting a "dialogue of values" (Blewitt, 2008) and providing an arena where other discourses meet and where contestation is played out (Riedy, 2007). The key limitation is that, despite growing popularity, its impact beyond discourse and rhetoric is (still) limited, as Riedy (2007) has illustrated in the Australian climate policy context:

> So far, sustainable development discourse has tended to concentrate on objective changes to technological, economic and political institutions. However, despite many small success stories, most social institutions in developed countries remain more consistent with rational cognition and modern values than…pluralistic values. (pp. 342-343)

Yet, there is no doubt about how important sustainable development discourse has become, since it "has dominated international environmental affairs from the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992 to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 and beyond"

(Dryzek, 2006, pp. 17-18). Whereas sustainable development as discourse has been useful in that it facilitated global negotiations, ecological modernisation as the second strand within sustainability discourses has become a popular approach for implementing sustainability in practice.

From an *ecological modernisation* point of view, structural issues are at the heart of environmental problems, which are thus best solved through conscious and coordinated intervention, for instance by redesigning and restructuring capitalist political economy along more environmentally sound lines (Dryzek, 1997; Riedy, 2007). Economic growth and environmental sustainability are referred to as "the 'business case' for sustainability. Money can be saved through energy use and waste reduction" (Roper, 2012, p. 4). While acknowledging the dependence of human systems on ecological systems, ecological modernist discourse sees the latter as manageable and controllable; it "views natural systems in limited terms, as mere adjuncts to the human economy" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 144).

Dedication to collaboration and partnership, rather than intentions to change the system itself, makes ecological modernisation less challenging and thus more achievable than sustainable development (Riedy, 2007). Because it maintains the "necessity" for continued economic growth and entails profit opportunities, the ecological modernisation discourse has been more effectively "sold" to governments and industry than some of the stronger versions of sustainability (Roper, 2012). In fact, Dryzek (1997) noted that countries where ecological modernisation dominates public discourse, such as Germany, Japan, the

Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, have been the most successful in implementing environmental policy through the 1980s and 1990s and beyond.

Furthermore, ecological modernisation discourse promotes active collaboration between governments, businesses, environmentalists and academia, trusting that consensus building is essential for successful policy design and implementation (Dryzek, 1997). The weakness of this ideology, according to Riedy (2007), is that by putting too much emphasis on environmental integrity and economic prosperity, ecological modernisation discourse fails to address more subjective issues, such as environmental justice.[8] Those are addressed in the environmental discourse referred to by Dryzek (1997) as green radicalism.

Green radicalism

Radical green discourse forms yet another, very distinctive strand within environmental discourse compared to Promethean, survivalist, problem solving and sustainability discourses as discussed above. Here, Dryzek distinguishes between green romanticism and green rationalism, their main difference being that green romanticism rejects "the Enlightenment's emphasis on rationality and progress," whereas green rationalists embrace key aspects of the Enlightenment, including "equality, rights, open dialogue, and critical questioning of established practices" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 153).

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[8] According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), environmental justice "is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." (Source: http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice, accessed 4 October 2012).

Characteristic for **green romanticist** discourse is "an artistic and aesthetic orientation to life and politics" and the belief that "nature and humanity…[form] an organic relationship best understood and developed through feeling and insight" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 155). Scientific rationality and the objectification of nature as promoted by the Enlightenment are rejected in favour of "a holistic union of subject and nature through a personal transformation towards an ecological sensibility" (Riedy, 2007, p. 345). As Riedy (2007) further observes:

> Green romanticism is a broad discourse with many varieties. Faced with an issue like climate change, some green romantics will directly protest against coal-fired power stations, others will establish their own self-sufficient dwellings running on renewable energy and others still will argue that GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions are a violation of the relationship between humans and nature and that individual transformation is necessary to re-establish the natural relationship. (p. 345)

Varieties of green romanticism include deep ecology, cultural eco-feminism, bio-regionalism (as a sense of place), green lifestyle movements, eco-theology and eco-communalism (Dryzek, 1997). Reflecting on its practicability, Dryzek points out that, while green romanticist discourse rightly laments a growing rift between humans and the natural world, it fails to offer a feasible alternative or instructions how to manage the transition between the current system and one where people live in harmony with nature. For Riedy (2007, p. 346), green romanticists "idealise the environmental sensibilities of mythic, magic or archaic societies, failing to recognise that…very few of these societies actually possessed any sort of ecological awareness." He concludes that while green romantics may be able to

change individual values, lack of political programs and ideas how to change established political and social structures impede wider implementation, which is why in his view green romanticism can have no lasting impact (Riedy, 2007).

Green rationalism is "a diverse discourse that includes many in the European green political parties, social ecologists, the environmental justice movement, social eco-feminists, those committed to bio-regionalism as a political program, eco-Marxists and animal liberationists" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 172). Contrary to green romanticism, those advocating for green rationalism do not categorically reject rationality as promoted by the Enlightenment movement. Instead, they make a clear distinction between positive and negative aspects of rational values, embracing the first – for example equality, human rights, dialogue and social critique – while rejecting the latter, for example environmental destruction in the name of human development (Dryzek, 1997; see also Riedy, 2007).

Unlike green romantics, green rationalists are well aware of the importance of social dimensions of ecological issues, and thus seek to create institutions and organisations that are in line with ecological values (Dryzek, 1997). In other words, instead of relying on "changed individual sensibilities, [a] return to a pre-industrial Eden, or…postmodern playfulness," green rationalists seek the solution to environmental problems in "hard-headed analysis of social, political, and economic practice and structure" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 175).

> Green rationalism…is committed to progress and operates from a genuine insight into the importance of developing new social institutions that allow the full expression of ecological or postmodern values. By working to

develop network organisations and new forms of democracy, green rationalism provides a concrete basis for the wider emergence of ecological values. (Riedy, 2007, p. 348)

Table 2 provides an overview of the different ideological strands present in environmental discourse, as suggested by Dryzek (1997).

Table 2. Ideological Positions in Environmental Discourse (Dryzek, 1997)

Discourse strand	*Characteristics*
Promethean	Advocates for economic progress and industrial development. Largely uncritical about environmental issues.
Survivalist	Warns against limits of growth and environmental resources, with an inclination for doomsday scenarios.
Problem solving *Administrative rationalism* *Democratic pragmatism* *Economic rationalism*	Believes environmental issues can be solved through minor adjustments within current political system.
Sustainability *Ecological modernisation* *Sustainable development*	Seeks to dissolve conflicts between environmental and economic values by redefining nature and objectives of development.
Green radicalism *Green romanticism* *Green rationalism*	Rejects industrialist society and capitalism.

In sum, where the discourse of industrialism, characterised by enthusiasm for economic progress and industrial development, remains largely ignorant and uncritical about environmental issues, survivalist discourse counters that by

warning against the dangers of excessive growth and surpassing ecological limits. Problem solving discourse, on the other hand, sees environmental issues as something that can be solved through minor adjustments within the current political system, while sustainability discourse attempts to "dissolve the conflicts between environmental and economic values" by redefining the nature and objectives of development (Dryzek, 1997, p. 14). Finally, green radicalism rejects industrial society and capitalism altogether, instead calling for other more radical alternatives (although it is not always clear what those alternatives would look like).

Notably, while Dryzek's categorisation of environmental discourses serves as a useful starting point to understand its historical development and underlying perceptions, values and beliefs, a closer look at environmental discourses in practice reveals that those hardly ever fit one category alone (Hajer, 1995). For example, attributing a news story to one of those ideological strands can be tricky, not least because people from different value backgrounds might join forces for a particular issue. Although members within such "discourse coalitions" (Hajer, 1995) will have a shared understanding of a specific issue, their ecological values or motivation can differ significantly, as "story-lines, not interests, form the basis of the coalition" (Hajer, 1995, p. 66). In the present study, Dryzek's categorisation of environmental discourse according to underlying ideologies will appear in the description of the discursive context of the *clean, green* NZ case study (chapter five), and the discussion of factors influencing news representations of national environmental performance and place brand image in chapter seven.

2.5 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been, by means of a review of existing literature pertaining to discourse theory and media studies, to introduce the theoretical perspectives most relevant for the present investigation which, together with the theories on place branding presented in chapter three, constitute the theoretical framework of this thesis. The chapter has stressed the constitutive role of discourse in the social construction of social reality, and the significant role and influence of the mass media and news media representations in the discursive construction process. It further determined news intertextuality as a key characteristic of news coverage, and news media's indexing tendency, news values (newsworthiness), journalistic norms and ideals, issue cycles and media attention span as factors that drive news coverage of environmental issues. The complexity of environmental discourse in general was illustrated in its characterisation according to underlying world views and ideologies.

The task of establishing the theoretical framework is continued in the following chapter with a review of literature on discursive constructions and perceptions of nations and places, and place branding.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Perspectives on Perceptions, Reputation and Branding of Places

Following the introduction of theoretical perspectives linked to discourse theory and media studies in the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter is to summarise existing literature and theoretical perspectives on discursive constructions of nations and places, national reputation, the branding of places and nations, and their news media representations. First, sections 3.1 and 3.2 conceptualise nations and places as discursively constructed, imagined communities. This is followed by a summary of literature on the nature and importance of a place's image and reputation (section 3.3). Section 3.4 introduces the concepts of national and place brands, and branding, and situates the present study situated within existing research approaches. Next, in section 3.5 I explore the concepts of brand image, integrity, authenticity and legitimacy and discuss why these are considered so essential for brands built on environmental promises. In addition, the section discusses the role that political and business leadership play as factors influencing the perceived credibility of place brands. Section 3.6 reviews literature on media representations of place image and national reputation, which is followed in the final section (3.7) with a summary of the theoretical framework, the knowledge gaps, and how they are addressed in this study.

3.1 Nations as Imagined Communities

In the previous chapter it has been suggested that people's perceptions of social reality are discursively constructed and influenced by mass media representations.

Apart from the importance of media representations and discursive constructions in the context of environmental issues, they also play a key role regarding country or national image and reputation. The definition of a nation most attuned to this theoretical perspective is Benedict Anderson's (1983) conception of nations as *imagined communities*. They are imagined "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1983, p. 15). Martin (1995) and Wodak, De Cillia, Reisigl, and Liebhart (1999) have identified language and discourse as the essential means through which the uniqueness and distinctness of a community and its particular values are presented, making these a key instrument in the social construction of imagined communities.

Following Wodak et al. (1999), national identity "is constructed and conveyed in discourse, predominantly in narratives of national culture. National identity is thus the product of discourse" (p. 22). Conceived in language, rather than blood (Anderson, 1983, p. 133), nations and national identities, when perceived as imagined communities, are then essentially socially constructed. Because they are "mobilised into existence through symbols invoked by political leadership" (Dryzek, 2006, p. 35), discourses are powerful in that they can construct, perpetuate, transform or dismantle national identities (Wodak et al., 1999).

Media representations are integral to the social construction of national identities (Anderson, 1983; Hallett et al., 2010; Milne, Tregidga, & Walton, 2009). As Thompson (1995) states, "we feel ourselves to belong to groups and communities

which are constituted in part through the media" (p. 35). Media images are powerful in that they contribute to our sense of who we are and how we relate to our environment (Cottle, 2009). News media in particular actively support a branded, simplified national identity in that they "draw on certain dominant discourses which relate to ideas associated with everyday understandings of notions of 'objectivity' and 'mainstream'" (Huijser, 2009, p. 60).

Moreover, depending on news media coverage, different parts of a nation's identity come into focus on the international stage at different times (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2000; see also Dinnie, 2008). But also within the imagined national community, new narratives can change people's perceptions of what constitutes their national identity (Wodak et al. 1999). Clearly, identity and image are context dependent, with image subject to change as societal expectations change (Roper, 2012).

3.2 Discursive Constructions of Places

Places, which in the geographical sense describe anything from towns, cities, regions, to entire countries (Hanna & Rowley, 2008), from a social constructionist perspective constitute a particular locality "imbued with social meaning" (Pocock, 2006, p. 95). Essentially, place is more than a physical space or "a passive container within which activities occur" (Meethan, 2006, p. 7). Rather, it is "constructed – and continuously reconstructed – through social and political processes that assign meaning […and can trigger powerful] emotional sentiments that influence how people perceive, experience, and value the environment" (Cheng, Kruger, & Daniels, 2003, pp. 87-88).

Whereas landscapes are often the most visible feature of places (Gibson &
Davidson, 2004; Relph, 2004, see also Campelo, Aitken, Gnoth, & Thyme, 2009),
places should not be reduced to landscapes alone, as a combination of many
different aspects contributes to a place's distinctness, including specific
landmarks, historical events, or cultural characteristics (Campelo, Aitken, &
Gnoth, 2011, p. 5). Describing the "real" nature of a place – or nation for that
matter – is difficult because "places are, in and of themselves, social constructs
that defy ready definition, categorisation, and measurement" (Cheng et al., 2003,
p. 90). According to Corbett (2006, p. 17), the "meanings that individuals
associate with a place may have purely instrumental or utilitarian values (what the
land 'is good for') as well as intangible ones like belonging, beauty, and
spirituality." Themes of belonging and identity are also stressed by Cheng et al.
(2003), noting that places influence people's view of themselves and what they
consider appropriate behaviour.

Unlike nations, discursive constructions of places tend to have a commercial
rather than a political focus, often crafted to promote a certain place for tourists or
to support a country's export market. The material, or commercial, dimension of
discursive representations of places is most visible in tourist destinations,
geographical regions explicitly branded and positioned for tourist enjoyment and
all sorts of travel activities (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). As is the case with places in
general, destinations never consist of only one statement or action (Saarinen,
2004), but function as the site and subject of various and sometimes competing
discourses (Papen, 2005). They are, according to McGibbon (2006, p. 142),
"surrounded by entire symbolic complexes of images originating from diverse

sources, including art, photography, literature, film, music, television and other forms of advertising."

Conceived as a discursively constructed representation of a specific geographical place, a destination "influences and organises both the actions of visitors and the conceptions of the local residents themselves" (Govers & Go, 2009, p. 15). Referring to Anderson (1983), Meethan, Anderson and Miles (2006) have suggested that destinations constitute imagined communities for tourists and hosts. Moreover, as tourism spaces, destinations are deliberately constructed to fulfil specific tourist expectations (Meethan, 2006). The values associated with specific tourist destinations play a crucial role regarding the degree to which people will consider their travel experiences as satisfying and as meeting their expectations (Meethan, 2006):

> By looking at the narratives of place, the stories, histories and myths that are associated with people and place, and by acknowledging the complexities involved in the ways in which people actively engage with their environment, together with the tensions between expectations and realisation, we can arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the production and consumption of tourist spaces. (Meethan, 2006, p. 7)

The multi-faceted and dynamic nature of discursive construction of places is reflected in their image and reputation, as discussed in the following section.

3.3 Place Image and National Reputation

According to Haider, Kotler and Rein (1994, p. 3), place images are "the sum of beliefs, ideals, and impressions people have toward a certain place." Shields (1991), on the other hand, regards place images as "the various discrete meanings associated with real places or regions regardless of their character in reality" (p. 60). In fact, various authors have stressed that people's perceptions of places tend to be vague (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaugnessy, 2000), and do not necessarily reflect local realities (Anholt, 2007; Dinnie, 2008; Walsh & Wiedmann, 2008). According to Anholt (2007, p. 1), people "navigate through the complexity of the modern world armed with a few simple clichés, [which] form the background of our opinions." Even though people's associations and experiences with specific places are likely to differ due to distinctive needs and purposes (Hankinson, 2004; Hart & Stachow, 2010; Relph, 1976; Warnaby, 2009), when shared and widely accepted, their images can become stereotypical for those places (Boisen, Terlouw, & Bouke, 2011).

Perceptions derived from stereotyping, "the process of generalising to an entire class of objects from a limited number of observations" (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002, p. 295), are not easily altered as once established, the core images on which those stereotypes draw tend to be persistent and stable (Coyle & Fairweather, 2005; Shields, 1991). Therefore, "even when we hear something new and surprising about another country, this may not affect our mental image of the country at all, which remains securely stowed in the mental compartment marked fundamental beliefs" (Anholt, 2011, pp. 29-30).

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As Anholt (2011) further notes:

> Barring their close neighbours, most people in the world really only respect, occasionally think about, claim to know about, and generally admire a maximum of 14 or 15 countries apart from their own, and these are major, industrialised democracies in Western Europe and the English-speaking world, plus Japan and Brazil. (p. 30)

While this might sound exaggerated, the message is clear: a high profile, or respect, does not come easily to those countries not part of the international political or economic elite. In those cases, extra effort is required to create a favourable image overseas. Yet, place images cannot easily be controlled (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). As noted earlier, places "are surrounded by entire symbolic complexes of images originating from diverse sources" (McGibbon, 2006, p. 142), and, as Papen (2005) has noted in a tourist destination context, are often subject to competing discourses.

Place images are further shaped by culture, history and locality (Florek & Insch, 2008; Hart & Stachow, 2010; Murphy, 2010; Relph, 1976), even famous citizens (Dinnie, 2008). As Relph (1976, p. 59) posits, they are not formed "simply in terms of patterns of physical and observable features, nor just as products of attitudes, but as an indissociable combination of these." Because no whole picture of a place exists "that can be 'filled in' since the perception and filling of a gap lead to the awareness of other gaps" (Shields, 1991, p. 18), place images are highly diverse and multi-faceted, "partial and often either exaggerated or understated" (Shields, 1991, p. 60).

Whereas a sustained impact of single events on people's image of a place is unlikely following the argumentation of the conservative and inert nature of place images once established, as highlighted above, this is not to say that place myths and stereotypes might not change, for example as a result of changes in societal expectations (Roper, 2010). In fact, clichés, stereotypes or prejudices are likely to gradually change if the people and organisations in those places start to change what they do and how they behave (Anholt, 2007). According to Anholt (2011) *symbolic actions*, anything "especially suggestive, remarkable, memorable, picturesque, newsworthy, topical, poetic, touching, surprising, or dramatic," can help create positive stories of places, so long as those symbolic actions are "swiftly followed by further and equally remarkable proof" (Anholt, 2011, p. 26-27).

Understood as the aggregate of place images *over time* (Passow, Fehlmann, & Grahlow, 2005), reputation differs from image in that it is centred on long-term impressions built around numerous images and actions (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). According to Rindova, Williamson, Petkova, and Sever (2005), reputation is generally attributed two dimensions: first, how stakeholders perceive the quality of specific attributes in the context of the organisation, and second, the degree to which an organisation is recognised collectively. In an organisational context, reputation has been defined as the combination of a firm's public prominence, its public esteem, and the qualities or attributes associated with it (Carroll, 2011b). In terms of public prominence, Carroll and McCombs (2003) argue that for firms to acquire a reputation, the public must first think about them. In other words, public prominence refers to the degree to which a company or organisation is recognised

on a large-scale and salient in the minds of stakeholders (Carroll, 2011a, p. 223; Rindova et al., 2005). Public esteem, on the other hand, stands for "the degree to which the public likes, trusts, admires, and respects an organisation" (Carroll, 2011a, p. 224).

The importance of social appeal, or public esteem, is further emphasised by the six dimensions of national reputation identified by Passow et al. (2005, p. 313) as:

1) *emotional appeal* (likeability, respectfulness, and trustworthiness);

2) *physical appeal* (attractiveness of a place and its infrastructure);

3) *financial appeal* (favourable environment for investors, such as the level of industrial growth, taxation, and safety);

4) *leadership appeal* (charismatic leadership and a clear vision);

5) *cultural appeal* (socio-cultural diversity, history, entertainment);

6) *social appeal* (the perceived responsibility as a member of the global community and the manifest support for good causes).

Clearly, if countries are increasingly expected to act as responsible members of the global community (Anholt, 2010a, 2010b), then their perceived emotional, leadership and social appeal in particular will be essential for their ability to build and maintain a favourable reputation.

In terms of the importance of creating and maintaining a positive place image and favourable reputation, it has been suggested that those can have a marked effect on people's behavior and actions (Boulding, 1956), including decisions "where to live, where to travel, where to invest, where to study or which country to support in a conflict" (Avraham & Ketter, 2008, p. 19). What is more, at times the image

of a place can become even more important than its "reality" (Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998), such as when people's purchasing behaviour is structured or influenced by representations, rather than actual features of a product or place (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). Essentially, a place's projected image matters as it determines the way the world sees and treats it, be it consumers, tourists, investors or international media (Anholt, 2003, 2007; Dinnie, 2008; Giannopoulos, Piha, & Avlonitis, 2011; Govers & Go, 2009). In short, "a place with a positive reputation finds it easier to vie for attention, resources, people, jobs, and money" (Morgan et al., 2011, p. 3).

From a commercial perspective, Kotler and Gertner (2011) observe that most place marketers and export promotion authorities are now aware that a country's reputation constitutes an important asset. As societies become larger, more diffuse and more complex (Anholt, 2010a), reputation "creates a reservoir of goodwill" (Morgan et al., 2011, p. 5) and trust, on which most human transactions now depend (Anholt, 2010a, p. 20). In fact, never, it seems, have a country's image and reputation been more important for its ability to gain and maintain a favourable position in the global marketplace:

> Today, the world is one market; the rapid advance of globalisation means that whatever countries try to pull in (investors, aid, tourists, business visitors, students, major events, researchers, travel writers, and talented entrepreneurs), and whatever countries try to push out (products, services, policies, culture, and ideas), is done with a discount if the country's image is weak or negative, and at a premium if it is strong and positive. (Anholt, 2011, p. 22)

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Functioning as "currency in a discourse economy" (Shields, 1991, pp. 60-61), images determine people's behaviour with respect to a specific place (Boisen et al., 2011), such as their purchase decisions of its products (Gnoth, 2002; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Lee, Rodriguez, & Sar, 2012; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). This has been referred to as the country-of-origin (COO) effect.

Built on the premise that people attach stereotypical perceptions to other people and countries (Balabanis, Mueller, & Melewar, 2002; Maheswaran, 1994; Nagashima, 1970, 1977), the country-of-origin effect suggests that, if a country's image is positive, products emanating from it appear preferable in consumers' eyes (*halo* effect), whereas a negative image can result in a *black cloud* effect (Balabanis et al., 2002), such as people's avoidance of products due to a country's unfavourable image. Images and perceptions can be so powerful in this context that even though the characteristics ascribed to a country may have no direct or obvious bearing on the products or services offered, in the absence of other cues (Cordell, 1992) they can still signal risk, or quality. As further information comes to light, those perceptions can change (Nagashima, 1970, 1977).

While the COO effect has gained importance due to globalisation and the internationalisation of trade, as Cordell maintains (1992), it is also limited in that COO is merely one of many cues available to consumers, such as the actual physical product, brand name, price, warranty (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999), and availability (Cordell, 1992). Rather than perceptions of a product's COO in general, consumer preferences are likely to be related to a product's performance and brand (Cordell, 1992), and whether the type of a product or service offered is

consistent with the country's image and reputation (Roth & Romero, 1992). For example, New Zealand apples are bought in the belief that those "will taste better and/or have lower agricultural spray residues than competitors" (Knight, Holdsworth, & Mather, 2007, p. 110).

However, by itself the country-of-origin effect does not necessarily lead to a competitive advantage or disadvantage in the marketplace (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999). For instance, apart from the perceived quality and the positive or negative attributes of its products, the image of a country-of-origin is determined by the historical and current relations with a country, and consumers' emotional attachments to it (Balabanis et al., 2002), which links back to the social appeal and public esteem dimensions of national reputation discussed earlier.

Lastly, a country's image and reputation are particularly relevant where no objective information is available at the time of purchase, or where products are intangible and experimental in nature (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999), such as products and services based on individuals' travel and tourism experiences. Without any feasible way to determine quality prior to purchase, consumers rely on the image they hold of a particular product or place (Knight et al., 2007). Apart from information and impressions conveyed through channels such as the news media, branding campaigns constitute an important element in the discursive construction of people's perceptions of nations and places, such as countries and destinations.

3.4 Branding of Nations and Places

Brand is a term closely linked to a product or place's image and reputation in that it "captures the idea of reputation observed, reputation valued and reputation managed" (Anholt, 2010a, p. 20). At its simplest, a brand is "a product or service or organisation, considered in combination with its name, its identity and its reputation" (Anholt, 2007, p. 4). As "trust broadcast system" (Anholt, 2010a, p. 23), *branding* – the process of promoting selected images (Gold & Ward, 1994) in order to establish a favourable reputation (Anholt, 2007) – plays a role in most spheres of life, including "political, social, and cultural, official and unofficial, private and public" (Anholt, 2010a, p. 23).

Provided they manage to create a favourable impression in the consumer's mind (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009), brands can be of immense value:

> If a place, product or service acquires a positive, powerful and solid reputation, this becomes an asset of enormous value – probably more valuable, in fact, than all its tangible assets, because it represents the ability of the place or organisation to continue to trade at a healthy margin for as long as its brand image stays intact. (Anholt, 2010a, p. 92)

Indeed, various scholars have argued that a place's prosperity and progress can only be ensured through creating and maintaining positive brand images (Govers & Go, 2009; Pride, 2011; van Ham, 2008; Widler, 2007). Places unwilling or unable to develop a competitive brand will find it increasingly difficult to win their share of the world's consumers, capital, investment, talent, cultural exchange, respect and attention (Anholt, 2007). A strong, positive brand image helps places to differentiate themselves from others (Kotler & Gertner, 2002,

2004; Kotler, Jatusripitak, & Maesincee, 1997). Brands' differentiating and identifying functions (Aitken & Campelo, 2011) make them a powerful influence on consumer thinking, attitudes, and behaviour (Heilbrunn, 2006). A strong brand can "enable premium pricing, as well as the market segmentation that makes it possible to communicate a coherent message to a target customer group" (Berthon, Holbrook, Hulbert, & Pitt, 2011, p. 41).

In short, brands are a powerful device to communicate a preferred image of products, services, or indeed places (Aitken, 2011; Campelo et al., 2011; Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2004). As intangible "product," tourist destinations in particular depend on place brands to attract visitors (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). As Morgan and Pritchard (2000) have noted, the battle for customers in the tourism industry will be fought not over price but over the hearts and minds, where branding will be the key to success. While tourism is frequently referred to as one component, or "output," of a nation's branding activities (Anholt, 2007; Hanna & Rowley, 2008), the high visibility of destination brands make them stand out as a crucial part of any nation brand (Giannopoulos et al., 2011), sometimes even making it difficult to distinguish between the two.

Importantly, and linking back to the significance and potential consequences of discursive constructions and representations of places from a normative perspective, brands represent more than a set of images to promote a product or place; they are about trust and respect (Bell, 2005). The meanings, symbols, and values represented by brands (Berthon, Holbrook, Hulbert, & Pitt, 2007) "not only reinforce the identity and uniqueness of destinations but also reassure the people,

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habitus, values, and symbols of their own culture, thus preserving the…'state of being' of the place" (Campelo et al., 2011, p. 11). The potential of brands to re-construct individual identities and re-connect collective ones is particularly relevant "in a post-modern world where identity is fragmented and purpose is unclear" (Aitken, 2011, p. 295).

As Berthon et al. (2011, p. 41) put it, brands are "symbols around which social actors – including firms, suppliers, supplementary organisations, the public, and indeed customers – construct identities." Academic literature has referred to this inward-focused function of place brands as national branding (Olins & Hildreth, 2011). In the following section I provide a brief overview of the different streams within scholarly work on national branding to date, and where the present study fits in.

3.4.1 Research approaches to national branding

"Concerned with a country's whole image on the international stage, covering political, economic and cultural dimensions" (Fan, 2010, p. 98), national branding goes beyond the narrower purpose of country-of-origin or place brands to promote specific economic interests (Fan, 2010). Fan further notes that, "as an emerging area of interest, nation branding is driven largely by practitioners and there is an urgent need for conceptual and theoretical development of the subject" (2010, p. 98). As a matter of fact, judging from Kaneva's (2011) extensive review of scholarly work attributed to nation branding, literature on the topic is far from homogenous but varies significantly, not least in the ways in which the very practice of nation branding is discussed. Referring to 186 examined scholarly publications, Kaneva concludes that a broad distinction can be made between

technical-economic, political and cultural-critical approaches, of which in terms of numbers the technical-economic is by far the most common in scholarly publications on the matter (Kaneva, 2011). The key characteristics of each of the three approaches are outlined as follows.

According to Kaneva (2011), branding practitioners and marketers dominate scholarly contributions that can be associated with the *technical-economic approach*. Taking a functionalist, instrumentalist stance, they perceive nation branding predominantly as a strategic tool to boost a country's competitive advantage, seeking to inform – not question – the hegemony of the market. Most definitions of nation branding and nation brands can be attributed to the technical-economic approach, as the explicit use of marketing language reveals. Dinnie (2008, p. 15), for instance, defines nation brands as "the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences." In the same light, nation branding is understood as the process of employing publicity and marketing to promote selected images of a geographical location (Gold & Ward, 1994). Eventually, from a technical-economic view, the purpose of both nation brands and nation branding is to ensure a favourable reputation with the target audience (Anholt, 2007; Bell, 2005; Dinnie, 2008). If done well, such a reputation not only shines on the country itself but also on its products and assets, making them appear preferable in the eyes of the consumers (Country Brand, 2008; Gnoth, 2002, see also Roper, 2010).

Perhaps the most telling description of nation branding from a technical-economic perspective comes from Simon Anholt, considered the most prolific author on the subject (Kaneva, 2011). In his view, nation branding is really just a metaphor for how effectively countries compete with each other for favourable perception, be it with regard to exports, governance, tourism, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, or people (Anholt, 2007). Like other authors sharing the technical-economic perspective on nation branding, Anholt puts the main emphasis in his definition on competition, that is, the economic imperative.

Scholars looking at nation branding from a ***political perspective*** see it as coordinated government efforts to manage a country's image in order to promote tourism, investment and foreign relations (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011). In this light, nation branding is seen as a powerful political tool, especially for small, peripheral nations eager to strengthen their economic position and to compete against the economic, financial or military clout of superpowers (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011). Literature attributed to the political approach sees nation branding, at worst, as an augmented form of propaganda, or, at best, as an inoffensive way of building and managing reputation by promoting a country's culture, history and geography, a "more progressive form of patriotism than its chauvinistic or antagonistic counterparts" (Aronczyk, 2009, p. 294).

Scholars pertaining to this political perspective on nation branding are critical about the emphasis on market positioning and competitiveness as outlined above, stressing that attempts to brand nations can be risky and even counter-productive in that it might create mistrust and prejudice efforts to win the hearts of others

(MacDonald, 2011). Volcic and Andrejevic (2011, p. 599) share those concerns, pointing out "in an era of capitalist globalisation," branding and commercial competition can easily become "the continuation of warfare by other means." Increasingly close links between nation branding and public policy – through active encouragement, funding, management and control through government organisations (Kaneva, 2011), have led to a growing field of critical examinations of nation branding, understood as a form of governance via market imperatives (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011). Kaneva identifies this cultural-critical perspective as the third pillar within nation branding research.

Studies adopting a ***cultural-critical approach*** to the exploration of nation branding tend to focus on its implications for national identities, social power relations and agenda-setting (Kaneva, 2011). Following this approach, the very practice of marketing and branding is to be treated with caution, since marketing is not a value-free, neutral means of providing products or services to satisfy physical needs (Moufahim, Humphreys, Mitussis, & Fitchett, 2007). Rather, through its use of specific symbols, ideological discourses and practices, branding actively shapes social relations, for example by granting material consumption a central role in people's lives (Moufahim et al., 2007).

Cultural-critical researchers concerned with nation branding aim to explore how marketing and branding influence the social sphere and how those practices alter people's perceptions of self and their national identity, linking the discursive dimension of nation branding to constructivist ideas of nationhood. They would argue, for example, that rather than drawing an adequate image of a places'

history, nature and traditions, nation brands are distorted versions to accommodate consumers' tastes (Butler 1998, see also Knight, 2011) and that the potential consequences of promoting such a distorted or idealistic image of a nation or place could prove problematic in that it "generates and perpetuates a lie with which the residents must live; thereby robbing a culture of its authenticity" (Fesenmaier & MacKay, 1996, p. 37). In this scenario, as Volcic and Andrejevic (2011) point out, the polity becomes the "brand community" and governments a country's chief marketers, expected to align foreign and domestic policies with the nation brand.

Understood as "a compendium of discourses and practices aimed at reconstituting nationhood through marketing and branding paradigms" (Kaneva, 2011, p. 118), nation branding from a cultural-critical perspective reveals a certain way of thinking about the role of a nation and its people, whom it seeks to mobilise in the name of economic development (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011). By doing so, it follows the logic of neo-liberal governance in that it combines the obligations of citizenship with the responsibilities and risks of the entrepreneur (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011).

In sum, whereas scholars exploring nation branding from a cultural-critical perspective understand it as a way to reconstitute nations both by means of ideology and praxis (Kaneva, 2011), literature attributed to the political approach sees nation branding, at worst, as an augmented form of propaganda, or, at best, as an inoffensive way of building and managing reputation by promoting a country's culture, history and geography (Aronczyk, 2009). Lastly, from a technical-

economic perspective, nation branding is seen as a means to build and maintain a country's strategic advantage with the purpose of economic growth.

Yet, not every research approach or publication concerned with nation branding can be clearly associated with one of the three perspectives described by Kaneva (2011). As she concedes, a more nuanced distinction can be achieved by taking a closer look at the ontological convictions that form the basis of nation branding research, particularly whether it follows the essentialist or the constructionist paradigm, and to what extent the stance taken by the researcher is critical of the nation branding concept, or disapproving.

Judging from her thematic analysis, Kaneva (2011) observed that academic literature on nation branding seemed to either praise or argue against the concept, largely depending on the underlying ontological assumptions with regard to social power and national identity. According to her, where essentialists see nationhood and national identity as a more or less fixed object to be discovered and represented, constructivist-oriented research assumes that national identities are continuously produced by various agents (Kaneva, 2011). The second distinction in nation branding research is concerned with the extent to which researchers take the market imperative for granted (consensus), or see it as problematic, and thus point or do not point to questions of power struggle and individual agency (dissensus) (Kaneva, 2011).

The position taken in this thesis is that nation brands can be both a positive means to encourage responsible citizens (Anholt, 2007; Kaneva, 2011) and a tool for

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propaganda (Kaneva, 2011). Moreover, while the majority of nation brands are not created out of the blue but based on existing culture and traditions (Dinnie, 2008), and thus to some extent justified, they nevertheless tend to be dominated by the market(ing) imperative, which warrants aforementioned concerns, such as the potential impact of national and place branding on individual agency. In the end, regardless of a nation's roots, of particular relevance for this thesis is the argumentation that "not what is, but what people believe is…has behavioural consequences" (Connor, 1994, p. 75), which grants national brands an important role with regard to people's perceptions.

3.4.2 Place branding vs. nation branding

Similar to nation branding, place branding seeks to promote a certain geographical location to a target audience (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). Closely linked to place marketing, namely the segmentation, targeting and positioning of a place (Govers & Go, 2009, see also Kotler and Gertner, 2004), "understandings and experiences of places are mediated by a range of everyday texts through which landscapes are presented" (Gibson & Davidson, 2004, p. 390).

Arguably, place branding is located somewhere between the all-encompassing concept of nation branding and tourism-focused destination branding. Hanna and Rowley (2008) attribute the importance of the place branding concept to:

> Growing power of international media, the falling cost of international travel, rising consumer spending power, the threat of place parity, a scarce pool of international investors, competition for skilled and professional

immigrants and growing consumer demand for a diverse cultural diet stimulated by low-cost global communication media. (p. 63)

As Moilanen and Ranisto (2009) point out, place brands are all about making a place's companies and investment attractive, to support its tourism and export industries, serve public diplomacy and to provide its citizens a sense of identity and self-esteem. Discourse is essential in this regard, particularly considering general acknowledgement that "understandings and experiences of places are mediated by a range of everyday texts through which landscapes are presented" (Gibson & Davidson, 2004, p. 390).

While academic literature on place branding and national branding does not always strictly distinguish between the two terms, a subtle difference exists. According to Olins and Hildreth (2011), unlike place branding's outward focus, national branding, at least from a political or cultural-critical perspective, is associated with nation-building and characterised by an inward focus, where it is mostly perceived as a way to reconstitute nations both by means of ideology and praxis (Kaneva, 2011). Following a political approach, national branding is seen as a powerful political tool, especially for small, peripheral nations eager to strengthen their economic position and to compete against the economic, financial or military clout of superpowers (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011).

Considering that the vast majority of academic literature on nation branding discusses it as a strategic means to boost a country's competitive advantage (Kaneva, 2011), literature on national branding does not always differ between the inward vs. outward foci of the two concepts. In fact, the two concepts merge in

their almost identical purpose to promote a certain geographical location to a target audience, to make a place's tourism and export industries appear attractive, and to support public diplomacy efforts (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). According to Anholt (2007), who is widely accredited with having coined the term[9], national branding is really just a metaphor for how effectively countries compete with each other for favourable perception, be it with regard to exports, governance, tourism, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, or people. In this sense, national brands are not much different from the conceptualisation of place brands. What is more, when perceived as ideas, emotions, or collections of perceptions (Fournier, 1998), both national and place brands are largely intangible and socially-constructed (Berthon et al., 2011).

With regard to the present study, no clear distinction is made between place and national branding, since both internal and external views play a role. Moreover, because in the case of New Zealand's environmental performance and place brand image, the economic, political and the cultural-critical dimensions of national branding are of relevance, the study cannot simply be associated with any one of the approaches to nation branding identified by Kaneva (2011).

3.5 Green Brands, Brand Integrity, Authenticity, and Legitimacy

Having defined and conceptualised key terms, such as nations, places, destinations, their image, reputation and branding, and situated the present study among the variety of approaches taken in literature concerned with national and

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[9] Anholt has since distanced himself from the notion of nation branding, arguing that the way in which it is used in academic literature and practice is misleading as it suggests a nation could be branded into existence (Anholt, 2010c, 2011).

place branding, in this section I take a closer look at the role of brand integrity, authenticity and legitimacy with regard to green brands.

3.5.1 Green brands

A green brand, according to Insch (2011), is a brand where environmental values constitute the brand essence. Although the selective positioning and promotion of places based on their natural attractions and eco-credentials is nothing new (Insch, 2011), with increasing recognition and awareness of environmental issues, emphasis on aspects of environmental sustainability in both product- and place branding have become more frequent (Insch, 2011). Encouraged by rapidly augmenting global demand for natural products, companies increasingly seek to make links between their green credentials and a positive, attractive lifestyle. As Meletis and Campbell (2007) noted, concerned consumers are opting for those products and services perceived least harmful to the natural environment, such as eco-tourism holidays, which presents a strong business case to focus product and place advertising on green credentials.

According to Hartmann, Apoalaza-Ibáñez, and Forcada-Sainz (2005), there exist essentially two approaches to green brand positioning: functional and emotional. Where the first appeals to the rational mind by providing detailed information on environmental benefits, the second stresses brand benefits related to people's emotional needs, such as a sense of satisfaction from contributing to the improvement or protection of the environment, or from exhibiting one's lived environmental consciousness to others. Crucially, as empirical research conducted by Hartmann et al. (2005) showed, functional attributes alone are insufficient to convince potential consumers of a product's environmental benefits. Rather, the

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combination of functional and emotional positioning resulted in the strongest shift of brand perception. Hence, the most effective green branding strategy would pursue "the creation of emotional benefits sustained by information on environmentally sound functional attributes" (Hartmann et al., 2005, p. 21). A similar conclusion was offered in a report by the UK think tank Forum for the Future (2008), which stressed that a trusted, aspirational brand is just as important as providing detailed product information.

The popularity of green branding and the positioning of products or places according to their environmental credentials can also be understood as a reaction to societal demands. Essentially, in today's risk society (Beck, 2009), concerned citizens and consumers have become increasingly wary of environmental issues and aware of the need for sustainability (Inglehart, 1997; Miles & Frewer, 2003; Roper, 2012), calling for precautionary measures to be taken "against potential and already evident environmental and social consequences of modern technology" (Roper, 2012, p. 15). As Anholt (2010b, p. 70) stresses, "more and more people in more and more countries feel unable to admire or respect countries or governments that pollute the planet, practise or permit corruption, trample human rights or flout the rule of law." In this context of global environmental expectations, green place branding transcends into politics and public diplomacy, with countries attempting to win the hearts and minds of the international community (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011).

Especially for small countries, creating a profile that makes them stand out from the crowd, such as by demonstrating environmental leadership, has become

indispensable to survive in the global market place (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). As Anholt (2010a) noted, competition is now based on "cultural, environmental, imaginative and human qualities rather than on raw power" (p. 37). What is more, green place branding goes beyond the potential of sustainability as a powerful differentiator (Dinnie, 2011) in that it can also facilitate and encourage those living within a place to commit to sustainability (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Westgate, 2009).

However, branding a product or place as "green" can be risky. If vague or loosely defined, such branding is prone to accusations of *greenwash* (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Insch, 2011), namely environmental claims made to suggest environmental responsibility which are not backed up with evidence. As Insch (2011) observes, destination marketers in particular tend to draw heavily on natural attractions, thereby running the risk of overstretching their eco-credentials. Hence, "in the complex context of growing concerns about environmental degradation, especially climate change," without integrity green place branding is a high-risk strategy (Roper, 2010, p. 1).

3.5.2 Brand integrity and authenticity

Because brands are as much an open invitation to complain as they are a promise to deliver (Anholt, 2003), the success of a place brand stands and falls with its perceived *integrity*, that is, the public sentiment of a brand's proven and trusted ability to fulfil its brand promise (Campelo et al., 2011; Humlen, 2012). Active collaboration among key actors, such as the business sector and national, regional and local governments, is thus needed to leverage from a green place brand (Fan, 2005; Giannopoulos et al., 2011; Roper, 2010). As brand ambassadors (Aronczyk,

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2008), a country's citizens and businesses need to act in alignment with the brand. Driven by their own interests, each of those can support or detract from the ambitions of establishing and maintaining a green place brand (Insch, 2011). As Roper (2010) has demonstrated, issues arise where brand promises of environmental integrity clash with political agendas that prioritise economic growth and development. Ultimately, a green brand positioning will be successful in the long term only if the proclaimed attributes and benefits are perceived as environmentally sound (First & Khetriwal, 2008; Hartmann et al., 2005).

This is easier said than achieved, however, since place and national brands can develop "a life and meaning beyond and, to some extent, independent of that intended by their initiators" (Berthon et al., 2011, p. 45). For example, "a consumer's knowledge, experience, expectations, beliefs, values and motives…[can]…produce a meaning or an interpretation that may be quite different from the one intended by the producer of the message" (Aitken, Lawson, & Gray, 2008, p. 293). Further, because place brand images are in the public domain, they can be manipulated and exploited by "any party with an interest…to achieve its own ends" (Fan, 2005, p. 8). In other words, brand images are dynamic, unstable and influenced by factors impossible to control (Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2002; Murphy, 2010). Nevertheless, the consequences of lost brand credibility are not to be underestimated. As Moilanen and Ranisto (2009) argue, trusted place brands add to the attractiveness of a place's companies and investment opportunities, its tourism and export industries, provide its citizens a sense of identity and self-esteem, and serve public diplomacy.

In addition, just like the image and reputation of nations and places, as discussed in section 3.3, the meaning of brands can change and evolve over time (Aitken & Campelo, 2011), not least due to changes in cultural context and language (Berthon et al., 2011), or societal expectations (Roper, 2012). Branding as a reputation-building measure, then, is essentially a long-term cumulative effort (Anholt, 2007; Roper, 2010), with no guarantee for success.

Importantly, both a place brand's image (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009), and whether "the place stands for norms and values that the audience admires" (Sevin, 2011, p. 161) determine its success. As Anholt (2010c) stresses, people's trust and respect of a brand have to be earned by action, not words. Not only do promotional promises need to be fulfilled (Campelo et al., 2011), in order to achieve credibility and demonstrate integrity, but destinations should also be marketed and branded in a way consistent with the larger place, such as the country of which they form a part (Campelo et al., 2011).

Because people "live, work, and trade almost exclusively among clouds of trust" (Anholt, 2010a, p. 23) and due to the growing distance between buyer and seller, consumers increasingly rely on the credibility and integrity of a brand promise (Anholt, 2010a; Delmas & Burbano, 2011). As Ballantyne and Aitken (2007, p. 366) argue, "if the gap between the projected image and the reality of the customer experience widens, customers smell hypocrisy."

Brand authenticity is also crucial for the credibility and integrity of a place brand, as only if local communities identify with it will they be committed to support it

(Aitken & Campelo, 2011). Two important factors in people's judgement of authenticity are: 1) whether a brand is true to its heritage in the sense that it is connected to time, place and culture; and 2) whether a brand lives up to its espoused values and commitments (Beverland, 2011; Napoli, Dickinson, Beverland, & Farrelly, 2013). Ensuring authenticity requires "managing the tension between commercial imperatives and the espoused values of the brand" (Beverland, 2011, p. 288). Most importantly, authentic brand stories need to be at one with the local community (Beverland, 2011).

Beverland (2011) summarises the benefits of authentic brands as follows: "First, consumers desire it. Second, research indicates authenticity increases brand equity. Consumers view authentic brands more favourably. Authentic brands have a higher status among consumers, thus resulting in greater loyalty and price premiums" (p. 269). Moreover, "authentic brands…often garner more press attention than their size merits, and therefore can increase their awareness at little expense" (Beverland, 2011, p. 271).

3.5.3 Brand legitimacy

Having illustrated the importance of integrity and authenticity in the green branding context, brand *legitimacy* is a concept particularly important with regard to national branding due to its potential impact on national identity. Particularly, as discrepancies between a projected or intended identity and its reception occur, identity itself becomes an issue to be managed (Christensen & Cheney, 1994). Sethi (1979, p. 65) used the term *legitimacy gap* to theorise the discrepancies that can occur between public perceptions of what an organisation [or, in this case, a nation] is doing and what is expected of it.

Understood as "social acceptance resulting from adherence to regulative, normative and cognitive expectations" (Deephouse & Carter, 2005, p. 353), legitimacy entails moral norms and values (Suchman, 1995). While legitimacy differs from reputation in that the latter usually refers to "comparisons among organisations [or countries] on various attributes" (Deephouse & Carter, 2005, p. 353), both "result from similar social construction processes" (Deephouse & Carter, 2005, p. 330; see also Fombrun & Shanley, 1990).

Further, as Cheney and Christensen (2001) have shown, an organisation's legitimacy depends at least as much upon the views of its internal publics as those of its external ones. When applied to a county or nation, the internal publics are all those organisations, as well as individuals, whose collective efforts and agreement are required to manage a cohesive national identity (Anholt, 2007). In order to avoid a legitimacy gap (Sethi, 1979), and to prove its credibility, a place brand thus has to be realistic and accurate (Hart & Stachow, 2010). Political and business leadership play an essential role in this regard.

3.5.4 The role of political and business leadership

First and foremost, it has been suggested that a place brand's espoused values need to be reflected not only in political leadership (Allan, 2011), but also in the attitudes and behaviour of key companies (Dinnie, 2008). As Allan (2011) has noted, how "leadership is practiced says a lot about the way the place is governed, its values, and…how it wants to be seen by the rest of the world" (p. 88). In addition, the actions and declarations of a country's political and corporate leaders "can attract or repel people, institutions, companies, investors, and tourists" (Allan, 2011, p. 82).

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With regard to the role of a country's government as key influencers of the perceived credibility, integrity and thus legitimacy of a national brand, Roper (2012) stresses that amidst increasing perceptions of environmental and social risk, "governments are required to rethink their core priorities and be seen to be acting in the 'public interest'" (p. 5). Roper further notes:

> Regardless of the fact that business and governments may or may not see a need for change, be it from an environmental, moral or economic perspective, the sub-political (Beck, 1997) uprising of society in response to risk can present an ultimatum: change or suffer a fundamental loss of trust, reputation and legitimacy. (2012, p. 3)

A very similar scenario is presented to business organisations which, according to Bonini, Hintz and Mendonca (2008, p. 1) "must act on global warming and other issues to narrow a general trust gap between them and the public."

However, achieving the concerted action necessary to leverage off a green place brand can be difficult due to the diverging interests of a multitude of stakeholders and players, such as business, communities, government, each of which might support or detract from the ambitions of a green place brand (Insch, 2011). The situation is further complicated by the fact that "business and governments face issues that stem from complex discursive struggles both within their own sectors and across other sectors, both nationally and internationally" (Roper, 2012, p. 4). According to a report by UK-based research consultancy AccountAbility (2007; see also Roper, 2012), businesses and governments find themselves in a paradoxical situation: while governments fear loss of national competitiveness and electoral support if they were to impose costs or lifestyle changes, businesses

eager to develop and market "climate friendly" products and services, are constrained by the lack of clear regulations and emissions pricing. Roper (2012) makes out neoliberal ideology as one culprit, since it opposes government interference in business practice. However, she also suggests that, while the neoliberal view is still dominant in countries such as New Zealand, "it is being challenged both here and elsewhere…[in] the form of business imperatives, as well as moral arguments" (p. 15):

> Climate change, along with the other major environmental (and social) problems of the world, is a global issue. It is no longer feasible for nation states to act independently of international opinion. This is especially so for countries such as New Zealand that rely on access to global markets. (Roper, 2012, p. 15)

In sum, the literature discussed in this section illustrates that place brands have to be realistic and accurate in order to be successful (Hart & Stachow, 2010), even more so where claims of environmental sustainability or other green credentials are made. A holistic approach rather than words alone is needed to create and sustain a positive reputation and trusted place brand (Anholt, 2010a). A viable place brand requires clear leadership (Allan, 2011), the incorporation of tourism, economic development, and a sense of place (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011), and the reflection of the espoused values in the attitudes and behaviour of key companies (Dinnie, 2008). Apart from actions and discourse emanating from a place's internal publics, such as leading politicians and businesses, media representations form an essential part of a place's perceived credibility and legitimacy (Mutch & Aitken, 2009).

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3.6 Media Representations of Place Image and National Reputation

Media representations play a crucial role in the place image context, since perceptions of places, including countries or tourist destinations, are influenced by the ways in which they are represented by the media (Boisen et al., 2011). While images are constructed and communicated through multiple channels, including direct experience, word-of-mouth and audio-visual media (Hudson & Brent-Ritchie, 2006), the mass media are one of the main means by which information is disseminated (Anholt, 2010a). As Hall (2002, pp. 458-459) puts it, the media play "a major part in informing consumers' images of destinations…either directly in terms of being read, heard or watched, or indirectly through the advice given by friends, relatives and other sources." In addition, Gilpin (2010) has noted that media representations are essential with regard to organisational reputation.

Remote places, in particular, depend on media coverage to become known to the outside world (Avraham, 2000; Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Choi, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Dinnie, 2008; Kotler & Gertner, 2011). What is more, the media's portrayal of distant places is mostly accepted as their "true" nature by those not living there (Adoni & Mane, 1984; Avraham, 2000; Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Burgess & Gold, 1985; Gold, 1980; Pocock & Hudson, 1978; Relph, 1976). In this regard, the media also function as a primary source for stereotypes and images associated with distant places (Dahlgren & Chakrapani, 1982; Gold, 1994). Media reporting can also turn remotely located places into areas of possible concern for people living thousands of kilometres away (Chouliaraki, 2006; Cottle, 2009a, 2009b). Yet, the ability of places to become known through

the media is limited by the tendency of the media in many countries to exclude peripheral regions (Avraham, 2003; Lahav & Avraham, 2008).

Regarding the amount and nature of media coverage of places, Avraham and Ketter (2008, p. 30; see also Avraham, 2000) – drawing on Manheim and Albritton (1984) – have proposed that places either 1) receive much negative coverage, 2) are not covered by the media except in a negative context, usually related to crime, social problems, natural disasters, etc., 3) receive much positive coverage, such as cultural events, tourist activity, or investments, or 4) are largely ignored by the media but when noticed are covered in a primarily positive light.

Carroll and McCombs (2003) offer some guiding principles that help understand the influence of news coverage on (corporate) reputation: 1) the greater the amount of coverage, the greater public awareness, 2) attributes emphasised in media coverage become attributes the public uses to define a firm; and 3) the valence of news coverage, positive or negative, is reflected in corresponding public perceptions about those attributes. Although those principles were developed with business organisations in mind, they can be considered equally valid for understanding the significance of media reputation for place or national brands. In both situations, brand managers are, at the best, outsiders listening in, if not completely disconnected from such conversations (Humlen, 2012).

Furthermore, the reputation an organisation or place enjoys in the media develops over time through a complex social process (Deephouse, 2000, p. 1098). It is subject to socio-political influences (Avraham & Ketter, 2008), constantly

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challenged and evolving (Murphy, 2010). Controlling the reputation granted to a place by the media is difficult, if not impossible (Murphy, 2010), because "places cannot control the socio-political context, the editorial decisions or most of their characteristics" (Avraham & Ketter, 2008, p. 42). Hence, isolated negatives in media coverage should not be dismissed as irrelevant, as "these dissonances may signal nascent patterns that, when they become obvious, may have assumed an immoveable logic of their own" (Murphy, 2010, p. 233). What is more, in today's media-savvy world, even the slightest mishap that could damage the reputation of a place matters as when kept alive on myriad of electronic sites it is likely to endure over decades to come (Masters, 2010). Yet, very little is known about how news representations of national environmental performance influence a country's reputation and its place brand image. A summary of the theoretical framework used to address this gap in knowledge is provided as follows.

3.7 Summary of Theoretical Framework

As this and the previous chapter have shown, the theoretical framework for this thesis draws on a variety of theoretical perspectives, including media theory and discourse theory (as presented in chapter two), and theoretical perspectives of place perception, national reputation and brand identity (as illustrated in this chapter). While the importance of a favourable national (brand) image and reputation, both from a moral, or normative, and an economic perspective has been sufficiently established by Anholt (2010a, 2010b), among others, there seems to be a considerable knowledge gap regarding the question to what extent and how international news media cover a country's environmental performance, particularly in relation to its place brand image. There is little theorisation in literature on the role and potential implications of news media representations in

the discursive construction of national reputation and place brand image, for example, to what extent they support, maintain, or challenge a country's brand credibility. In addition, while a range of studies have looked at the influencing factors and drivers of news coverage in an environmental context, such as news values, to my knowledge those have not yet been discussed in a context similar to the present study, concerned not only with the question how a country's brand positioning is covered in a specific way, but also why and with what consequences. Also unexplored is the question whether, how and why media coverage of a specific country's environmental performance and its branding differs across countries and changes over time. Addressing this knowledge gap through analysis of international news coverage over a period of time seems essential considering the significant material and immaterial benefits and risks associated with the degree to which a brand is considered favourably and credible.

This is even more relevant in the case of intangible, complex and frequently contested "green" place or destination brands. As indicated in chapter one, New Zealand presents a particularly interesting case due to its remote location and economic dependence on a favourable reputation and brand credibility overseas, as outlined in chapter five. In order to determine the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of *clean, green* NZ, both the discursive context and its representations in international print media formed part of the study presented in this thesis.

With regard to the analysis of news articles, this study draws on Carroll (2011a), Avraham (2000) and Manheim and Albritton (1984), by focusing on:

1) *Quantity* (amount of coverage a place receives in the news media), indicating *public prominence*, attention and importance given to a country's environmental performance, and

2) *Valence* (nature of coverage, particularly whether it is favourable or unfavourable), serving as indicator for *public esteem*, namely the degree to which the public likes, trusts, admires, and respects the country.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual approach developed for this study of news representations and discursive constructions of national environmental reputation and place brand image.
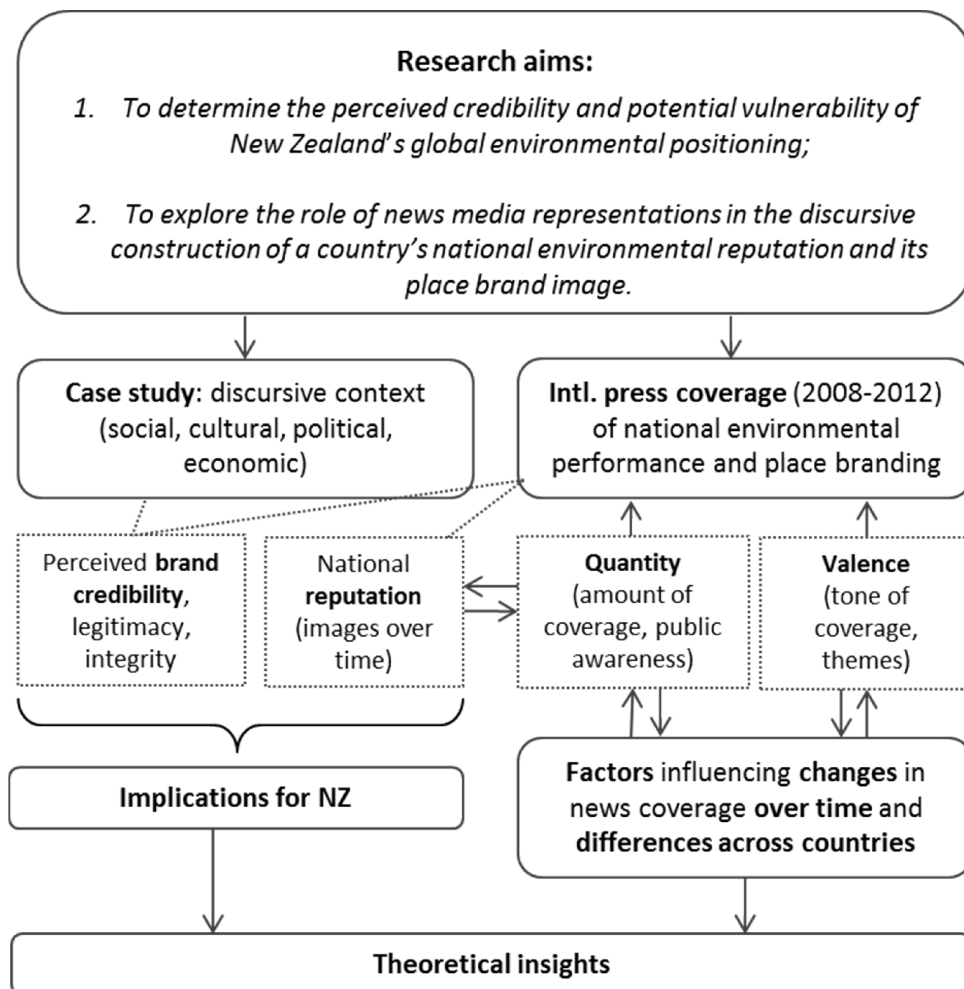
Figure 1. Conceptual framework at a glance

The time factor expressed in the definition of reputation as the sum of images over time (Passow et al., 2005) is addressed by extending analysis of news coverage over a five-year period (2008-2012, see chapter four for details). Moreover, analysis of news coverage was extended across three different countries in order to determine, on the basis of the factors identified in section 2.3, to what extent and why international news coverage of national environmental performance and place branding differs across countries and changes over time.

Because national brands are not only about promoting a specific image to the outside world but also nurture the imagined community that the nation is part of, analysis of international news coverage needs to go hand in hand with analysis of discourse and perceptions from within the country concerned. In other words, systematic analysis of media articles needs to be linked to a broader study of the specific case and the discourses surrounding it. Only through the broader social and cultural context is it possible to make out the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of a country's national brand positioning. The methodology and methods used to answer the research questions and to address the knowledge gap described in this section are presented in chapter four, as follows.

Chapter 4

Methodology and Method

Following the review of existing literature and the outline of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study, this chapter presents the methodology and methods used to examine international press coverage of New Zealand's environmental performance and branding as a way to determine the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of its *clean, green* and *100% Pure* positioning. First, I introduce the qualitative, mild social constructionist research paradigm which informed this study (sections 4.1 and 4.2). This is followed by a review of methodological literature on discourse analysis, qualitative content analysis and software-assisted qualitative data analysis. Section 4.6 describes the case study and review of secondary data conducted to establish the historical and discursive context for this investigation. Next, section 4.7 presents the methods used for the collection and analysis of media texts, including an outline of the data collection criteria and the various steps involved in the software-assisted approach to the analysis of news articles. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the study limitations and the measures undertaken to make the analysis process as transparent and the research results as trustworthy as possible.

4.1 Qualitative Research

This study operates from within a qualitative research paradigm. While a watertight distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is difficult to maintain in practice (Gold & Revill, 2004), the two paradigms differ in their analytical approaches. In simplified terms, *quantitative* researchers focus on the search for empirical evidence in quantifiable form, using methodologies with a

mathematical and statistical basis (Gold & Revill, 2004). Essentially, in quantitative research "information is analysed statistically in line with general principles of statistical analysis, such as testing for validity and representativeness" (Gold & Revill, 2004, p. 24).

Qualitative research methodologies, on the other hand, are characterised by an intensive (in-depth, small-scale, explanatory) approach, where the formulation of the research method is largely dependent on the context and the research questions asked (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). A useful description of the rationale behind using qualitative methods is provided by Bazeley (2007), according to whom they are applied "where a detailed understanding of a process or experience is wanted, where more information is needed to determine the exact nature of the issue being investigated, or where the only information available is in non-numeric (e.g., text or visual) form" (p. 2). Rather than statistical representativeness, the aim pursued in qualitative research is "to gain greater depth of understanding of particular aspects of social, cultural or mental life" (Gold & Revill, 2004, p. 24). All in all, both the overall aim, objectives and research questions presented in chapter one, and the social constructionist paradigm that informed this study clearly position it within the broad field of qualitative research.

4.2 (Mild) Social Constructionism

Further to its qualitative nature, the study presented in this thesis is informed by social constructionism,[10] a theory of knowledge concerned with understanding how social realities are constructed (Louw, 2010) and, in the context of discourse

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[10] Social constructionism is also referred to as social constructivism, constructivism or constructionism. There does not seem to exist a clear rationale for choosing one term or the other (Burningham & Cooper, 1999).

studies, the role discourse plays in this construction process (Fairclough, 2006). Social constructionists seek to understand "the ways in which issues, problems, claims, and definitions emerge through social processes of communication, enter into and are elaborated in public arenas (notably the mass media)" (Hansen, 2010, p. 187). In other words, social constructionist studies are concerned with how people assign meaning to their world (Best, 1987). They also share the view that an entirely neutral, or objective, perspective on the world does not exist, as different people come from different backgrounds and therefore see the world in different ways (Kincheloe, 2005; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). In this section I give a brief summary of the different approaches within social constructionism and why mild constructionism was chosen as the epistemology best suited for an examination of news representations and the discursive construction of national environmental reputation and place brand image.

Particularly popular in the humanities and social sciences (Sismondo, 1993; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), social constructionism functions as an umbrella term for a wide range of different approaches (Burningham & Cooper, 1999). In fact, as Sismondo (1993) maintains, "it is sometimes unclear exactly what it is claimed is constructed, and how these approaches sit vis-à-vis sociological and philosophical alternatives" (p. 516). According to Sismondo (1993), the basic ideas behind social constructions have been around at least since Marx and possibly much earlier, although Berger and Luckmann (1966) first introduced the term in its current use. According to Hattingh-Smith (2005, p. 343), social constructionists, generally, accept that:

- all ways of understanding are products of culture and history, and dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in a culture at a particular time;

- our currently accepted ways of understanding the world are products not of the objective observation of the world, but of the social processes and interactions in which people are constantly engaged with each other; and

- these "negotiated" understandings can take a variety of different forms, and we can therefore talk of numerous possible "social constructions" of the world.

Apart from those common assumptions, perceptions taken in social constructionist studies can differ considerably, ranging from "radical" and "strict" to "contextual" and "mild", each approach with its specific assumptions. As Burningham and Cooper (1999) stressed, it is therefore crucial for those operating in the broad field of social constructionism to be explicit about their own normative stance and the way in which this influences their research. In the following paragraphs I briefly characterise each of the four main streams within social constructionism, paying special attention to mild social constructionism, and how it has informed the present study.

From a *radical* constructionist perspective everything, including material objects, such as stones or trees, is essentially a social construction because every person perceives and interprets it differently (Sismondo, 1993). Radical constructionism asserts that "there is nothing outside discourse but more discourse; all reality, natural and social alike, is discursively contingent and fabricated" (Reed, 2000, p. 525). *Contextual* constructionists, on the other hand, "maintain a distinction

between what participants believe or claim about social conditions and what is 'in fact' known about the conditions" (Burningham & Cooper, 1999, p. 304). *Strict* constructionists "avoid making any assumptions about 'the reality' of conditions and focus entirely on the claims made about them" (Burningham & Cooper, 1999, p. 304). In other words, they are "not interested in assessing or judging the truth, accuracy, credibility or reasonableness of what members say and do" (Schneider & Kitsuse, 1989, p. xii).

Mild constructionism, the approach followed in this thesis, differs from the other perspectives insofar as it does not challenge "the independent, objective reality of nature" (Burningham & Cooper, 1999, p. 300). Instead, it draws a distinction between the material and the social "roughly along the line of meaningfulness: social objects must be meaningful, whereas material objects are only meaningful when they are incorporated into the social" (Sismondo, 1993, p. 524). According to Burningham and Cooper (1999; see also Sismondo, 1993), mild constructionism is the approach most commonly used in applied research following the social constructionist paradigm, including studies dealing with discourse and representations of environmental issues. In fact, social constructionism is well suited to address questions such as "how and why different global crises [such as environmental issues] receive different amounts of attention in the world's news media and with what impacts and consequences" (Cottle, 2006, pp. 193-194).

Moreover, rather than focusing on news balance, accuracy or objectivity as objects of investigation, social constructionism as applied in this thesis

emphasises "the way in which issues, problems, claims, and definitions emerge through social processes of communication, enter into and are elaborated in public arenas (notably the mass media), provoke and are met with counter-claims/counter-rhetoric, etc." (Cottle, 2006, p. 187).

Constructionists are sometimes criticised for failing to provide solutions for "real" problems and for refusing to contribute to practical or political aims by denying the "reality" and independent existence of nature and environmental problems (Burningham & Cooper, 1999). Others have taken offence at the overt focus in social constructionism on language, arguing that there is more to social reality than what is articulated through the language of individuals and that system factors, among others, need to be taken into account to fully understand and explain the social world (Bergin, 2011). This, however, is not disputed by the moderate versions of social constructionism most frequently employed in empirical research (Burningham & Cooper, 1999). Mild constructionism in particular acknowledges that, while discourses might well determine "how we operate in the world as human agents" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 122), other factors can play a role. As Sumares and Fidéélis (2011, p. 61) noted, discourses are "but one element of social life, along with the material world with its objects and instruments, the people that inhabit it with their histories and beliefs, their social relations, and the action and interaction that occurs in social life."

Taking this into account, Dickens (1996) has noted that the sometimes pronounced dichotomy between constructionism and realism is misleading. After all, both accept that "all knowledge must in some sense be a social construction.

No knowledge has fallen out of the sky with a label attached pronouncing 'absolute truth'" (Dickens, 1996, p. 71). Moreover, especially in its moderate forms "constructivism is often fully compatible with either empiricism or realism, and thus...needs no specific defence in a field where these are its competitors" (Sismondo, 1993, p. 516). As Barkin (2003, p. 325) has noted, "realists who claim their paradigm is incompatible with constructivism focus for the most part not on the methodology per se, but on a perceived tendency for constructivists to be idealists or utopians." This suggests that not social constructionism as a whole is refuted, but its extreme, radical variations (Benton, 1994; see also Burningham & Cooper, 1999).

Another criticism aimed at strict constructionism addresses relativity, that is the contention that all claims of "truth" are equally valid and as such do not justify political engagement or criticism (as discussed, for example, by Benton & Short, 1999; Burningham & Cooper, 1999). As Riedy (2007) notes, in extreme forms, social constructionism can be "used to argue that every perspective is equally valid, posing problems for policy makers seeking to take practical action without marginalising different perspectives…[and compromising] the practical demands of policy, decision-making and daily life (p. 316). Considering ample literature on the prominent role of the media in the discursive construction of social reality, as discussed at length in chapter two, such criticism of the strict constructionist perspective seems warranted. In fact, because its focus is on how *social* reality is socially constructed, mild constructionism as a research paradigm is relatively uncontroversial (Burningham & Cooper, 1999). In other words, the argumentation adopted in this thesis is that, whereas the *meaning* of something is essentially

constituted through discourse, it can still have a material existence. In this light, issues such as NZ's environmental performance are essentially a rhetorical, discursive achievement in that they "become 'social' problems when someone draws public attention to them" (Hansen, 2010, p. 16).

Moreover, the mild constructionist approach adopted here is compatible with the argumentation put forward in section 2.1 (chapter two) that discourses can have both discursive and non-discursive, material effects (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Fairclough, 2006; Roper, 2012; Saarinen, 2004). As the review of academic literature in the previous chapters showed, the constitutive role of discourse is both apparent in news coverage of environmental issues and the discursive representations of a country's environmental performance and reputation, and the credibility of its place brand.

4.3 Discourse Analysis

Concurrent with the view that language constitutes a central element in social life, discourse analysis (DA) presents a particularly useful method to study text in its broader historical and structural context (Danaher et al., 2000; Fairclough, 1995; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Pritchard & Morgan, 2005; Richardson, 2007). Used to explore how particular phenomena are represented, and to unveil the consequences, effects, or functions of discourses (van Dijk, 1988), DA works well with social constructionist studies aimed at exploring the role and functioning of the media in discursive construction processes (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

DA in its various forms has been applied extensively for explorations of news coverage of environmental issues (Benton & Short, 1999; Dryzek, 1997; Riedy,

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2007), and has also been used in research on national images and identity (for example, Alameda-Hernandez, 2006; Huijser, 2009). According to van Dijk (1988), interest in the analysis of discourse reaches back as far as the times of Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC) and his teachings of rhetoric. More recently, DA has become increasingly popular as a method in qualitative research, not least due to the now widespread realisation that discourses not only reflect but also shape social reality (Howarth, 2000; Jäger & Maier, 2009; Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005; Saarinen, 2004). Consequently, language is considered an important facet of social life and "a significant…aspect of all the major issues in social scientific research – economic systems, social relations, power and ideology, institutions, social change, social identity and so on" (Fairclough, 2006, p. 9).

DA is useful for examinations of "how language, broadly defined, constructs social phenomena" (Phillips & Di Domenico, 2009, p. 551), and how meanings and social reality are discursively constructed, maintained, and experienced by people (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; see also Moufahim et al., 2007). Discourse analysts approach this task by examining texts in their broader historical and structural context (Pritchard & Morgan, 2005). In fact, accounting for the context of discourses, or texts, is crucial from a perspective that discourses both shape and are shaped by context (Fairclough, 1992; Grant, Harvey, Oswick, & Putnam, 2004; van Dijk, 1988, 1997).

It has to be noted, however, that discourse analysis is hardly a homogenous approach (Bazeley, 2007; Schönfelder, 2011), but describes the analysis of texts

in a broad sense, including written texts, spoken interaction, multimedia texts of television and the Internet (Fairclough, 2005). Essentially, DA has to be adapted to the specific requirements of the research at hand (Howarth, 2000).

The rationale for using DA in this study, apart from its emphasis on the *historical context* of media texts, was because it allows the qualitative researcher to focus on the *consequences*, *effects*, or *functions* of discourses (van Dijk, 1988). As Fairclough (1992, 1995) and Fairclough and Wodak (1997) have stressed, discourse is best analysed within its social and political context. Having said that, rather than pursuing the radical social agenda sometimes associated with critical approaches to DA (Jones, 2007), it was applied in this study to understand how social reality comes to be constituted in human interactions and in language, including written text (Gergen, 1985), and – consistent with the mild constructionist agenda – to explore the material and immaterial implications of discursive constructions.

For the research at hand, analysis of secondary data (NZ case study, see chapter five) was conducted to understand the historical, social and institutional context as one facet of the discourse analysis. I further paid close attention to media theory - particularly the factors influencing news coverage of environmental issues - in order to understand the institutional context of these news texts. Together, they provided the necessary context for the discourse analysis as methodology, and informed the qualitative content analysis of international press coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions, and its place branding, as described further below.

4.4 Qualitative Content Analysis

Following the presentation of discourse analysis as employed for this study, this section introduces qualitative content analysis as the method used to determine the amount and nature of international press coverage of New Zealand's environmental performance and branding. Unlike classical content analysis with its long history as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952, p. 18), qualitative content analysis (QCA) considers context "central to the interpretation and analysis of the material" (Kohlbacher, 2006, para. 80), which makes it particularly suitable for a discourse analysis of the type described here.

QCA moves away from the focus on objectivity as maintained by traditional quantitative content analysis (Berelson, 1952; Bryman, 2012; Holsti, 1969), in an attempt to allow for "the subjective interpretation of the content of text data" while maintaining "the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Moreover, QCA keeps transparency as a key advantage of classical CA intact (Bryman, 2012) in its attempt to synthesise two contradictory methodological principles: openness and theory-guided investigation (Gläser & Laudel, 1999).

In other words, QCA seeks "to preserve the advantages of quantitative content analysis as developed within communication science and to transfer and further develop them to qualitative-interpretative steps of analysis" (Mayring, 2000, para. 2). It therefore allows "empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and

step-by-step models, without rash quantification" (Mayring, 2000, para. 5). One key advantage of such an approach is that quantitative aspects, such as word frequency analysis, can be integrated in qualitative analytical approaches (Mayring, 2000), for example to examine with what frequency particular statements occur, as a way to identify trends (Jäger & Maier, 2009). Section 4.7.2 exemplifies how tools provided by QDAS, such as NVivo, can be employed to incorporate quantitative elements in a qualitative research design.

Overall, software-assisted QCA was chosen primarily for analytical flexibility, such as the ability to combine quantitative and qualitative elements, and to "zoom in and out of data." The focus of QCA on the *context* of texts as an essential part of the analysis (Mayring, 2000; Kohlbacher, 2006) made it a useful method for the discursive analysis of news texts presented in this study.

4.5 Software-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis

As noted in the introductory chapter, one objective of this thesis not directly linked to the research questions is to make a contribution to existing methodological literature on software-assisted qualitative data analysis[11] by exemplifying how software packages, such as NVivo, can be used for a qualitative content analysis of news articles. The rationale behind the considerable attention paid to the use of software in this chapter is to address a concern among some qualitative researchers about insufficient explanation and illustration of software use in methodology chapters and research papers, as noted below. In the following sub sections, I offer an introduction to software-assisted qualitative data analysis

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[11] Methodological literature uses both CAQDAS (software/computer-assisted qualitative data analysis) and QDAS (qualitative data analysis software). To avoid confusion, I only use the QDAS abbreviation in this thesis.

by means of a review of existing methodological literature, focusing on the advantages and limitations of such software use in qualitative research, and some of the key concepts and functionalities of NVivo, the software package that was used for this study. A detailed description of the application of NVivo software for the analysis of news articles follows in section 4.7.2.

4.5.1 Advantages and limitations of software use in qualitative research

Numerous scholars have discussed the advantages and potential limitations of using qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) in academic research. Proponents hail them for faster and more efficient data management (Bazeley, 2007, 2009, 2011; Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2006; Mangabeira, Lee, & Fielding, 2004; Marshall, 2002; Richards, 2002; Ryan, 2009; Welsh, 2002), their ability to handle large volumes of data (Bergin, 2011; Bourdon, 2002; MacMillan, 2005; Roberts & Wilson, 2002) and to reduce complexity (Schönfelder, 2011). Others have stressed their ability to improve methodological rigor (Richards, 2002), consistency (Bergin, 2011) and analytical transparency (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004; Bringer et al., 2006; Cousins & McIntosh, 2005; Johnston, 2006; Ryan, 2009; Thompson, 2002; Welsh, 2002).

According to Bazeley (2007), software packages, such as NVivo, support qualitative research as a tool for managing and organising data, managing ideas, querying data, graphically modelling ideas and concepts, and reporting from the data. Through the software's searching and modelling tools, data becomes visible in ways not possible with manual methods, allowing for new insights and reflections on a project (Siccama & Penna, 2008). NVivo and other QDAS are

very well suited for qualitative research requirements, not least because they allow for changes in conceptualisation and organisation as the project develops.

Critical voices have warned that QDAS might entice the researcher to put too much trust in the tools provided, thereby potentially generating unrealistic expectations (MacMillan, 2005; MacMillan & Koenig, 2004; Mangabeira et al., 2004). For instance, MacMillan (2005) concluded that software-assisted discourse analysis "can, at best, be more time consuming than useful, and, at worst, can steer the analyst away from the task of analysis" (para. 57).

Various scholars have voiced their concern that software-assisted qualitative analysis can distance the researcher from the data and thereby hinder in-depth, interpretative analysis (Bazeley, 2007; Bourdon, 2002; Ryan, 2009). Likewise, too much closeness to data has been identified as a considerable limitation to using QDAS in qualitative research, particularly when researchers immerse themselves too much in their data and lose sight of the larger picture (Bazeley, 2007; Gilbert, 2002). As Bazeley (2007) points out, both closeness and distance are required: "closeness for familiarity and appreciation of subtle differences, but distance for abstraction and synthesis, and the ability to switch between the two" (para. 8).

Bazeley (2007) further observed that recent software development (that is, newer versions of QDAS) has made it easier to strike a balance between too much closeness, or distance respectively. According to her, closeness of data "is assisted by improved screen display, rapid access to data through documents or retrieval of coded text, identification of data in relation to source characteristics, and easy

ability to view retrieved segments of text in their original context" (Bazeley, 2007, p. 8). Distance to data, on the other hand, can be achieved through "tools for modelling ideas, for interrogating the database to generate and test theory, for summarising results…[which] take the researcher beyond description to more broadly applicable understanding" (Bazeley, 2007, p. 8). The multi-level approach to QDAS-assisted analysis of news articles presented in section 4.7.2 of this chapter demonstrates how existing software tools can be used in an analysis that requires both closeness *and* distance to data.

Furthermore, the relative ease of software-assisted coding can reduce critical reading and reflection (Bazeley, 2007), with the danger of coding becoming the method of analysis rather than a way of managing the data (MacMillan, 2005). As Bazeley (2007) observes:

> The facility for coding has led to a kind of "coding fetishism" – a tendency to code to the exclusion of other analytic and interpretive activities, which biases the way in which qualitative research is done (Richards, 2002). Historically, prior to the development of computer software for coding, much more emphasis was placed on reading and re-reading the text as a whole, on noting ideas that were generated as one was reading, on making links between passages of text, on reflecting on the text and recording those reflections in journals and memos. (p. 9)

Whereas the danger of over-coding is particularly acute with novice researchers who often do not know when to stop coding (Marshall, 2002), "getting sucked" into coding is an experience shared by many qualitative researchers, often with

the consequence that coding becomes an excuse to delay other steps of analysis (Gilbert, 2002). In this scenario, rather than serving its original purpose to facilitate analysis by making coding easier, QDAS can turn into a serious limitation by making it so difficult to stop, particularly because no matter how much time and effort one spends coding, there is always something else, something potentially useful to be found (Marshall, 2002). To fight the temptation of endless oncoding, Welsh (2002), among others, has suggested to take time off, sit back and to ask oneself if additional coding will really contribute to a better understanding of the data.

Reflecting on the study at hand, over-coding was mostly a challenge encountered when conducting the literature review using NVivo software, due to the fact that each journal article, for example, usually contained references to other potentially interesting articles or publications. With most of those articles available in digital form, I ended up importing and reading much more literature than I would have by printing and manually reading those texts, or than I could accommodate in the respective thesis chapters. With regard to the analysis of news articles, the over-coding issue was prevented by the structured top-down and bottom-up approach described in section 4.7.2.2.

Moreover, numerous authors have criticised the casual mention of QDAS use in methodology chapters, attesting the lack of detailed description of how the software has been used (for example, Johnston, 2006; Kikooma, 2010; MacMillan, 2005; MacMillan & Koenig, 2004; Thompson, 2002). Regarding this thesis, the intention has been to accommodate these concerns by granting

considerable attention in this chapter to QDAS and how the various tools provided by NVivo software were utilised. The prominent role granted to theoretical and practical considerations of software use in this chapter also responds to the suggestion that, once the decision has been made for QDAS, the chosen software has to become a fully integrated part of the very design of the research project, rather than being mentioned as "just" a convenient tool (Bourdon, 2002). Ultimately, every research endeavour will require a careful pondering of the advantages and potential limitations involved in QDAS-use, an overview of which is provided in *Table 3*.

Table 3. Advantages and Limitations of Software-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis

Advantages (Pros)	*Limitations (Cons)*
- Data management, efficiency (time, resources) - Transparency, accountability, (trustworthiness) - Rigour, consistency, research quality - (Coding) flexibility - Visualising, linking concepts - Quick search and retrievals	- Suitability/implications for qualitative research - Time and effort required to learn the software - Finding the right distance or closeness to data - Over-coding ("coding fetishism") - Technical issues

Lastly, choosing the right software package from the growing list of available options, such as MaxQDA, NVivo or dedoose, can be daunting, as each has its advantages and limitations. Particularly important for those with little knowledge of QDAS is the question whether learning support is available, such as trainings, guide books or video tutorials. In addition, technical support and the ability to learn from a sample project can be used as factors to consider in the decision

about which software to employ. In the case of NVivo used for the study presented here, such support proved well worth the investment. Clearly, those aspects should not be underestimated, as the initial effort required to learn and master the tools offered by QDAS can pose a difficult hurdle in conducting software-assisted qualitative research, as noted, for example by Bergin (2011) and Mangabeira et al. (2004).

Technical specifications – and available support! – are yet another important aspect to consider when choosing a specific software package, as they can be a serious drawback of conducting QDAS-assisted literature reviews or qualitative content analyses of the type conducted for this thesis. Computers need to have some minimum processing capacity and software can crash, in which case files can end up lost or inaccessible. Keeping the possibility of technical issues in mind is particularly crucial in the case of NVivo, which saves the whole project (including all annotations, memos and imported files) in one file. As convenient as this might be for backing up and sharing the NVivo project with colleagues or supervisors, if the file becomes corrupted, then all work undertaken within it can be lost. Frequent backups and the use of real-time synchronisation cloud storage services, such as *Dropbox*, can avert such worst-case scenarios. If they do happen, as was the case at an early stage of the present study, then the technological support included in the software licensing fee can be of great help.

All in all, it is perhaps fair to say that, albeit no magic wand through which bad analysis or sloppy data will deliver great results (Marshall, 2002; Thompson, 2002), QDAS such as NVivo provide useful tools to enhance analytical flexibility,

for example by allowing the researcher to navigate between different levels of closeness, or distance, to data, and to make the qualitative research process more transparent and trustworthy.

4.5.2 NVivo-specific terminology and tools

Having looked at the general advantages and potential limitations of QDAS and software-assisted qualitative data analysis, this section introduces the NVivo-specific terminology and tools most relevant for the software-assisted analysis of news articles illustrated further below. From the growing number of QDAS available, NVivo (versions 9 and 10) was used in this thesis as a tool to organise, query and code data. Developed by Australian company QSR International, NVivo software is both well developed and widely used (Kuş-Saillard, 2011; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). While there is no room here for a detailed description of all the tools and functionalities offered by QDAS such as NVivo – in the case of NVivo 10, the text book by Bazeley and Jackson (2013) offers a comprehensive account – a brief introduction of some key terms and functions will help understand the software-assisted qualitative content analysis conducted for this study.

First, *coding*, the act of assigning segments of text or other content to nodes, plays a prominent role in the QDAS-assisted research process. Nodes are best understood as containers or storage areas (Bazeley, 2007) that hold "references about a specific theme, place, person or other area of interest" (Bryman, 2008, p. 570). Similarly to the way folders are organised in Microsoft Windows operating systems, nodes can be structured hierarchically so that a parent node (for example,

NVivo all) can have any number of child nodes, which in turn can have more child nodes (*Screenshot 1*).

Coding can be a first step of in-depth discourse analysis or "a permeating feature throughout the analytical process" (Schönfelder, 2011, p. 9). Which approach to coding is best suited depends on the chosen methodology. For example, inductive coding, that is, starting with a detailed analysis of sources, such as news articles, and generating nodes as themes emerge, is the preferred strategy for those following a grounded theory strategy (Bazeley, 2007). Deductive coding, on the other hand, means to start with a specific set of themes, keywords or theoretical ideas in mind, and then to explore whether and how these are mentioned in the sources. In the study at hand, a combination of the two strategies was used in the coding procedure detailed further below.

Screenshot 1. Parent and child nodes in NVivo (10). On the left, the nodes are shown by their name and according to hierarchy. To the right, the "sources" column indicates the amount of sources (articles) included in the respective node, while "references" shows the number of specific references within those sources that have been coded at that node.

In NVivo, coding is done by selecting parts of text or pictures and putting them into a node, most conveniently via drag-and-drop. Coding is an integral part of most qualitative analysis and in particular of discursive studies because "data must be reduced and managed before theoretical conclusions emerge" (Marshall,

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2002, p. 56). In this regard, coding works diachronically compared to discursive grouping: while "coding breaks down and conceptualises the data at an individual language or sentence level…discourses group multiple categories together to demonstrate the more complex, higher level, or 'real world' consequences of language use" (Fleming & Vanclay, 2009, p. 5).

NVivo also offers an option to show coding stripes. Displayed in different colours and next to the text, they can be very useful to make out which parts have already been coded or at which node(s) a particular sentence or paragraph has been coded. Another strategy that I frequently used at different stages of analysis was coding-on. Essentially, this means to open a specific node (container) and to rework its content, for example if more specific distinctions are possible or necessary (reading through content coded at the node *climate change* one might discover parts related to specific countries, which can then be coded at a new sub node, for example *climate change and US*). Especially during the literature review I made heavy use of on-coding as a means to refine and clean up nodes before printing, exporting, or comparing them (framework matrix).

NVivo's main tools for analysis are *queries*, search operations that assist the researcher in finding patterns and to pursue ideas (Bazeley, 2007). Queries can be saved and re-run on different data; and results can be stored, printed or exported (Bergin, 2011; Schönfelder, 2011). For example, text search queries allow searching for a specific word or combination of words, while word frequency queries generate a list of the most frequent words in a particular source, folder or node, thus helping to identify the main concepts or themes utilised in the selected

files. Compound queries are a combination of any two queries and make it possible, for example, to search for specific text in or near content coded at a specific node (Bazeley, 2011; Bergin, 2011).

The following section illustrates the methods used to establish the historical, social and institutional context of international press coverage of New Zealand's environmental performance and branding, as relevant for the research questions posed in chapter one.

4.6 Establishing Historical and Discursive Context

4.6.1 Description of case study

For the present investigation, a case-based approach was used in conjunction with DA to establish the political, economic and historical context of New Zealand's environmental performance and *clean, green* image. Case studies are frequently used across the social sciences for in-depth, intensive and detailed investigations of contemporary issues or phenomena in their context (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001; Gerring, 2007; Hartley, 2004; Kohlbacher, 2006; Patton & Appelbaum, 2003; Titscher et al., 2000; Yin, 1981, 2014). Case studies usually focus on "the dynamics present within single settings" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 534) or "a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time" (Gerring, 2007, p. 19). They offer "the opportunity for a holistic view of a process" (Patton & Appelbaum, 2003, p. 63), and are particularly useful for answering *how* and *why* questions (Carson et al., 2001; Fitzgerald & Dopson, 2009; Hartley, 2004; Titscher et al., 2000), such as the ones guiding this thesis.

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Academic literature on case study research distinguishes between descriptive, exploratory, explanatory, interpretive and blended approaches, which are applied depending on the research questions at hand, such as whether the purpose is to describe, test theory, or to generate theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). While a purely descriptive case study suffices the purpose "to describe a phenomenon in its real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 238), exploratory case studies are often used "to identify the research questions or procedures to be used in a subsequent research study" (Yin, 2014, p. 238). Explanatory approaches to case-based research, on the other hand, set out to "explain how or why some conditions came to be (for example, how or why some sequence of events occurred or did not occur)" (Yin, 2014, p. 238). Essentially, "we will have a research question, a puzzle, a need for general understanding and feel that we may get an insight into the question by studying a particular case" (Stake, 1995, p. 3).

The case study of NZ presented in this thesis served both a descriptive and an explanatory purpose in that it sought to provide the necessary historical, socio-cultural and economic background, and aimed at illustrating and uncovering the changes and developments in discourse within the country linked to its environmental performance and the *clean, green* and *100% Pure* brand positioning. Moreover, as noted in the introductory chapter, New Zealand was selected for this investigation because few places have managed to position themselves on a global scale as favourably in an environmental context (Bowler, 2013; Oram, 2007; Tourism New Zealand, 2009; Yeoman & Mahon-Beattie, 2011), and because the country's environmental credentials have become an important factor for its largely export-driven economy, as discussed in detail in

chapter five. In addition, New Zealand as case study was intriguing due to the increasing concerns about a growing gap between NZ's environmental branding and its actual environmental performance, threatening to undermine the perceived credibility of its branding. Therefore, on the one hand NZ presented a useful case to examine the role of news media representations in the discursive construction of national reputation and place brand image. On the other hand, there is also an acute need to gain some new insights into the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of NZ's distinctive *clean, green* global environmental positioning, which has been addressed by the overall Marsden research project of which this thesis forms part.

Material used for the NZ case study consisted of secondary data, namely documents such as scholarly publications, books, websites, research and consulting reports, and news articles. These were collected in a non-probabilistic, purposeful manner (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), based on their relevance for this investigation. Google content alerts and online searches were used mostly, together with existing literature, studies and reports published by other members of the Marsden research team at the University of Waikato. Focusing analysis on documents had the advantage that those could be accessed at a location and time convenient to the researcher. Moreover, because documents are not usually created specifically for the purposes of social research – unlike surveys or interviews, for example – "the possibility of a reactive effect can be largely discounted as a limitation on the validity of data" (Bryman, 2008, p. 515).

4.6.2 Analysis of secondary data

Review of secondary data – the case study – was conducted to understand the NZ social and institutional context as one facet of the discourse analysis, as mentioned above. NVivo software was used both for the review of academic literature leading to the theoretical and conceptual framework presented in chapters two and three, and for the review of secondary data as part of the discourse analysis. QDAS such as NVivo is very useful for conducting literature reviews because the process of reading, reflecting and making comments, for instance, is very similar to qualitative analysis of primary data. Arguably the biggest advantage of conducting a literature review with the assistance of tools provided by NVivo and similar software is that everything can be stored in one place, and that this is a great way to learn the software.[12]

4.7 Collection and Analysis of Media Texts

4.7.1 Data collection

The textual corpus used to explore international media representations of NZ's environmental performance and positioning consisted of articles published in some of the leading newspapers in their respective country, namely Australia, the UK and the US. Chapters two and three explored at length the importance of mass media discourse for people's perceptions in an environmental and place branding context. This section provides additional details on the reasons for the focus on coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions, the choice of newspapers, and the time period to which the study was limited.

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[12] For a detailed discussion and illustration of QDAS-assisted literature reviews, see Beekhuyzen (2008), diGregorio (2000) and Lavery (2012).

4.7.1.1 Rationale for search terms

The focus on carbon emissions as a proxy for NZ's environmental performance reflects the fact that, as a cause of climate change, the issue of carbon emissions had gained considerable political and economic weight in the years prior to and during the analysis period. Al Gore's extensive campaigning, book and documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), major scientific publications, particularly by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and events such as the 2009 Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change (COP15) had led to recognition of climate change and carbon emissions as serious environmental issues in the media (Carvalho, 2007; Cottle, 2009b; Hansen, 2011; Lester, 2010; Lester & Cottle, 2009; Monbiot, 2007; Nielsen & Schmidt Kjærgaard, 2011). Together with growing concerns about NZ's comparatively high carbon emissions from within the country, as will be discussed in chapter five, carbon emissions were the issue deemed most likely to be picked up by international media with regard to the country's environmental performance, but also in connection with respect to potential scrutinising of the country's *clean, green* and *100% Pure* branding.

4.7.1.2 Rationale for focus on the quality press

The main broadsheet quality newspapers (see *Table 4* below) of each of the three countries included in this study were chosen for the examination of media representations of NZ's environmental performance and place branding because the news media,[13] and newspapers in particular, stand out as the most trusted source of information (Bird, 2010; Corbett, 2006; Fishburn-Hedges, 2007;

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[13] Which include newspapers (daily and weekly), magazines, radio, television, and the Internet (Corbett, 2006).

Newspaper Association of America, 2010). While to some extent all forms of media play a role in the representation and discursive construction of social reality, the popular media[14] tends to cater to the masses by offering entertaining stories in a tabloid manner (Louw, 2010), whereas quality media inform the elites by providing information relevant for decision making (Louw, 2010). Furthermore, "the spread and regularity of newspaper coverage make the print media a highly plausible agent in reputation formation and maintenance" (Kearns, Kearns, & Lawson, 2013, p. 593). *Table 4* provides a list of newspapers included in the analysis of coverage of NZ's national environmental performance and its place branding.

Table 4. Newspapers Included in the Analysis of Coverage of NZ's National Environmental Performance (Carbon Emissions) and its Place Branding.

Australia	UK	US
The Age *The Australian* *The Canberra Times* *The Sydney Morning Herald*	*The Daily Telegraph* *The Guardian* *Financial Times* *The Independent* *The Times*	*The New York Times* *San Francisco Chronicle* *USA Today* *The Wall Street Journal* *The Washington Post*

Note. Newspapers are listed in alphabetical order. In the US, access to coverage of the *Los Angeles Times* was restricted, and therefore replaced by the *San Francisco Chronicle* in order to have at least one US newspaper included in the study representing the country's west coast. However, neither *USA Today* nor the *San Francisco Chronicle* provided any coverage relevant for this study.

The study was limited to newspaper articles published in Australia, the UK and the US due to their economic significance for and close ties with New Zealand, as explained in more detail in the following chapter.

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[14] Such as the *Daily Mirror* or *The Sun* in the UK.

4.7.1.3 Rationale for time period

A longitudinal study was conducted in accordance with the definition of reputation as the aggregate of place images *over time* (Passow et al., 2005), centred on long-term impressions built around numerous images and actions (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). A time period (2008-2012) was chosen that reflected both the rise and establishment of carbon emissions as a key environmental issue in public debates (Good, 2008), and during which significant changes occurred regarding NZ's political environmental discourse (see chapter five), thus of particular relevance for the present study.

4.7.2 Software-assisted analysis of news articles

This section outlines the various steps involved in the software-assisted multi-level qualitative content analysis of media texts conducted to determine the amount (quantity) and nature (keywords, themes, tone) of international press coverage of NZ's environmental performance and branding.

4.7.2.1 Preparing articles for analysis

Relevant newspaper articles were downloaded from the Dow Jones Factiva[15] database, using the search string *(Zealand) and (carbon (footprint or emission*))*[16] for international press coverage of the country in connection with carbon emissions as a proxy for its environmental performance. Articles referring to the country's environmental positioning were retrieved from Factiva using the search strings *Zealand and clean green*, as well as *100 and Pure and Zealand*. The search was refined according to the specifications regarding newspapers and

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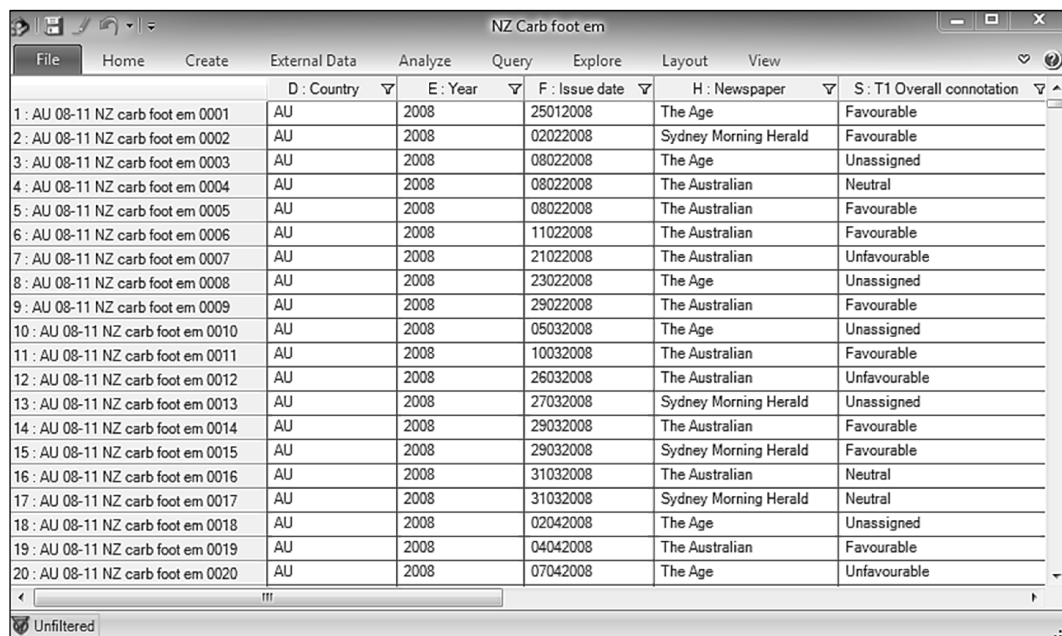
[15] See http://www.dowjones.com/factiva
[16] The asterisk (*) allows for search results to include multiple word endings, such as *emission* and *emissions*.

time period detailed above. Once downloaded as text documents, articles were checked for their relevance with regard to the research questions (excluding, for example, sports reports or obituaries), and were then imported into NVivo.

Prior to analysis, I created a source classification sheet to assign attribute values to the news articles just imported, such as country, year, newspaper, publication date, author position, and connotation linked to specific themes. In other research scenarios, attributes might be age, gender, or profession.

	D : Country	E : Year	F : Issue date	H : Newspaper	S : T1 Overall connotation
1 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0001	AU	2008	25012008	The Age	Favourable
2 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0002	AU	2008	02022008	Sydney Morning Herald	Favourable
3 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0003	AU	2008	08022008	The Age	Unassigned
4 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0004	AU	2008	08022008	The Australian	Neutral
5 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0005	AU	2008	08022008	The Australian	Favourable
6 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0006	AU	2008	11022008	The Australian	Favourable
7 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0007	AU	2008	21022008	The Australian	Unfavourable
8 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0008	AU	2008	23022008	The Age	Unassigned
9 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0009	AU	2008	29022008	The Australian	Favourable
10 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0010	AU	2008	05032008	The Age	Unassigned
11 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0011	AU	2008	10032008	The Australian	Favourable
12 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0012	AU	2008	26032008	The Australian	Unfavourable
13 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0013	AU	2008	27032008	Sydney Morning Herald	Unassigned
14 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0014	AU	2008	29032008	The Australian	Favourable
15 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0015	AU	2008	29032008	Sydney Morning Herald	Favourable
16 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0016	AU	2008	31032008	The Australian	Neutral
17 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0017	AU	2008	31032008	Sydney Morning Herald	Neutral
18 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0018	AU	2008	02042008	The Age	Unassigned
19 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0019	AU	2008	04042008	The Australian	Favourable
20 : AU 08-11 NZ carb foot em 0020	AU	2008	07042008	The Age	Unfavourable

Screenshot 2. Source classification sheet with attribute values (NVivo 10). The column on the very left represents the individual news articles, followed by columns for attributes such as country, year, issue date, newspaper, and connotation.

Software guides (for example, Bazeley, 2007, 2011; Bazeley & Jackson, 2013) and NVivo video tutorials freely available online[17] were of great help in the preparation process. Essentially, assigning attributes to documents means to catalogue specific information or characteristics (DiGregorio, 2000), which enables the search of data for patterns across specific groups or subgroups

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[17] See http://www.qsrinternational.com/support_tutorials.aspx

(Robertson, 2008), or to run detailed queries at a later stage (Bringer et al., 2006). Attributes can be added, edited or deleted throughout the analysis process as needed. Due to the comparatively large number of sources, the best way forward for the study at hand was to export the classification sheet and to fill in attribute values in an external Excel spread sheet, which I re-imported into NVivo once completed.

4.7.2.2 Multi-level coding process

A combination of inductive and deductive coding was used to determine both quantity (amount) and valence (tone and themes) of international press coverage of New Zealand's environmental performance linked to carbon emissions and its place branding respectively. This procedure varied slightly between the different search terms. The first step of the multi-level coding approach used to determine how Australian, UK and US newspapers covered *NZ* and *carbon emissions* during 2008-2012 (illustrated in *Figure 2*) was to reduce the newspaper articles to those parts relevant for the research question, namely those that contained both search terms, *Zealand* and *carbon emissions*. This was done by first conducting a text search query for *emissions* and by saving results including the surrounding paragraph at a new node. Next, I ran a text search query for *Zealand* within content saved in the newly created *emissions* node (NVivo calls this a compound query), to single out references to NZ *and* carbon emissions. Again, results were saved as a new node, *NZ emissions*, which became my *context node*. In so doing, I made sure that only the really relevant parts of the articles, that is, those that contained both search terms, were included in the analysis. The decision to proceed that way resulted from findings during preliminary analysis that comparatively few of the articles containing both terms exclusively reported on

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NZ and that in most cases references to the country were limited to one paragraph, leaving the rest of the article of little relevance for the research questions.

Having eliminated those parts of the articles not referring to and thus not relevant for this study, the next step was to establish keywords and themes within the references saved in the context node. A theme, according to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) is something that "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question." Themes can be identified when the criteria of recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness are present (Owen, 1984) and are best explored by a combination of "analysis of the frequency of codes with analysis of their meaning in context" (Wilkinson, Joffe, & Yardley, 2004, p. 54).

This was done by running a word frequency query on the context node and by creating a new node for each of the key terms that appeared in the query results, such as *emissions trading*, or *Australia*. I then ran a text search query for the respective keyword on the context node to single out and save references to each keyword, or key term, in the respective node. Once the keywords most relevant for the research question were established and text parts referring to them saved in nodes, the inductive part of coding, or bottom-up coding, consisted of opening the nodes created for each of the most frequent terms, reading their content line-by-line, and coding themes into new child nodes as they emerged. This procedure is also referred to as open coding (for example, Gibbs, 2002; Kuş-Saillard, 2011; Siccama & Penna, 2008).
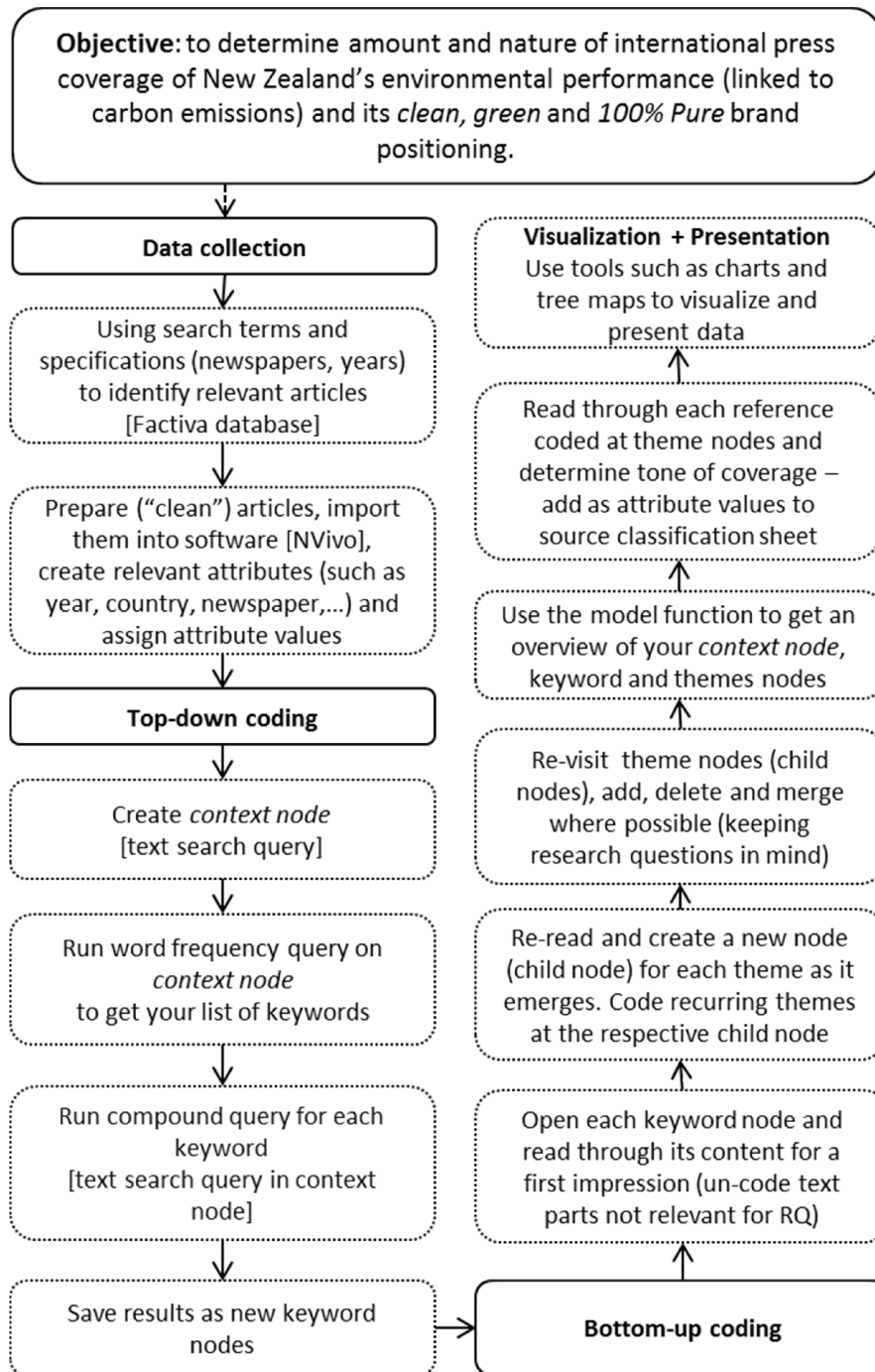
Figure 2. Software-assisted analysis of news articles

Unlike the top-down coding process presented as the first part of QDAS-assisted QCA, the second part was deliberately flexible by allowing for theme nodes to be edited, changed, and merged once coding had reached saturation point, that is, when thematic nodes became too similar and thereby were not adding anything new to the analysis.

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The procedure followed for analysis of articles covering *clean, green* and *100% Pure*, representative for NZ's global environmental positioning, differed from the one described above in that the number of articles was considerably smaller compared to mentions of NZ and carbon emissions. Again, context nodes were created by running text search queries on the articles collected for each search term to single out mentions of *Zealand* close to *100 Pure*, and *clean, green* respectively. Keywords and themes were established by reading through those context nodes, creating nodes for themes as they emerged, and by later reviewing and consolidating those nodes (open coding).

Many QDAS users have taken such a flexible, mixed approach to coding and adapted their strategies to research questions and objectives (for example, Bourdon, 2002; Hoong Sin, 2008; MacMillan, 2005; Ryan, 2009; Tapia-Mella, 2012). As Marshall (2002, p. 68) aptly put it, "like painters, cooks, or wood workers qualitative researchers during coding shift perspective, move between routine and imagination and wrestle with intractable matter to create something of value."

In order to determine whether NZ's environmental performance and its place branding were covered favourably or unfavourably overseas, one task of the analysis was to establish the connotation, or tone-of-voice. This was done by creating connotation attributes for each of the key themes established previously, then reading through each mention within the respective theme node and assigning "favourable", "neutral" or "unfavourable" as attribute value, based on the manifest wording in the article. While time-consuming, following this

procedure paid off in that it allowed the creation of graphs and visual representations not only of the change in the amount of coverage over time and differences across countries, but also the tone-of-voice as an indicator of perception changes. Lastly, coding reliability was ensured by repeated coding of the news articles, and by having coding double checked by another researcher familiar with, but not directly involved in the research project.

4.7.2.3 Visualising data

The final step of QDAS-assisted qualitative content analysis of news articles was to use some of the visualisation tools offered by NVivo, such as models, charts and tree maps, in order to detect patterns and relationships in data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). As noted earlier in the chapter, visualisation tools, such as models, help to compare, contrast and make sense of findings, rather than "just" describing them (Bazeley, 2009). They are particularly useful because emerging ideas can be investigated without interfering with the database or actual project documents (Siccama & Penna, 2008; Bazeley & Richards, 2000). In addition, because models can illustrate parts of the NVivo project and communicate key concepts or relationships to audiences (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013), they are a useful tool for demonstrating analytical transparency and trustworthiness of research findings. For the study at hand, the model function was used for example, for *Figure 11* in chapter six.

Apart from data visualisation through models, the tree map function was used to facilitate analysis of a combination of attributes, such as amount or tone of coverage by *country* and *year*. One key advantage of using tree maps and other visualisation tools is that they are linked to the data represented, allowing for fast

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and easy access. For instance, hovering over the fields within a tree map shows the number of items it represents, while a double-click opens the classification sheet with the meta-data (attribute values) previously assigned to the respective articles.

Lastly, in order to overcome the limited functionalities of NVivo visualisation tools and to counter the risk of losing work caused by software failure, tools provided by other software were utilised, such as Microsoft Excel to generate the graphs in chapter six, and Microsoft PowerPoint for the schematic illustrations of the conceptual framework (*Figure 1*) and multi-level coding process (*Figure 2*) included in the previous section.

4.8 Limitations

The study presented in this thesis is limited in several ways. With regard to the collection of secondary data to establish the historical background and context of the *clean, green* NZ case study (presented in chapter five), a key limitation is that:

> Because of intertextuality…every discourse is bound up with many others and can only be understood on the basis of others. The determination of the unit of investigation therefore depends on a subjective decision of the investigator and on the research questions that govern the investigation. (Titscher et al., 2000, p. 26)

Since one document invariably refers and responds to others (Attkinson & Coffey, 2004; Bryman, 2008), the results of secondary data analysis presented in this study are only a part of a much more complex and diverse discursive realm, rather than a complete account of perceptions within NZ regarding the country's

environmental performance or positioning. While considerable effort and time was invested to ensure a presentation of the discursive context as comprehensive as possible, there is always the possibility that other potentially interesting or relevant documents might have been overlooked, and thus excluded from the study.

Regarding the analysis of international print media representations, the main limitation was that it was limited to a specific set of newspapers, chosen in a non-probabilistic, purposeful manner. While justified by the important role of quality newspapers in discursive constructions of perceptions, as stressed earlier in this chapter, analysis of media other than quality newspapers , such as TV, radio, films or magazines, or indeed social media, would allow for a more comprehensive assessment of the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of New Zealand's *clean, green* and *100% Pure* global environmental positioning. Due to the limited scope of this project, the inclusion of other media platforms was beyond the bounds of possibility.

In addition, the focus on carbon emissions meant that coverage of other environmental issues was not addressed, some of which, for example water quality, might influence international perceptions of NZ's environmental credibility. Furthermore, despite their potential importance as a factor influencing news coverage, as discussed in chapter seven, the present study could not address to what extent lobbying and public relations influenced (non-) coverage. Nor was there room for an analysis of editorial decisions and "behind-the-scenes battles" (Anderson, 2009), which would have been beneficial for the discussion of

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journalistic norms and the "human factor" as possible reasons for (non-) coverage of NZ's environmental performance and its branding.

Equally beyond the scope of this study was an examination of media effects, that is, to what extent news coverage of NZ during 2008-2012 actually had an impact on people's perceptions, which constitutes a limitation when attempting to ask questions about reputation. Yet, such an examination would have required methodological approaches significantly different from the ones used. What I have tried to do in chapter five through the analysis of secondary data is to give some insight into perceptions within NZ regarding the country's environmental performance and positioning, in order to provide the background and context for the analysis of international press coverage. I cannot, however, make any judgement from the secondary data analysis as to how widespread those perceptions would be.

Trustworthiness of research findings can be a concern with qualitative data analysis mainly because processes of organising, coding and analysing are largely invisible for the reader, and therefore require a high amount of faith in the presented research results (Johnston, 2006; Kikooma, 2010; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Thompson, 2002). The danger of limited trustworthiness of the research process due to insufficient transparency (Bringer et al., 2004; Decrop, 1999; Kikooma, 2010; Krippendorff, 2013; Richards, 2002) was addressed in this thesis through the detailed discussion and illustration of QDAS-use presented in this chapter.

In particular, the following measures were adopted to make the research process as transparent as possible: First, NVivo software was used throughout the research, that is, for both the literature review, analysis of secondary data conducted to establish the context of the case study, and the thematic analysis of news articles. Apart from allowing me to revisit, compare and contrast literature at any time (which was particularly useful when writing and revising the various chapters), having the entire project saved in one file meant that supervisors could check on progress at any time they liked. Second, a research journal was kept for reflections on the research process and to keep track of software or coding issues. Lastly, following the suggestion by Bringer et al. (2004) and Kikooma (2010), graphical illustrations and visualisations were used throughout the thesis.

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and justified the methodological approach and the methods used for the analysis of international press coverage of NZ's environmental performance and branding, conducted to determine the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of *clean, green* NZ. together with the role and potential implications of international press coverage of a country's environmental performance and branding with regard to its reputation and brand image. The chapter started with an introduction of the qualitative, mild social constructionist research paradigm that informed the present study, followed by a review of methodological literature on discourse analysis, qualitative content analysis and software-assisted qualitative data analysis. The chapter went on to present details of the case study and the analysis of secondary data conducted to establish the historical and discursive context of this investigation. This was followed by a step-by-step outline of the NVivo-assisted analysis of media texts conducted to

determine the amount and nature of Australian, UK and US print news coverage of NZ's environmental performance and branding during 2008-2012.

Study limitations and measures undertaken to make the qualitative analysis process as transparent and the findings as trustworthy as possible were outlined in the final section. I hope that by providing such a detailed discussion and illustration of the software-assisted qualitative content analysis developed for this study, the chapter does justice to the objective of this thesis to exemplify how software tools, such as those provided by NVivo, can enhance analytical flexibility and transparency of qualitative research of the type presented in this thesis.

Chapter 5

Case Study Background and Context

This chapter presents the results from the review of secondary data conducted to establish the historical, political and economic context of NZ's environmental performance and branding. In particular, the chapter illustrates how the *clean, green* and *100% Pure* branding is discussed, contested and defended within the country, both in terms of its perceived legitimacy, and regarding NZ's actual environmental performance. Secondary data reviewed for this chapter includes government and industry reports, academic publications, press releases and transcripts of ministerial speeches, newspaper articles and other material, selected according to their relevance for the study. On a cautionary note, while considerable effort was undertaken to make sure the documents drawn on present a view that is as comprehensive as possible, taking such an approach of purposeful selection (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) inevitably bears the risk that some material might have been left out. However, the approach is justified insofar as the key purpose of the chapter is to *situate* the reader by providing the historical and political background and the context for the present study.

5.1 New Zealand's Economic Profile

New Zealand (Māori: Aotearoa – both English and Māori are official languages) is a country located south east of Australia. Its comparatively small population of 4.4 million people (similar to Ireland, Singapore or Norway) inhabits a land mass of almost 270,000 square kilometres, comparable in size to the United Kingdom.[18]

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[18] Though the UK has 63 million inhabitants (Source: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL, accessed 6 January 2014).
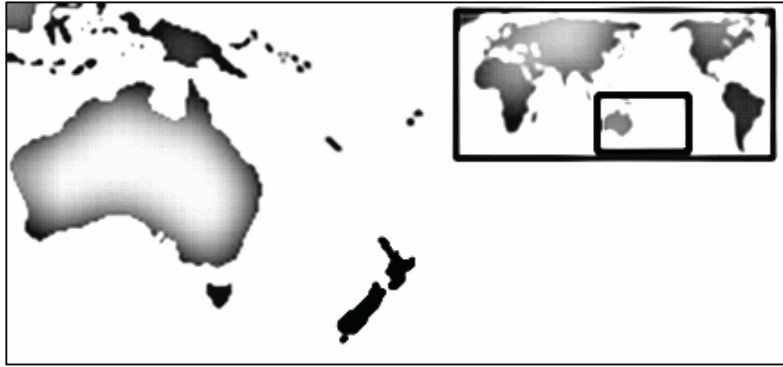
Figure 3. New Zealand's location in the world[19]

With a gross domestic product (GDP) of 208.7 billion NZ Dollars in 2012,[20] the country's market-based economy has traditionally been dominated by export of farm products, such as wool and dairy goods, and incoming tourism. Trade plays a paramount role for NZ's economy since "it provides a channel to break the constraints of its small size. New Zealand cannot rely solely on the domestic base to increase its standard of living" (Crocombe, Enright and Porter, 1991, p. 38).

The first country in the world to dedicate a government department to tourism, in 1901 (TNZ, 2009), tourism clearly plays a key role for NZ's economy. To the year ended November 2013, 2.7 million international tourists visited New Zealand, generating NZ$9.8 billion or 16.1% of New Zealand's total export earnings, with a direct contribution of 3.7% to New Zealand's GDP (NZ Ministry of Economic Development, 2013). Primary industries, agriculture and the export of primary products, constitute the other main pillar of New Zealand's economy,[21] according to the NZ Ministry for Primary Industries (2013):

> More than any other developed country, New Zealand's economy, people
>
> and environment depend on the success of our land-based

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[19] Picture credit: Wikimedia, creative commons
[20] Source: http://www.newzealandnow.govt.nz/investing-in-nz/opportunities-outlook/economic-overview (accessed 6 January 2014).
[21] Source: http://www.mpi.govt.nz/agriculture (accessed 6 June 2014).

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industries…Agriculture is how New Zealand earns a living and together with the food and forestry sectors, generates 70% of New Zealand's merchandise export earnings and around 12% of Gross Domestic Product. New Zealand is the world's largest dairy and sheep meat exporter.

As Crocombe et al. (1991, pp. 147-148) noted, "New Zealand was originally 'Britain's farm', exporting a narrow range of agricultural commodities...to Britain." Following the loss of Britain as guaranteed market for primary goods when it joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in the late 1960s (Crocombe et al., 1991), NZ intensified its exports to other countries. At the end of 2012, its principal trade partners were Australia, China, the United States, Japan and South Korea (NZ Treasury, 2012).[22]

5.2 New Zealand and Carbon Emissions

Due to the importance of incoming tourism and export of agricultural produce to NZ's economy, environmental issues such as greenhouse gas emissions as a cause of global warming are becoming a significant issue for the country's ability to compete globally. As Craig (2009) observed:

Environmental management and sustainability are crucial to New Zealand. The country promotes its environment as unique, beautiful, and comparatively pristine, and agriculture and tourism remain two dominant industries. The country's geographical isolation is also a potentially

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[22] In late 2013, China overtook Australia as NZ's principal export destination (Source: http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/industry_sectors/imports_and_exports/OverseasMerchandiseTrade_MRNov13.aspx, accessed 6 January 2014).

negative factor, because climate change prompts reorganisations of global

trade networks and tourism flows. (p. 56)

The following sections illustrate the economic relevance of the discourse surrounding carbon emissions, carbon footprint and food miles in the New Zealand context, focusing on the tourism and agriculture/food exports industries.

5.2.1 *Air miles* and the environmental impact of tourism

As the relationship between tourism and the environment is now more hotly debated than ever (Holden, 2008), it does not take much to realise how challenging the discussion about environmental impacts of travelling might become for New Zealand. Tourism in general is highly dependent on an intact environment, which makes it only a matter of time until perceived or real consequences of issues such as global warming begin to affect travel behaviour and tourist attitudes (Gössling & Hall, 2006; Simpson, Gössling, Scott, Hall, & Gladin, 2008).

According to The Icarus Foundation (2008), amidst growing evidence of an ecological collapse, travel and tourism will become a key target for both consumers and governments aiming to reduce their carbon emissions (Bertram & Terry, 2010; Mason & Alamdari, 2007; Middleton, Fyall, Morgan, & Ranchhod, 2009). Worldwide, over 800 million people travel across national boundaries every year and, by doing so, contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions (The Icarus Foundation, 2008).

Flying has been the fastest growing source of carbon dioxide emissions in the past 20 years (Oram, 2007), with an estimated annual growth of 2.7 percent (World Economic Forum, 2009). Long-haul travel and aviation have become a "symbolic threat in the dialogue on climate change" (Garside, MacGregor, & Vorley, n.d., p. 37), castigated as an "indulgence" and "sin" (The Icarus Foundation, 2008).

In the case of NZ, international air travel contributes about 10% to the country's total greenhouse gas emissions (Smith & Rodger, 2009), which is considerably higher than the world average, ranging from 3.5 to 6.8% (Schott & Pearce, 2010). This, however, might be explicable by the remote geographical location of New Zealand, practically only reachable by air, the rugged terrain and lack of alternative rapid modes of transport (trains) between its major urban centres, namely Auckland, Wellington (the capital), Christchurch and Hamilton, which in many cases makes domestic air travel the only viable travel option.

5.2.2 The *food miles* controversy

Further to the concerns around the environmental impact of tourism and the carbon emissions linked to long-haul flights (air miles), the continuing globalisation of food transport, production and consumption has led to concerns about their environmental impact, particularly greenhouse gases (mainly carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) emitted during food production, processing, distribution, and retailing phases (Ballingall & Winchester, 2008; Edwards-Jones et al., 2008; Hogan & Thorpe, 2009; Kemp, Insch, Holdsworth, & Knight, 2010). Commonly referred to as *carbon footprint*, or *food miles* (McClaren, 2010), emissions related to the transport of food have attracted considerable consumer and media attention (Chalmers, Joseph, & Smithers, 2009; MacGregor & Vorley,

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2006; Saunders, Barber, & Sorenson, 2009), and particularly in the UK (Ballingall & Winchester, 2008). Based on the premise that the further food travels, the worse its environmental impact (Kemp et al., 2010; Wynen & Vanzetti, 2008), the *food miles* concept was initially conceived for imported food that could be easily grown in the UK (Wilson, 2007), where it was used as umbrella term for a variety of issues related to the production and transportation of food (McClaren, 2010).

As Ballingall and Winchester (2008) observe, particularly in 2003 and 2004 not many days went by without some UK media coverage on *food miles*, often transmitting the same message: a 'green' consumer will opt for local, seasonal produce whenever possible, as avoiding long-distance transport helps the environment by keeping carbon emissions low (Conrad, 2005; Hogan & Thorpe, 2009). Especially in Europe (Ballingall & Winchester, 2008; Garside et al., n.d.) and North America (Ballingall & Winchester, 2010), the *food miles* movement has reached and influenced a broad audience (Shimizu & Desrochers, 2008), offering consumers a way to reduce the ecological "footprint" of their food intake (Chalmers et al., 2009; Saunders et al., 2009).

However, the debate was not always fuelled by environmental concerns, as illustrated by UK industry association, Farmers Weekly, which was found to use *food miles* as an argument to weaken NZ imports and to increase its members' market share (Barnett, 2007; Wynen & Vanzetti, 2008). In fact, it has been pointed out that the *food miles* debate was as much about the environmental impact of global food systems as it was about concerns for rural communities and the disappearance of local shops (Hawkes, 2008; Smith et al., 2005). Their

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campaign has been particularly fruitful in the UK, a country with long-standing emotional attachment to the rural sector and traditional farming lifestyle (Ballingall & Winchester, 2008).

From a scientific perspective, literature suggests that *food miles* are by no means a robust indicator of the sustainability of food products (Coley, Howard, & Winter, 2009; Hogan & Thorpe, 2009). Studies have shown that, because emissions linked to food production and storage were not accounted for, the concept is flawed (Ballingall & Winchester, 2008; Saunders & Barber, 2008; Saunders et al., 2009; Wilson, 2007). In other words, the "distance equals carbon footprint" concept entirely ignores the complexity involved in accurately measuring the full energy consumption and carbon emissions of food production and transport (Kemp et al., 2010; Pretty, Ball, Lang, & Morison, 2005; Smith et al., 2005).

Others have warned that both the *food miles* and the carbon emissions concepts ignore ethical impacts of food production (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008; Rae Chi, MacGregor, & King, 2009), as they fail to address social and economic development aspects of food trade, and might act against development goals, such as "trade not aid" (Garside, MacGregor, & Vorley, 2007; MacGregor & Vorley, 2006; Rae Chi et al., 2009). Considering its limited scientific value, what has made the *food miles* concept so popular nevertheless seems to be its functioning as a simplistic representation of a phenomena (global food markets) otherwise difficult to understand and act on (McClaren, 2010). According to Smith et al. (2005), it is this over-simplicity of the *food miles* approach that has encouraged people to engage in what has been an emotional rather than a rational, objective

discussion (Shimizu & Desrochers, 2008). Having said that, more and more consumers have now become aware of the limitations of the *food miles* approach (Lebouille, 2008), which has now been partly replaced by the more accurate *carbon footprint* concept (Coley et al., 2009; Saunders et al., 2009; Wynen & Vanzetti, 2008). Nevertheless, as Adam (2007) points out, uncertainty remains, as accurate measurements of the exact carbon footprint of a product (which would have to include indirect emissions from all related commercial activities) are difficult to obtain.

For New Zealand's export-based economy, mediated representations and consumer perceptions of issues such as *food miles* present an easy target for overseas competitors due to the country's remote location, with potentially significant implications for the country's export-based economy (Conforte, Garnevska, Kilgour, Locke, & Scrimgeour, 2008; Forbes, 2011). For example, when in 2007 UK newspaper *The Times* suggested to its readers to buy French instead of NZ wine to reduce their carbon footprint, NZ wine makers realised how serious and potentially threatening the food miles debate had become for their export-driven and geographically isolated industry (Barnett, 2007; Waye, 2008). As Roger Kerrison, project manager for The New Zealand Wine Company Ltd remarked: "All it could take…is for one *The Guardian* columnist…to write an article on how to live ethically and environmentally and it's 'Boycott New Zealand products', it's a big, big threat to New Zealand exporters" (quoted in Barnett, 2007, para. 23).[23]

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[23] Some New Zealand wine growers have responded to these concerns by obtaining independent certification under the CarboNZero™ programme for their emissions offsetting initiatives. See http://www.carbonzero.co.nz for details.

Moreover, Edlin (2009) calculated that, if European consumers were to take the food miles concept seriously and opt for local producers instead of exported goods, NZ's exports of meat and dairy products to European countries could decrease by as much as three quarters. The financial consequences would be dire indeed, considering that the UK market alone is worth over NZ$1bn of food and beverage exports (Kemp et al., 2010) and that NZ exports a large share of its agricultural produce to the UK (Saunders et al., 2009). Even if not every consumer that claims interest in local food and environmental credentials actually goes on to purchase it (Kemp et al., 2010; Weatherell, Tregear, & Allinson, 2003), the impact of access restrictions on NZ's economy could be considerable (Ballingall & Winchester, 2008).

5.3 NZ's Political Environmental Discourse

In this section I provide an overview of recent political developments relevant for this study's focus on climate change and carbon emissions in the New Zealand context, particularly discourse surrounding the signing of the Kyoto protocol and the implementation of the emissions trading scheme (ETS).

Some of the most significant events that boosted New Zealand's environmental reputation occurred during the Labour Government under Helen Clark, which was in power from December 1999 until November 2008. Informed by the *Third Way* philosophy,[24] Clark's administration parted with the neo-liberal ideology that had dominated NZ politics in the 1980s and 1990s, instead committing itself to

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[24] According to Roper (2012, p. 4), "proponents of the *Third Way* attempt to go some way towards mitigating the detrimental effects of the free market by reintroducing government provision for social and environmental protection." As political ideology, *Third Way* advocates the "precautionary approach" of ecological modernization and sustainability (Giddens, 1998, p. 55, see also Roper, 2012, p. 4).

ecological modernisation and sustainability (Roper, 2012). As Roper (2012) observes, "the first major policy manifestation of that philosophy was the 2002 ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, ahead of its major trading competitors" (p. 6).

5.3.1 Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol

In 2002, the Labour Government ratified the Kyoto Protocol, showing a sense of global commitment and responsibility (Yang, 2004), though not necessarily shared by the country's opposition parties and business sectors at the time (Roper, Collins, Lawrence, & Haar, 2010; Yang, 2004). As Roper (2012) found:

> Almost uniformly, the key discourses employed by the agricultural, fossil fuel, transport industries and the key industry associations were at odds with the government's sustainability discourse. Their arguments were embedded in economic discourse, couched in terms of competition, risk and precaution… Some expressed uncertainty about the science of climate change. Discourses of environmental sustainability were absent, as was any notion of ecological modernisation. Together these industries represent the large majority of the nation's greenhouse gas emitters, as well as its principle earners. (p. 8)

While in New Zealand the gap between governmental priorities and those of the business elite at the time was particularly obvious, the discourse surrounding climate change policies, giving priority to the theme of competition, is not very different from other countries, judging by Jamieson's (2001) observations in a US context:

> In the United States the debate about reducing GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions centres on self-interest and national interest rather than on appeals to morality … The debate has been dominated by hypersensitivity to the domestic politics of which sectors would win and which would lose as a result of controlling GHGs. (p. 294).

The argument of the need to protect the national interest, rather than to assume global responsibility, was very much evident in the lead up to the 2002 ratification of the Kyoto Protocol:

> Although ratification went ahead, the business sector was resistant, primarily on the grounds that the country (and business) could not afford the terms of Kyoto (Collins and Roper, 2005). Key to their arguments was that two of New Zealand's key trading partners, Australia and the USA, had not ratified and would thus be at an economic advantage. (Roper, 2012, p. 8)

Closely linked to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol was Labour's push for an emissions trading scheme, which positioned it at the forefront of global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to mitigate their effect on the climate.

5.3.2 Emissions trading scheme (ETS)

The second piece of legislation relevant in the carbon emissions context, apart from the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, was Labour's push for an emissions trading scheme from 2006, in an effort "to move the country towards a leadership position in sustainable development" (Roper, 2012, p. 10). The need for taking a lead in climate change policy was illustrated by then Prime Minister Helen Clark in her statement to the NZ Parliament in February 2007:

> New Zealand needs to go the extra mile to lower greenhouse gas emissions and increase sustainability…In our high value markets in Europe, we face increasing pressure on our trade and tourism, from competitors who are all too ready to use against us the distance our goods must travel to market, and the distance tourists must travel to us. (Clark, 2007a, para. 27)

Despite the Labour Government's strong case for the need to show sustainability leadership, which was reiterated in speeches by several ministers, such as that of Minister for the Environment, Trevor Mallard (2008),[25] many NZ businesses remained sceptical, if not overtly hostile to the idea of an ETS, fearing economic disadvantages (Bertram & Terry, 2010; Jiang, Sharp, & Sheng, 2009; Roper et al., 2010; Roper, 2012).

With elections imminent in 2008, the ETS was eventually passed into law, containing significant concessions to the agricultural sector which, as the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, had vehemently lobbied against the scheme. However, once in power, one of the first actions of the new National-led coalition government "was to stall the introduction of the ETS, and to review climate change policies generally (Roper, 2012, p. 11). The draft for a modified and more business friendly ETS was presented a year later, whose priorities were outlined by Nick Smith, the Minister for Climate Change Issues, as follows:

> This Bill recalibrates New Zealand's position to a more pragmatic approach. The existing Act was a branding statement by a dying

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[25] "The Labour-led Government's goal for the future is to make New Zealand a world leader of smart, innovative responses to environmental issues. We want New Zealand businesses to be recognised for their sustainable practices. We also want to see improvements in New Zealand businesses' impacts on the environment and community, and improvements in their reputation internationally for environmental integrity. It also enables us to enter new markets and earn premiums for sustainable goods and services." (Mallard, 2008, para. 9)

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Government wanting to make grand gestures about saving the planet with little regard for whether it would work and its impact on consumers, jobs and investment. (Smith, 2009, para. 12)

As Roper (2012) reports, many NZ businesses welcomed the change from sustainability to economic competitiveness as the new political priority, putting "economic growth in the agricultural sector ahead of mitigation of greenhouse gases, unless that could be effected by new technologies" (p. 12).

This new directive is manifest in the statement by the New Zealand government to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznan (Poland), 2008:

An absolute priority here for New Zealand and all developing countries where livestock agriculture is an important activity is further scientific research on mitigation options … Food production must continue to expand if we are to feed the world and we must do this while responding to the challenges of climate change. If, in the area of livestock production, 'mitigation' simply means 'cut production' – we do not have a sustainable way forward. (Groser, 2008, para. 21).

Referring to the speech, Roper (2012, p. 12) noted: "Reducing production was eliminated as a possibility by constructing New Zealand as responsible for 'feeding the world', rendering increased production (and increased emissions) as a social responsibility rather than an economic advantage."

Overall, Roper et al. (2010) suggest that during its nine years in power, the Labour government made significant advances to position NZ as a global sustainability leader, bolstered by its commitment to greenhouse gas emission

reduction and the pro-active management of climate change and other environmental issues. However, some criticism suggested that policy implementations fell short of the declared sustainability aspirations. For example, the ETS was criticised as insufficient because of the exclusion of the agricultural sector as NZ's largest greenhouse gas emitter (Bertram & Terry, 2010; Bührs, 2008).

5.3.3 Beyond Kyoto and the ETS

Following the 2008 election, the National-led coalition government broke with the previous Labour government's focus on sustainability and – influenced by the global recession of 2008 – declared economic revitalisation as the new political priority (Rudzitis & Bird, 2011). Initiatives established under Labour to promote sustainability, such as the Sustainable Business Network fund (Roper et al., 2010), were stopped. Controversial proposals, such as facilitating mining activities in the country's national parks and protected areas were introduced under a government much more friendly to the business sector (Roper et al., 2010). The mining proposal, however, was met with fierce protest, both from environmental lobby group *Forest and Bird* and NZ citizens, of which 40,000 took part in what was to become the largest protest march in a generation (Rudzitis & Bird, 2010), forcing the government to backtrack on the issue, presumably to avoid loss of popularity before the election due at the end of 2011[26] (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010, see also Tapia-Mella, 2012).

Nevertheless, judging from analysis of ministerial speeches, the National Government was not indifferent to environmental issues and was conscious of

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[26] New Zealand Governments serve three-year terms.

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overseas pressure mounting, such as concerns around animal welfare, food safety, and environmental management (Carter, 2010). Realising that "sustainability is not a fad. It's an enduring trend that's here to stay" (Carter, 2010), at least some sections of the Government had started to embrace a discourse of ecological modernisation, acknowledging "a need for transformational change" (Roper, 2012, p. 12). For example, the Government created a Green Growth Advisory Group, whose report titled "Greening New Zealand's Growth" was published in December 2011. The key recommendation of the report was for NZ businesses to move to greener technologies and practices, and to seek benefit from green growth market opportunities (Green Growth Advisory Group, 2011).

Further proof for the National Government adopting the discourse of ecological modernisation (Roper, 2012) was provided in a ministerial statement in 2011, in which Environment Minister Nick Smith was quoted as saying:

> Concepts of green growth, green jobs and cleantech are attracting international attention with the work of the OECD and the United Nations. This is about New Zealand applying some of our best private sector minds to how we ensure we take up these green growth opportunities to support the Government's broader economic growth strategy. (Brownlee, English & Smith, 2011, para. 6)

Those statements, however, represented a reactive rather than a proactive stance regarding environmental sustainability, since they were "clearly linked to international regulatory pressure" (Roper, 2012, p. 13) and economic considerations. Most strikingly, there was hardly any acknowledgement in Government discourse "of the reality of climate change or of the costs of non-

mitigation, and no moral arguments in terms of ethics or responsibility (other than economic)" (Roper, 2012, p. 13). Overall, Roper sums up the stance of the National-led Government coalition as follows:

> In spite of the Government's stated recognition that New Zealand has to improve its environmental performance in the face of growing international pressure, it continues to stall expansion of environmental legislation ahead of the country's major trading partners, preferring voluntary action in line with the dominant business lobby...Economic growth remains top priority. (Roper, 2012, p. 13)

In sum, this section has illustrated how environmental sustainability had become a key driver for policy under the Labour Government, and how it has been replaced by the National Government's prioritisation of economic growth, leading to some controversial proposals such as mining activities in national parks, threatening to damage the country's *clean, green* image and the credibility of its *100% Pure* place branding campaign.

5.4 *Clean, Green* NZ: Origins and Meaning

For over 20 years NZ has benefited from a marketing and advertising campaign promoting it as a *clean, green* country and *100% Pure* food exporter and tourist destination (Bennett, 2010; Oram, 2007). Who exactly coined the phrase "clean and green" is uncertain (Everitt, 2009) though its origins are believed to be relatively recent, linked to the Rainbow Warrior incident (1985)[27] and New Zealand's "stance against nuclear energy and genetically modified organisms in

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[27] See http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/politics/nuclear-free-new-zealand/rainbow-warrior (accessed 14 August 2013).

the 1980s" (Insch, 2011, p. 285), particularly the passing of the NZ Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act in 1987 (Sanderson et al., 2003; Coyle & Fairweather, 2005).

According to Coyle and Fairweather (2005), *clean, green* NZ "is bolstered by a number of place images of the country as an Arcadia, '100% Pure', 'beautiful New Zealand', the pastoral idyll, a tourist paradise, nuclear free and a desirable place to live" (p. 149). Apart from referring to natural parks, scenic beauty and green pasture, Bührs and Bartlett (1993) suggest that *clean, green* equally stands for a friendly population and a land little affected by industrial pollution, over-population, traffic congestion, noise or urban decay. As "environmental paradise" and "land of plenty" (Henderson, 2005, p. 118) *clean* and *green* is linked to a long-held perception of the NZ lifestyle "where people could own their own land and home; enjoy wholesome, locally produced food and drink; and where pride in the pioneering spirit was strong" (Henderson, 2005, p. 118). For Coyle and Fairweather (2005, p. 148), "clean and green registers an ideal notion – a 'place myth'", while Pawson (1997) described it as a "national identifier" that "incorporates both nostalgic and anticipatory elements" (p. 17). Tucker (2011) illustrates this point as follows:

> Not only does clean and green incorporate both nostalgia and future, but also a particular geographical space and cultural identity, 'what is' and 'what should be', complacency and aspiration, along with economic and cultural value. It is open, flexible and versatile – it allows space for engagement given its multiple meanings and value associations. (pp. 116-117)

Clean, green has taken a dominant role in NZ's national consciousness (Coyle & Fairweather, 2005). According to Bell (1996), the values represented by the notion have been linked to the kiwi national identity since the 1970s. Similarly, Dew (1999, p. 55) has noted that "the tradition of elevating nature to a special space has strong cultural resonances in New Zealand's export oriented, post-colonial society." The importance of *clean, green* for NZ's national identity was highlighted by Tucker (2011) as follows:

> [The] clean and green national identity is a powerful master frame in terms of movement collective identity. It conjures up a strong feeling of national pride, and has a history that is multifaceted. The history of this national identity icon has been developed over several decades, incorporating both nostalgia and visionary thinking. (p. 119)

Having said that, critical voices have suggested that notions of a distinctive NZ identity have to be treated with caution, since "determining what constitutes the nation, and therefore national identity, has been problematic, particularly given the presence of significant indigenous people" (Fleras and Spoonley, 1999, p. x). A similar stance is taken by Brodie and Sharma (2011), who contend that, because New Zealand as a nation is still young compared to other countries, there is "a widespread misunderstanding of who we really are" (p. 11).

Exemplary for those conflicting perceptions regarding the role of the natural environment for NZ's national identity is the self-perception of Māori people as stewards and guardians of the land (Kaitiakitanga[28]) and the predominantly

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[28] According to the *The Ara* Encyclopedia, kaitiakitanga means guardianship and protection, a way of managing the environment, based on the Māori world view (source: http://www.teara.govt.nz /en/kaitiakitanga-guardianship-and-conservation, accessed 2 January 2014).

utilitarian value given to the natural environment by Pākeha (the Māori term for white inhabitants of New Zealanders). For example, as representatives of the Ngai Tahu tribe (Māori) pointed out in a discussion with officials of the Green Growth Advisory Group: "Operating in an environmentally-responsible manner is intrinsic to who we are as people and is fundamental to our culture" (Green Growth Advisory Group, 2011, p. 15).

A very different picture was drawn by Pearson (1974), who in his essays on NZ noted:

> We treat our land like campers: cheer up, mate, we're not here for long, make the most of it while you can, it'll all be the same in a hundred years; the land is not for farming but mining and if in the end we ruin it, well, we'll be under the sod before that happens. So we sneer at our own countryside; we think it effeminate to admire it, we pride ourselves often on not knowing the names of hills and rivers. We only venture into the wild when we have a utilitarian purpose pig-shooting, deer-stalking, or tramping and even then we aim to cover a certain mileage in a certain time, and seldom pause to look…We haven't made friends with the land. We use it as a convenience, an expedient. (p. 28)

While it has been suggested that nature constitutes an integral part of many kiwi identities (Tregidga, Kearins, Milne, & Byrch, 2007), many New Zealanders seem to be aware that there is a difference between the promotional imagery and the reality as they see it (Bell, 1996). A survey conducted in 2001 showed that every second respondent thought of the *clean, green* image as a myth (Gendall et al., 2001). A similar study in 2010, while not specifically asking about people's

opinion regarding the credibility of *clean, green*, was revealing in that it showed that the natural environment and the protection thereof had lost importance to those Kiwis that formed part of the study (Gendall & Murray, 2010).

Nevertheless, the country's environmental credentials seem to have become a comfortable position for many New Zealanders. As a respondent to an earlier survey acknowledged:

> We keep seeing New Zealand as the perfect place. When I was overseas, I found myself saying things I had heard, about it being very green, and clean, and friendly. I don't really believe those things but they are a handy way of telling people what they want to hear, and what we think we should say. (Hirschberg, 1993, cited in Bell, 1996, p. 10)

More recently, Brodie and Sharma (2011) have reported concerns within the business community that NZ's national identity might be overly reliant on nature "and so lends itself only to the horticultural and agricultural sectors" (p. 9), while "emphasis on the rural idyll" would damage "the reputation of some of the country's highly sophisticated export businesses" (Brodie & Sharma, 2011, p. 10). This links to Henderson's (2005) observation that political and economic discourse in NZ was promoting "an identity for New Zealand as a 'knowledge economy' that depends on innovation and 'cutting edge' technologies such as biotechnology" (p. 118).

How *clean and green* links cultural aspiration with economic realities is described by Tucker (2011), as follows:

> Along with sentiments of cultural wellbeing and belonging, clean and green has economic significance. As such, it is a prevalent, commonly understood discourse engaged in by not only movement activists, but by antagonists and the wider public. It has strong resonance and potency, offering a sense of connection and belonging to Aotearoa New Zealand. (p. 119)

According to Pawson (1997, p. 17) *clean and green* has become "New Zealand's national brand image." Its prominence is in large part due to the *100% Pure* tourism campaign, described in the following section.

5.4.1 The *100% Pure New Zealand* campaign

Simplified by "clean, green, beautiful" (Bell, 1996), tourism in particular owes much of its success to the country's green image (Bennett, 2010; Oram, 2007). According to Bell (2008), since its colonial development, NZ has been promoted as a scenic wonderland, blessed with pristine environments and a unique landscape. More recently, this imagery was fuelled by the *100% Pure New Zealand* destination branding and marketing campaign and the prominent appearance of the country's landscapes in the *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* movies. "Set in diverse scenery ranging from rolling green farm land to spectacularly steep mountains" (Roper, 2010, p. 3), those representations of NZ created an image of "a country more committed to protecting the environment than other developed nations" (Rudzitis & Bird, 2011, para. 4).

Representing "purity, unspoiled landscapes, and an authentic experience" (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2011, p. 174), *100% Pure* both feeds from and

nurtures the country's *clean, green* image and reputation (Everitt, 2009). In fact, first launched in 1999 (Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2003), *100% Pure New Zealand*[29] has been praised as one of the world's strongest, longest-running and most admired destination brands (TNZ, 2009; Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2011). According to TNZ (Tourism New Zealand), the country's national tourism board, in 2007 and 2008 alone, one billion people saw coverage of New Zealand and its *100% Pure* values in print, broadcast and online media (TNZ, 2009).

Presumably to anticipate critique and to soften the environmental promise, several attempts were made over the years to shift the focus from pristine landscapes to "people interacting with the landscape and enjoying being outdoors" (Campelo et al., 2011, p. 8), and to depict "a naturally beautiful country home to young, dynamic people full of attitude, open to new experiences, and with a natural disposition to do things, have fun, and be happy" (Campelo et al., 2011, p. 9). As Campelo et al. (2011) conclude:

> 100% Pure New Zealand seems to be no longer limited to a clean and green image but more concerned with presenting the notion of a pure New Zealand culture. This rhetoric presents the way people understand nature and interact with the landscape, thereby creating meanings and establishing a sense of place. (p. 9)

Yet, their visual analysis of the *100% Pure New Zealand* advertising campaign shows that the natural environment still plays a dominant role in the campaign,

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[29] The booklet *Pure as: Celebrating 10 years of 100% Pure New Zealand* by Tourism New Zealand (available from http://10yearsyoung.tourismnewzealand.com) gives a comprehensive overview of the campaign.

illustrated by the fact that as much as 90% of the advertisement was set "outdoors amid natural, pristine, and wild scenery, serving to enhance the idea of a pure, open, and fresh environment" (Campelo et al., 2011, p. 8). Indeed, as Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott (2002) noted, landscape is the very essence of the *100% Pure* brand, whose success "is due in large part to the use of landscape – a very important part of the New Zealand identity" (MacDonald, 2011, p. 68).

Linking back to the discussion surrounding the relevance for *clean, green* for NZ's national identity, MacDonald (2011) suggests that "using something that resonates with all New Zealanders and which forms a foundation for nationhood gives the 100% Pure New Zealand brand a truthfulness that makes it work with overseas audiences" (p. 68). According to him, not only has the brand "gained a big share of the overseas market," it has also "been successful in turning a tourism brand to an umbrella brand that effectively markets many New Zealand products" (MacDonald, 2011, p. 68). The economic value of the clean, green image and 100% Pure branding is illustrated in the following section.

5.4.2 Economic value of *clean, green* and *100% Pure* NZ

While accurate measurement of the monetary value derived from a positive environmental image and New Zealand's brand positioning is difficult (Insch, 2011), there certainly have been attempts, each coming up with slightly different results. In terms of *clean, green* as NZ's country or national brand, in 2001 the NZ Ministry for the Environment suggested a potential loss of about NZ$938 million in revenue from the country's five inbound tourist markets (Australia, Korea, the US and UK, and Japan) if tourists' perceptions of the environment worsened (NZ Ministry for the Environment, 2001, see also Insch, 2011). In another estimate it

was suggested that the average dairy farmer could lose an estimated NZD$18,000 to NZD$49,000 if the *clean, green* image were tarnished, as reported by Pickering (2002). In 2005 it was suggested that the value of "Brand New Zealand" – that is, the real contribution of the brand to the nation's economy – amounts to US$102bn (Anholt-GMI, 2005, p. 3).

With regard to the economic importance of *100% Pure*, in 2005 New Zealand's tourism brand was valued worth US$13.6bn (Interbrand, 2005, as cited in Insch, 2011; see also TNZ, 2009). The economic success of the *100% Pure* branding is also demonstrated in the increase of NZ tourism "from 1.6 million visitors in 1999, when the campaign started, to 2.5 million visitors in 2010" (Rudzitis & Bird, 2011, para. 5). In the year 2012, this number had grown to 2.6 million, which is considerable for a country with a population of 4.4 million.[30]

Over time *clean, green* has become an integral part of the marketing of NZ and its products (KPMG, 2011). The dependence of NZ's economy on the natural environment (Vivid Economics & Energy Centre University of Auckland Business School, 2012, p. 61) is best illustrated by tourism and agriculture, the country's largest export earners (NZ Ministry of Economic Development, 2011; TNZ, 2009). Both their strong linkage to the natural environment and their dependence on export markets have left NZ's tourism and agriculture industries vulnerable to increased scrutiny overseas regarding environmental issues, such as their greenhouse gas emissions. As Insch (2011) has noted, "New Zealand is a

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[30] Source: Statistics New Zealand (http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/snapshots-of-nz/nz-in-profile-2013/international-travel.aspx, accessed 5 November 2013).

youthful, new nation dependent on international tourism among its other resource-intensive industries (i.e. dairy, meat, horticulture)" (p. 285).

As umbrella brand (MacDonald, 2011), *100% Pure*, while initially conceived as a promotional tagline targeted at tourists (Roper, 2012), has since become highly valuable for other industries, particularly agriculture and food exports, where *clean, green* is associated with food quality and safety (Clemens & Babcock, 2004). For example, the country's wine producers have marketed their products' origin as the "clean, green land" (Lewis, 2008, p. 114), while NZ's dairy industry has placed advertising in congested London settings, depicting happy cows on spacious, green fields (Everitt, 2009).

Considering that the *clean, green* image forms a critical part of NZ's marketing to international tourists (Vivid Economics & Energy Centre University of Auckland Business School, 2012), those figures illustrate that, if NZ's environmental credibility is lost, the financial consequences could be severe. As Insch (2011) contends:

> New Zealand food manufacturers, particularly in the dairy and meat product categories, also link the quality of their produce to the country's clean, green image, but without an understanding of the potential risks of green positioning or the financial outcomes of their investments. (p. 285)

Rod Oram (2007), a leading NZ business commentator, sees the country's travel and tourism industry failing to respond fast enough to changing customer sensitivities over the world's environment, ignoring the possible economic impact that negative views on New Zealand's branding could have.

In sum, secondary data reviewed for this section leaves little doubt about the economic importance of NZ's global environmental positioning, not least due to its dependence on the export of commodities and landscape-driven tourism. The following section illustrates how controversially the legitimacy of the *clean, green* proposition is discussed within NZ, and how the country's deteriorating environmental record has put additional pressure on the viability of the national and place brand.

5.5 *Clean, Green* Legitimacy Contested (and Defended)

Notwithstanding the economic success of the *100% Pure* tourism campaign (Bowler, 2013) and its high international regard as a country brand (Future Brand, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012), numerous voices, both from within the country and from abroad, have expressed concerns about a growing gap between the country's *clean, green* and *100% Pure* brand positioning and its actual environmental record (for example, Bell, 1996, 2005; Cumming, 2010; Everitt, 2009; Oram, 2007; Roper, 2010, 2012; Su, 2013). Roper (2010), who has researched and written extensively about NZ's global environmental positioning, describes the situation as follows:

> The New Zealand brand, 100% Pure, has served the country well...However, as is also often the case, a very successful brand can be vulnerable (Klein, 1999) especially if it is built upon relatively narrow parameters which may be difficult to live up to and which could then be contested by competitors, or subject to consumer perceptions of risk. (p. 1)

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With regard to NZ businesses, there is "a growing divide between companies that see advantages in change and those that continue to lobby for 'business as usual'" (Roper, 2012, p. 13). In 2011, an organisation of business leaders, *Pure Advantage*, was formed to campaign for stronger governmental support for green growth as an economic necessity and opportunity to maintain and strengthen NZ's competitive advantage (Morrison, 2011). Themes of competitiveness and economic benefit, rather than environmental or climate responsibility, dominated the discourse of the *Pure Advantage* group (Roper, 2012). Exemplary for this argumentation is a declaration by Rob Morrison (2011), chairman of *Pure Advantage*, in which he noted:

> There is no country in the world that promotes its clean and green image as much as New Zealand does and there is probably no country in the world that is as reliant on its clean and green image for exports and tourism. So in the green growth race – and it is a race – New Zealand should be out the front, but it is not. (para. 23)

Moreover, Wright and Kurian (2010) see New Zealand's environmental image and fragile *clean, green* identity "threatened in large part by a lack of political will to take steps necessary to protect the environment in the face of a ubiquitous pressure for economic growth" (p. 398). Rather than abolishing the brand, however, it has been suggested that NZ needs to take a leadership role in promoting sustainability to protect and grow the *clean, green* proposition (Barnett, 2007; Gibb, 2013; Yeoman, 2009). After all, "the world wants and will pay for green. We need to accelerate our ability to provide it, and take Green Leadership in the industry categories we specialise in" (Everitt, 2009, p. 203).

A similar stance was taken by conservation group *Forest and Bird*, which considered it "a no-brainer to get ahead of the game on sustainability," particularly because an "awful lot of our industry trades on our clean, green image" (as quoted in Cumming, 2010, para. 7).

Beyond the economic importance of NZ's environmental positioning as a competitive advantage, Masters (2010) has pointed out that "as a green idea, the brand connotes high prestige to the country" (p. 65). This seems particularly relevant in times of increasing awareness of the environment and environmental issues, such as global warming and the effects of carbon dioxide emissions (Roper, 2010). In other words, if NZ businesses fail to change and adjust to environmental expectations they not only risk missing out on economic opportunity presented by the demand for green products and services, there is also a risk of "losing legitimacy with a civil society that is increasingly demanding material remedial action against environmental and social problems" (Roper, 2012, p. 15).

Albeit being *clean* and *green* by accident rather than conscious effort (Cumming, 2010) and despite their own doubts, New Zealanders still maintain their self-perception of a remote, exotic and environmentally pristine country, not only to support commercial interests, but also to distinguish themselves from the rest of the world (Bell, 2005). As the late Sir Paul Callaghan, a former trustee of the *Pure Advantage* initiative, put it, New Zealanders "do not see the lack of honesty which surrounds this branding. We are merely a small population spread over a large area which provides an impression of clean and green" (as quoted in Stewart,

2012, para. 46). Roper (2010, p. 15) sees "a lack of connection in people's minds between the sustainability positioning, the country's actual performance, consumer perceptions, and their long term value to New Zealand," noting that "maintaining the integrity of the brand is not a collective priority" (p. 15). According to Roper (2010, p. 16):

> New Zealand suffers a loss of legitimacy if it is seen to be failing to live up to the claims of its public positioning. As a small country it has to maintain a viable and niche position for itself that has integrity and so can stand up to the external threats to its economy. Its producers will be made to comply with the growing international regulatory framework for climate change mitigation and for sustainability more generally, either directly or indirectly as a supply chain issue.

Having said that, Roper (2012) also points out that the sustainability issues faced by NZ are common to many nations. However, they are "particularly acute in a country so dependent on the export of commodities and landscape-driven tourism" (*The Economist*, 2010, para. 9). Whereas some NZ businesses have been very successful in integrating sustainability into their way of thinking and operating, "this has not been the case for a large number of industries, especially under conditions of economic recession" (Roper, 2012, p. 14).

Ideology plays a crucial role in business resistance to change:

> Much of the opposition can be understood as coming from New Zealand's 30-year history as a free market based economy, with the business sector predominantly embracing neoliberal ideologies of economic growth,

including minimal government intervention in business matters and voluntary action for issues such as environmental damage mitigation. …The agricultural industry, for example, is the country's largest export earner, but with 54% of the country's emissions (primarily methane), the industry stridently resists climate change legislation. (Roper, 2012, p. 6)

Moreover, surveys conducted in 2003, 2006 and 2010 showed that, while there was an average increase of 10% in the number of companies adopting environmental practices from 2003 to 2006, in 2010 NZ businesses were moving in opposite directions (Collins, Lawrence, Roper, & Haar, 2010; Collins, Roper, & Lawrence, 2010). The resistance of some of NZ's key industries to embracing environmental sustainability not only for their own good but also to give substance to the *clean, green* branding is surprising considering that some of the most credible voices within the business community have left no doubt regarding the urgency of the matter. For instance, Oram (2007) warned that due to "dirty" dairying and other forms of pollution, NZ's greatest long-term asset, the *clean, green* image was at stake: "If we get this wrong, we will lose our customers, our livelihood and our reputation" (p. 32).

Equally unequivocal was a statement by business consultancy KPMG (2011):

Like it or not, Brand New Zealand, the intangible association that has developed between New Zealand and clean, green and pure, is one of the most valuable assets the country has. Consequently, the onus falls on everyone in the [agribusiness] industry to act in a consistent manner with the spirit of the message. Failure to do so can bring accusations of

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'greenwash' from our international competitors and risk access to our markets. (p. 11)

Both NZ's tourism and agriculture industries seem to be aware of the risks involved in the *100% Pure* branding. As the country's tourism board acknowledged, brands only work as long as they are credible in the eyes of the customer (TNZ, 2009). In 2010, Mike Peterson, chair of the Meat and Wool Industry Association, noted: "It's absolutely crucial we ensure our reputation is intact. And it's not just about meeting legal requirements, it's about what consumers want" (as quoted in Cumming, 2010, para. 20).

Yet, because *clean, green* and *100% Pure* have worked well in the past (TNZ, 2009), the prevailing desire in the business community seems to be to silence critical debates about environmental issues, rather than to deal with them proactively (Blackett & Le Heron, 2008). The same attitude was illustrated, for example, in National Government Prime Minister John Key's response to criticism of the *100% Pure* brand due to the poor state of the country's rivers, arguing that "people did not expect waterways to be 100% pollution-free any more than they expected to be lovin' McDonalds every time they ate it" (as quoted in Davison, 2012, para. 1).

A similar stance was taken by Key when confronted with evidence of considerable environmental problems in NZ, such as river pollution during an

interview for the BBC *HARDtalk* programme in 2011,[31] in which he fiercely defended the *100% Pure* New Zealand brand, arguing that NZ's environmental record was still good in comparison with other countries. Clearly, the difference between Key's statement and the initiatives undertaken under Helen Clark's Labour Government during 1999-2008 to establish the country as a sustainability leader, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is striking.

An explanation for Key's strong reaction is provided by the observation made by Henderson (2005) that since the 1990s, in NZ neo-liberal political and economic policies had become "commonly accepted as normal, to the point where alternative viewpoints had to compete for recognition against this yardstick" (p.121). Indeed, there are striking similarities between the dismissive stance of John Key's conservative Government to criticism aimed at the country's environmental record and the response of political leaders to the pentachlorophenol (PCP) contamination issue in the 1990s. Used in the treatment of timber, PCP had become a serious environmental issue as it contaminated land and rivers (Dew, 1999). Long ignored by politicians and NZ's mass media, the issue only received attention when it was reported in international media as a threat to the country's *clean, green* image, to which the NZ Government reacted defensively, condemning those overseas articles "as unpatriotic, jeopardising export and tourism markets" (Dew, 1999, p. 54). In other words, only when the *clean, green* image was perceived to be at stake, and fears mounted about potential economic costs, was there a political will to address the PCP issue,

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[31] *BBC HARDtalk,* Monday, May 9th, 2011. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/hardtalk/9480610.stm

despite the extra costs and regulatory burdens that this meant for the business sector (Dew, 1999).

The transformation from NZ as aspirational sustainability leader to environmental laggard is illustrated in the attitude of its Government regarding global warming and carbon emissions as a cause thereof. Carbon emissions have become a serious issue for the country's environmental record. In 2012, NZ was ranked worst for climate leadership out of 194 countries participating in the 18th Annual UN Climate Change Conference in Doha by the *International Climate Action Network*, a global alliance of civil society organisations dealing with the causes and consequences of climate change:

> For a country whose emissions are similar in scale to the Canadian tar sands, New Zealand has demonstrated exceptional blindness to scientific and political realities. Surprising many and disappointing all, New Zealand has…[led] a campaign of extreme selfishness and irresponsibility. (International Climate Action Network, 2012, para. 3)

In the same year, a UK strategic management consultancy, in cooperation with The University of Auckland, noted that "when measured on a gross basis before including net removals from forestry, NZ's emissions of greenhouse gases per capita are higher than the other developed countries…roughly twice as much as France or Spain" (Vivid Economics & Energy Centre University of Auckland Business School, 2012, p. 86). The same report concludes that, in terms of emissions, NZ "has made no clear progress over the last 20 years" (p. 87).

Those, however, were not the first reports stressing NZ's comparatively poor carbon emissions record. As a matter of fact, numerous scholars and institutions have addressed the country's comparatively high per capita greenhouse gas emissions over the years (for example, Bertram & Terry, 2010; International Energy Agency, 2006; OECD, 2011). As Cumming (2010) wrote:

> Under the Kyoto Protocol, NZ committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels. But emissions in 2007 were 22% higher than in 1990. Methane and nitrous oxide emissions from agriculture comprise 47% of our total emissions…5th highest greenhouse gas emissions per person out of 27 OECD countries (2005). Agriculture: 48% of emissions from this sector. Fossil fuels: Use increased by 22% between 1998 and 2007, mainly road transport. Cars: Reliance on private vehicles over public transport and increased trucking contributed to 39% increase in emissions in energy sector since 1990; 2nd highest in OECD. (p. 8)

Apart from failing its carbon emission reduction targets, delaying and watering down the ETS to near insignificance (Bertram & Terry, 2010; Martin, 2012; Oram, 2007; Renowden, 2007), and boasting one of the highest car ownership rates worldwide (International Energy Agency, 2006; The Economist, 2009), international rankings provide some further indications of NZ's deterioriating enviornmental record. For example, while in 2006 it was ranked first out of 133 countries in the *Yale–Columbia University Environmental Performance Index*

(EPI),[32] its position had deteriorated to fourteenth by 2012, with a rank of 66 for climate change (Emerson et al., 2012).

That the country's actual environmental performance could be even worse was highlighted by NZ freshwater scientist Mike Joy (2013). As he points out, NZ's three worst environmental impacts [which he identifies as biodiversity loss, water quality and non-CO_2 greenhouse gas emissions, especially methane] are not even accounted for in the Yale assessment. In his view, NZ ranking 120th in the world for environmental impact, as suggested in a study by the University of Adelaide in Australia that includes biodiversity loss and water quality, gives a more realistic picture (Joy, 2013).

All in all, review of secondary data and literature on clean, green NZ indicates that the biggest issue regarding the perceived legitimacy and credibility of the country's global positioning seems to be the lack of a common stance. For instance, Tucker (2011) has noted that:

> While the New Zealand Government embraces clean and green and all it encompasses, including the economic benefits of this brand image, the political and economic arguments that come from within the same Government are viewed as contradictory by activists. (p. 117)

A similar picture is presented by industry responses to the concerns summarised in this section. For example, reflecting on the credibility of the *100% Pure* proposition, TNZ (2009) readily acknowledged that "the 100% Pure New Zealand

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[32] Available from http://www.yale.edu/epi/2006EPI_Report_Full.pdf (accessed 14 November 2013).

campaign makes a promise of a visitor destination second-to-none to these visitors, so when they arrive it is crucial that this promise is fulfilled" (p. 58) – a view shared by then Air New Zealand CEO Rob Fyfe (TNZ, 2009, p. 6). However, in the same publication, George Hickton, then Tourism New Zealand CEO, states: "I believe the reason that *100% Pure New Zealand* has been so successful is not just because it's a great catch phrase, but because it is true. And it is the people of New Zealand that give it that truth" (TNZ, 2009, p. 4).

Clearly, this is contradictory to evidence of NZ's environmental record reviewed earlier in this chapter. In the end, trust and integrity are essential to maintain the legitimacy of NZ's environmental positioning. As NZ Green party leader Russel Norman (2009) has warned:

> It's about trust and integrity. New Zealand is seen as one of the most honest countries on the planet, and it probably is. But if brand New Zealand is saying we're all clean and green, and yet consumers hear stories about rivers full of effluent, then we will lose their trust. (para. 54)

Norman's view underlines the importance of taking a closer look at the stories told about NZ internationally. Considering the significant influence of the news media on people's perceptions and as agenda setter (see chapter two), news media coverage linked to NZ's environmental performance, perceived leadership, and brand image in particular is crucial to determine the observed credibility and potential vulnerability of the *clean, green* promise.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results from the review of secondary data conducted to establish the historical, political and economic context relevant for the discursive analysis of international news coverage of NZ's environmental performance and branding. Judging from the data reviewed in this chapter, there seems to be little doubt about the economic significance of NZ's *clean, green* proposition and the *100% Pure* branding, not least since those have allowed the country's important food export and tourism industries to maintain a competitive advantage globally. Yet, analysis of secondary data over time revealed significant discrepancies among the country's political and business leaders with regard to the extent to which they consider NZ's environmental leadership and brand promise an issue. Particularly in the agricultural sector and under the political leadership of John Key as Prime Minister, there seems to be a reluctance to acknowledge the meaning of *clean, green* and *100% Pure* beyond their function as marketing slogans.

For the thesis at hand, the key question regarding the potential vulnerability of *clean, green* NZ is how the country's environmental performance and its branding are covered in international news media, in particular whether such news representations support or challenge the environmental claim. As discussed in chapter two, media representations are the most likely to be able to exert pressure on the *clean, green* proposition due to news media's important role in the discursive construction of social realities. The following chapter presents the results from analysis conducted to address these questions.

Chapter 6

International Press Coverage of NZ's Environmental Performance and Branding

Having established the historical, economic and political context of NZ's environmental performance and positioning in the previous chapter, this chapter presents the results of the analysis of Australian, UK and US news articles mentioning NZ's environmental performance linked to carbon emissions and its place branding. The purpose of the analysis was to determine the amount and nature of Australian, UK and US press coverage of NZ's environmental performance (carbon emissions), its *clean, green* image and the *100% Pure* branding during 2008-2012, particularly regarding changes in coverage over time and differences across countries. Furthermore, analysis was also conducted to find out whether there were any apparent links between coverage of NZ's environmental performance and its branding during that period. To answer these questions, news articles were analysed with regard to the amount and nature (that is, keywords, themes and tone) of coverage, using the multi-level, software-assisted analysis approach described in chapter four. Together with the background and context of the case study presented in the previous chapter, these results will be further discussed in chapter seven.

6.1 International Press Coverage of NZ and Carbon Emissions

The following sections describe Australian, UK and US newspaper coverage of New Zealand in connection with carbon emissions, which was used in this study as a proxy for environmental issues, and, as illustrated in the previous chapter,

because during the analysis period carbon emissions played an important part in the discourses associated with NZ's environmental performance.

6.1.1 Amount of coverage

In total, 230 articles published between January 1st, 2008 and December 31st, 2012 were analysed for this study, containing 293 references to New Zealand in connection with carbon emissions. Most articles were published in Australian newspapers (84%), followed by the UK (10%) and the US (6%). The high percentage of Australian articles is perhaps not surprising considering Australia's relative geo-political and cultural proximity to New Zealand, both of which constitute important factors as regards the amount and nature of news coverage (Hansen, 2010). Having said that, a closer look at coverage of NZ and carbon emissions in Australian newspapers by month reveals that a significant increase in coverage occurred in June 2011, at a time when a heated carbon tax debate was taking place in Australia. References made to NZ at that time mostly concerned its emissions trading scheme (ETS), used in the Australian press both as an example to follow and as argument against the Australian Government's intention to put a price on carbon emissions, which I will discuss in more detail later on. Those numbers provide a clear indication that the amount of Australian coverage of NZ was strongly linked to the political debate taking place in Australia at that time, which is in line with findings from several studies that press coverage tends to follow governmental and political discourse (for example, Carvalho, 2005; Hajer, 1995; McCombs, 1992, see section 2.3.1).

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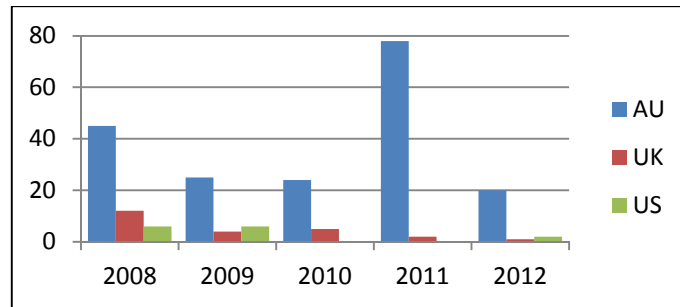
Figure 4. NZ and carbon emissions–Number of articles overall

During the same time period (2008-2012), UK and US print news coverage of NZ and carbon emissions was very limited and, especially in the years 2010, 2011 and 2012, close to non-existent, indicating that NZ's environmental performance linked to carbon emissions did not attract much media attention in those countries. *Figure 4* above illustrates the considerable differences in the amount of Australian, UK and US press coverage of NZ and carbon emissions both across countries and over time.

6.1.2 Tone of coverage (connotation)

Regarding the tone of coverage overall (all countries and years), articles mentioning NZ and carbon emissions were mostly classified as favourable (98 articles) or neutral (67 articles) toward the country. Fifty articles were classified as unfavourable.[33] There were, however, some significant changes in the tone of coverage over time and differences across the three countries included in the study. Whereas in 2008 coverage was mostly favourable with a similar number of neutral and unfavourable mentions, in 2009 it was almost equally favourable and unfavourable. Notably, in 2010 coverage was more neutral and proportionally less negative, while 2011 saw a strong increase in both favourable and neutral coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions. However, in 2012 those

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[33] 15 articles were classified as not applicable (for example printed speeches by politicians).

proportions of the previous year reversed, with unfavourable articles outnumbering neutral and favourable ones (*Figure 5*), thus indicating a considerable change in the way Australian, US, and UK newspapers reported on NZ in the carbon emissions context.
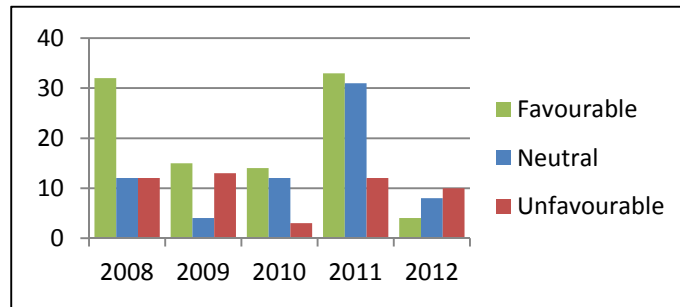
Figure 5. NZ and carbon emissions–Tone of coverage/year (all countries)

Examination of the tone of coverage by month (again referring to all countries and years) showed that favourable and neutral coverage mostly occurred during 2008, then peaked in June 2011, while turning mostly unfavourable towards the end of 2012 (*Figure 6*).
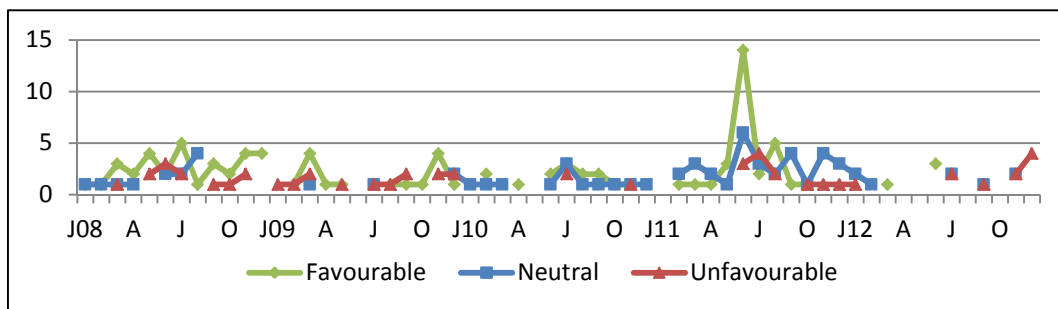
Figure 6. NZ and carbon emissions–Tone of coverage/month (all countries)

The June 2011 peak coincides with NZ Prime Minister John Key's visit to Australia and his address to the Australian Parliament, during which he commented on the Australian Government's plans to introduce a carbon tax, stressing the success (in his view) of NZ's ETS. More details on Australian, UK and US print news coverage of Key and the NZ Government are provided in section 6.1.6.

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In terms of differences in the tone of coverage across countries, both Australian and UK coverage showed a comparatively large amount of neutral, that is, non-opinionated references to NZ in the carbon emissions context, whereas US coverage was found to be either favourable or unfavourable. A more nuanced picture was provided by analysis of the tone of coverage on a month-by-month basis, which revealed that most of the favourable and neutral mentions of NZ, dominated by Australian newspapers, occurred during the aforementioned carbon tax debate in Australia in mid-June 2011.

Apart from the obvious link to the amount and nature of news coverage to political discourse, as already discussed, the higher amount of neutral coverage both in Australian and UK coverage, compared to US coverage, might be because developments in New Zealand are more likely considered newsworthy in Australia and the UK due to the geo-political and cultural proximity of those countries to NZ (Hansen, 2010, see section 2.3.3). After all, not only is Australia NZ's closest neighbour and a key trading partner, the two countries are also part of the Commonwealth of Nations[34] and, while independent from the UK, share the British monarch as their head of state.

6.1.3 Type of article and author positions

Further to the amount and tone of Australian, UK and US print news coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions, as presented in the previous sections, analysis for type of article and author position showed some significant differences *across the three countries*. For example, while the percentage of Australian articles described as news (usually short articles written by newspaper

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[34] For more information, see http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/ (accessed 8 January 2014).

staff and without offering an opinion) made up almost half (43%) of Australian coverage overall, those were proportionally less frequent in the UK (37.5%) and the US (36%). To the contrary, the percentage of internal opinion pieces (articles written by newspaper staff and offering some opinion or interpretation of events) was lowest in Australia (37%), while making up half of UK coverage and 57% in the US. Furthermore, the number of external opinion pieces (articles written by third parties) was proportionally higher in Australia (20%), followed by the UK (12.5%) and the US (7%).
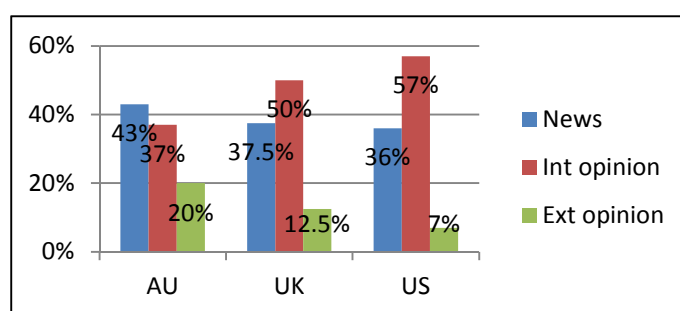
Figure 7. NZ and carbon emissions–Type of article/country (all years)[35]

Again, a possible reason for this is that most Australian coverage occurred at the time of the carbon tax debate in Australia, which fulfilled the news media requirement for newsworthiness. In fact, whereas internal opinion articles dominated overall coverage (all three countries) in 2008 and 2009, in 2011 and 2012 half of all coverage was classified as impartial, or neutral, which equals an increase of neutral ("news") coverage from 35% in 2008 to 52% in 2012 (*Figure 8*). The number of external opinion pieces was comparatively small in 2008 and 2009 (each 11%); although, this doubled in 2010 and 2011 (both 24%) and further increased to 26% in 2012.

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[35] Note: percentages shown in Figures 7 and 8 are in relation to the total amount of coverage per country (*Figure 7*) or year (*Figure 8*).

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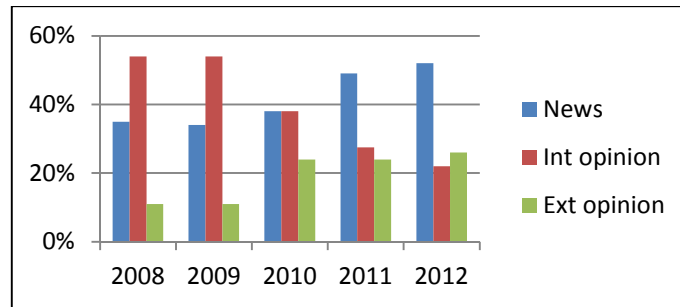
Figure 8. NZ and carbon emissions–Type of article/year (all countries)

Reasons for these changes over time and differences across countries, and their implications for theory and practice (the case of *clean, green* NZ), will be discussed in the following chapter.

In terms of author positions (or beats), political reporters provided most coverage (20%), followed by environmental reporters (17%) and business, economic or finance reporters (15%, *Figure 10*). Only in 2008 was coverage by environmental reporters more frequent than that of political or business reporters, while in 2011 coverage by political reporters prevailed, most likely due to John Key's visit to Australia falling into this terrain. In 2012, articles by business reporters exceeded all others (*Figure 9*).

Figure 9. NZ and carbon emissions–Comparison author positions/years

In comparison, articles written by external sources were led by representatives of non-profit organisations (7%, pertaining both to the political left and right),

followed by contributions from the academic field (4%) and, almost exclusively Australian, active politicians (3%, *Figure 10*).
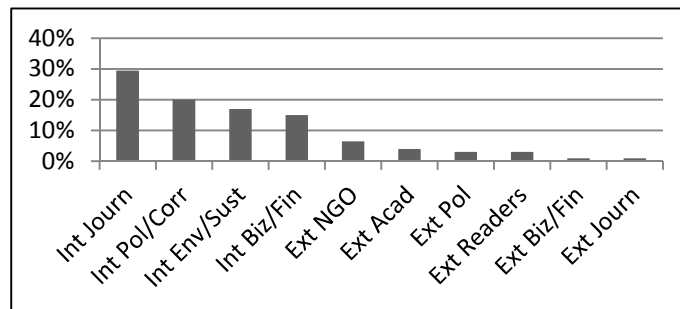
Figure 10. NZ and carbon emissions–Author position/% (all years and countries)

In the following sections, where extracts from articles are used to illustrate a point, external sources will be identified. It is also important to note that the purpose of this descriptive part has been to provide a general idea, or overview, of international print news coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions which, in some cases such as the tone of coverage, was subject to subjective judgement and interpretation.[36] The following section now turns to the salient keywords and themes identified in Australian, UK and US coverage of NZ and carbon emissions during 2008-2012.

6.1.4 Keywords and themes

Apart from the amount and connotation of coverage overall, analysis of the keywords and themes formed an important part of this study's aim to examine news representations of NZ's environmental performance and branding in order to determine the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of the country's global environmental positioning. As *Table 5* shows, the most frequent keywords

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[36] See chapter four for an outline of the measures undertaken to ensure coding reliability and trustworthiness of research findings.

and themes in international press coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions differed quite substantially across the three countries.

Table 5. Most Frequent Keywords in Australian, UK and US Newspaper Coverage of NZ and Carbon Emissions During 2008-2012.

AU 2008-2012			UK 2008-2012			US 2008-2012		
Word	*Count*	*%*	*Word*	*Ct*	*%*	*Word*	*Count*	*%*
emissions	354	3.14	emissions	31	3.52	emissions	30	3.94
zealand	274	2.43	zealand	29	3.29	zealand	24	3.15
carbon	222	1.97	carbon	14	1.59	carbon	12	1.58
trading	195	1.73	energy	9	1.02	greenhouse	9	1.18
scheme	177	1.57	apples	7	0.79	air	7	0.92
australia	170	1.51	kyoto	7	0.79	international	7	0.92
climate	99	0.88	lamb	7	0.79	reduce	7	0.92
energy	83	0.74	methane	7	0.79	gas	6	0.79
price	76	0.67	british	6	0.68	australia	5	0.66
government	74	0.66	shipped	6	0.68	energy	5	0.66
world	73	0.65	trading	6	0.68	fuel	5	0.66
change	70	0.62	air	5	0.57	world	5	0.66
global	54	0.48	governments	5	0.57	apples	4	0.53
greenhouse	52	0.46	scheme	5	0.57	climate	4	0.53
australian	42	0.37	world	5	0.57	flight	4	0.53

Note. The words *emissions*, *zealand* and *carbon* appearing at the top of the table were part of the original search term used for data collection. Word frequencies are of the entire five-year period (2008-2012).

Dominant themes in Australian coverage

Based on the results of the word frequency query presented in Table 4, *emissions trading scheme*, *Australia*, *climate change*, *energy*, *price*, *government* and *world* were the key terms identified in Australian coverage of NZ in connection with

carbon emissions during the 2008-2012 period. Further analysis of those key terms revealed the following sub-themes, or discourse strands:
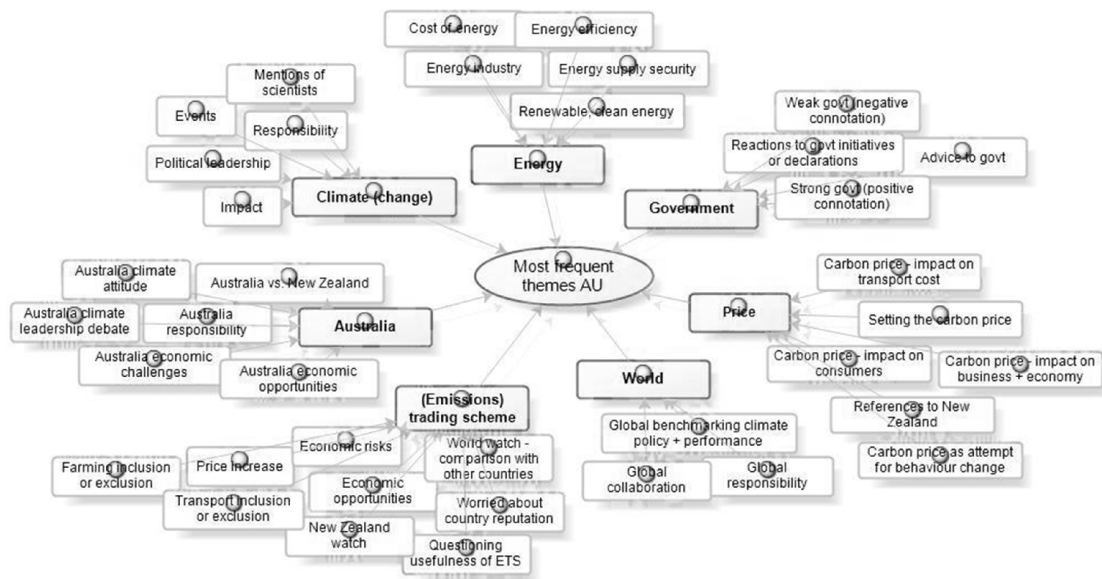
Figure 11. Dominant themes in Australian coverage of NZ and carbon emissions

In most of the Australian articles, references to NZ formed part of a political discourse surrounding plans by the Australian Government to introduce a price on carbon emissions in Australia, as noted before. Concerns in this context mostly related to the economic and financial implications of such a carbon price for Australian businesses, whether a carbon tax would threaten the country's competitiveness vis-à-vis industries in countries not subject to such obligations, plus the potential increases in costs of energy and transport for the end consumer. The limited financial and economic impact of NZ's ETS on its businesses and citizens/consumers was used as an argument to dispel those fears. Nevertheless, the competitiveness theme remained strong in Australian coverage, receiving renewed interest in connection with China in 2012, whose reportedly much lower carbon price revived concerns in Australia about a potential loss of competitiveness if subjected to a carbon tax higher than that of China, a key

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importer of Australian commodities. While not directly relevant for the NZ context, these findings show that, generally, Australian press coverage of carbon emissions was dominated by a discourse of short-term economic considerations and concerns, with comparatively little discussion of environmental implications or the potential consequences of failure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Where articles explicitly focused on NZ and carbon emissions, rather than making only a passing mention of the country while reporting on the Australian context, they tended to precede or follow specific events, such as a conference on climate change and business held in Auckland in 2008, and a visit by the NZ Prime Minister, John Key, to the Australian Parliament in June 2011. A closer analysis of the key terms and themes in Australian coverage, as established in Table 5, is provided in the context of coverage of NZ businesses, political leaders, the ETS, and carbon footprint (*food miles* and *air miles*) in sections 6.1.5 – 6.1.7.

Dominant themes in UK and US coverage

The most frequent keywords and themes in articles published in UK and US newspapers were found to refer to carbon footprint related to transport of primary produce (food miles), with some mentions of the potential impact of emissions trading on aviation, political leadership regarding carbon reduction, and carbon emissions related to agriculture in NZ. Having said that, the small amount of coverage makes it quite difficult to identify any dominant themes.
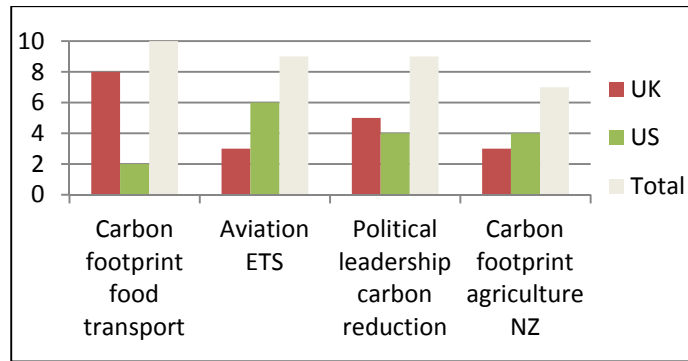
Figure 12. NZ and carbon emissions–Most frequent themes UK and US coverage

The only noteworthy coverage in terms of quantity resulted from a research publication by NZ's Lincoln University, showing that the carbon footprint of apples and lamb meat shipped from New Zealand to Europe was actually lower than of those locally sourced, which provided a strong argument against the validity of the food miles concept as discussed particularly in the UK at the time (see section 5.2.2). Apart from very few exceptions, which will be discussed in the context of coverage focused on NZ business and political attitudes and actions linked to carbon emissions, hardly any articles published in the US or UK during the 2008-2012 period provided in-depth coverage or a critical assessment of New Zealand in connection with carbon emissions.

Consistent with the importance of demonstrated business and political leadership for perceptions of place reputation and brand integrity, as discussed in chapter three, in the following two sections I take a closer look at international news coverage of NZ's businesses and industries, and references to the country's political leaders and Government in connection with carbon emissions.

6.1.5 Coverage of NZ's businesses and carbon emissions

Almost one quarter (23%) of the 230 articles analysed for this study mentioned NZ businesses or industries in connection with carbon emissions. Most of these

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appeared in Australian newspapers (43 articles), with only eight articles in the UK and two in the US. Australian coverage varied between eight mentions in 2008, four in 2009, back to eight in 2010, then increasing to fifteen mentions in 2011, and back to eight in 2012. The 2011 increase was mostly caused by a peak in coverage around June that year, caused by increased media attention accompanying NZ Prime Minister John Key's visit to Australia and his speech to the Australian Parliament, during which he referred to NZ's emissions trading scheme as generally well received by the NZ business community. The comparatively high amount of coverage in June 2011 was further caused by then Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, adding this declaration as an argument to support her carbon tax initiative.

Some articles highlighted the negative impact of the scheme on NZ's economy in general,[37] sometimes used as an argument against introducing a similar scheme in Australia: "In New Zealand, where an ETS is already implemented, the domestic economy is expected to shrink by around $NZ 6 billion ($A4.75 billion) this year. And household costs could rise by $NZ19,000 ($A15,000) by 2020" (*The Canberra Times*, 18 July 2008).

Critical mentions in Australian coverage focused on NZ's agricultural sector. For example, continued exception of NZ's farmers from the country's emissions trading scheme was seen as unfair to Australian farmers once subject to their country's own carbon tax:

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[37] For example, *The Age*, 28 April 2008; *The Canberra Times*, 18 July 2008; *The Australian*, 22 June 2011.

Global dairy giant Fonterra is poised to receive generous emissions exemptions for its New Zealand operations but, if Australia's farmers didn't receive similar concessions, our dairy industry "is rats...these fellows might as well pack up," Senator Heffernan said. (*The Canberra Times*, 28 February 2009)

In two instances, a NZ farming industry representative was quoted as stressing how economically devastating the inclusion of farming in the ETS would be for the NZ industry (*The Age*, 2 August 2011, and *The Australian*, 2 August 2011).

Some articles questioned the suitability of an ETS as a useful tool to reach sufficient emissions reduction (for example, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 June 2008), especially considering the exclusion of farming, NZ's biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions (*The Age*, 13 September 2011).

In 2010 and onwards, these questions became more frequent, with some pointing out that in its current stage the scheme provided no financial incentive for businesses to reduce emissions.[38] Oddly enough, an expert panel featured in *The Australian* (21 September 2011) suggested the exact opposite, that NZ should slow the increase of its carbon price under the ETS and soften its impact on agriculture once it was included in the scheme in 2015 (*The Australian*, 21 September 2011). In addition, three articles in *The Australian* (3 and 4 March 2009, and 16 February 2011) referred to NZ Government concerns about divergent carbon emissions schemes in Australia and NZ, threatening to undermine trans-Tasman economic integration.

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[38] *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 September 2010; *The Age*, 31 December 2010; *The Australian*, 31 March 2011; *The Australian*, 21 June 2011; *The Australian*, 14 September 2012.

Articles published in the UK and US were critical of NZ farmers' strong lobbying and resistance against the sector's inclusion in the country's emissions trading scheme, pointing out that agriculture was a significant contributor to NZ's greenhouse gas emissions (for example, *The New York Times*, 4 December 2008 and *The New York Times*, 17 November 2012). However, *The Times* (10 May 2008) noted that subjecting NZ industries to an ETS would make its exports to Europe uncompetitive for no valid reason, considering that NZ accounted for only 1% of global emissions.

On a more positive note, NZ wine growers managed to get favourable press coverage for having come up with original measures to reduce their carbon emissions. Those included Yealands Estate's use of sheep to "cut" grass between the vines (*The Guardian*, 23 July 2009; *The Canberra Times*, 26 July 2009; *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 November 2011). Mobius wines were mentioned for becoming the first in the world to display the carbon footprint on their bottles (*The Guardian*, 3 November 2010). Furthermore, New Zealand's clean tech pioneer CarbonScape made it into the *Financial Times* (19 March 2009) for developing "a machine to turn biomass such as agricultural waste into carbon-rich material…[which] could also be used as fertiliser or fuel."

While not very frequent, some Australian articles did refer to the opportunities and potential benefits of an ETS, such as the cost efficiency resulting from streamlining emissions trading and cooperation between Australia and NZ.[39] Another article saw the economic opportunities of trans-Tasman cooperation

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[39] *The Australian*, 29 March 2008; *The Australian*, 18 August 2008; *The Age*, 21 June 2011; *The Australian*, 21 June 2011.

mainly in legal advice and risk advisory services and in creating "more market liquidity and risk management opportunities for firms" (*The Australian*, 29 March 2008). Yet another acknowledged that "Australia, NZ, Canada and the US have real scope for the establishment of large-scale sequestration forests, which could provide a genuine low-cost alternative to reducing net emissions until a broader suite of low-emission technologies becomes available" (*The Australian*, 11 February 2008, also 1 April 2011).

The Sydney Morning Herald and *The Age* (both 13 August 2010) referred to a press release from the Australia-NZ Climate Change and Business Conference, in which business leaders expressed their optimism about ways to reduce carbon emissions, while at the same time improving profitability. This view was shared by Air New Zealand, the country's national carrier, which, according to *The Australian* (31 December 2008), acknowledged the ETS as a way to reduce its carbon footprint but also to cut costs. Air NZ also received favourable mentions for undertaking test flights with biofuels, and for advocating for carbon emission reductions through technological innovation. For example, *The Australian* (9 October 2009) noted:

> Air New Zealand is recognised as being on the cutting edge of airline moves to reduce emissions and [its CEO] Mr Fyfe has been vocal in promoting New Zealand as a green destination under the *100% pure* campaign.

However, favourable mentions of the airline were limited to 2008 and 2009. Whether this is due to changes in the airline's priorities, for example caused by

the global economic and financial crisis, or because its initiatives were no longer perceived newsworthy in the eyes of international newspapers, is unclear.

6.1.6 Coverage of NZ's political leaders and carbon emissions

Following the above analysis of Australian, UK and US newspaper coverage of NZ's businesses and economy in connection with carbon emissions, this section presents findings related to coverage of the country's political leaders and Government. Most of the 71 articles (out of the 230 articles included in this study) referring to NZ's Government appeared in Australian newspapers, with only minimal coverage in the UK and the US. Coverage was relatively strong in May/June 2008 and peaked in June 2011 (*Figure 13*), following NZ Prime Minister John Key's visit and speech to the Australian Parliament at a time where the introduction of a carbon tax and a possible collaboration between the Australian and NZ's carbon reduction initiatives were discussed in Australia.
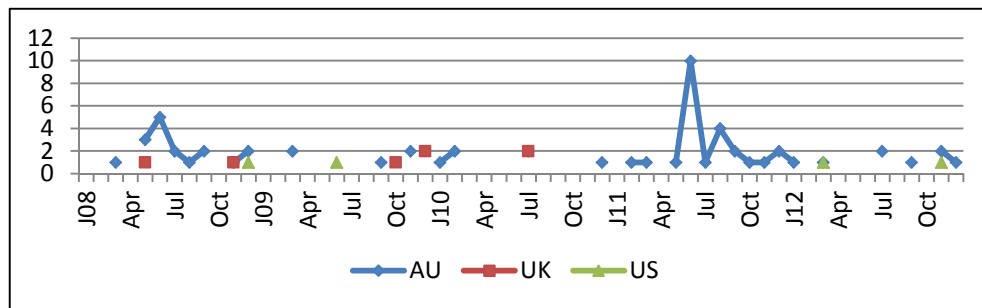
Figure 13. NZ Government–Number of articles/month (all countries)

Despite their different political backgrounds (John Key being a Conservative and his Australian counterpart at the time, Julia Gillard, a Labour party leader), the two lauded each other's commitment to reducing carbon emissions, engaging in some sort of "discursive Ping-Pong", presumably to back each other's arguments. This explains the relatively high number of favourable mentions during that time (*Figure 14*), all of which occurred in Australian coverage (none of the UK or US

newspapers covered NZ's Government in connection with carbon emissions during that time).
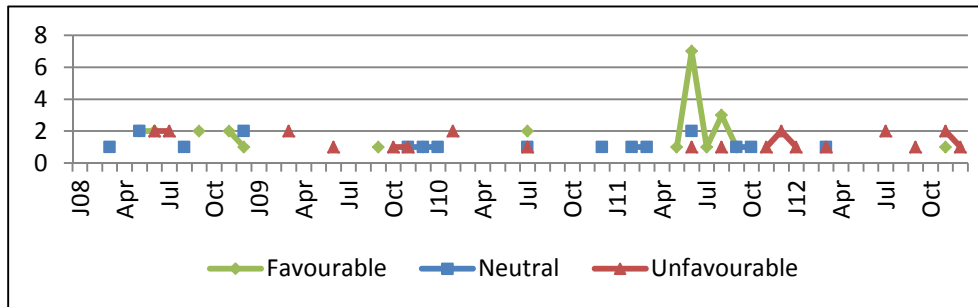
Figure 14. NZ Government–Changes in tone of coverage/month (all countries)

Earlier, in 2008, mostly favourable coverage backed NZ's reputation as a sustainability-driven, environmental leader, which can be traced back to the sustainability discourse and initiatives of former Prime Minister, Helen Clark. For instance, her visionary speech on making NZ world's first truly sustainable and carbon-neutral nation was reprinted in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (5 June 2008). In the UK, *The Independent* (7 November 2008) commended her commitment to making NZ carbon neutral and for having taken a lead in efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by ratifying the Kyoto Protocol.

Nevertheless, the same year also saw some very critical coverage on NZ's failure to reach the targets set under Kyoto and the potential financial consequences and penalties (reported, for example in *The Australian*, 26 March and 21 July 2008; *The Times*, 10 May 2008; *The Guardian*, 8 December 2008).

Following the NZ election in November 2008, references to the global financial crisis and the need for economic growth became more dominant in coverage of the NZ Government in connection with carbon emissions. For example, on 10

December 2008 *The Australian* quoted John Key that "economic growth would be the focus of his new Government as he tried to lift the country out of recession."

The imminent change in political priorities from environmental sustainability to economic growth had already triggered some critical coverage in 2008 during the election campaign. For example, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (21 June 2008) criticised John Key and his National Party for promising to delay the inclusion of petrol and transport in the country's ETS in order to get elected, an accusation the newspaper repeated at the election campaign three years later (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 October 2011).

In 2009, *The Australian* (3 March) reported that Key again underscored the need for economic growth due to the global financial crisis, which would require substantial changes to NZ's planned emissions trading scheme. In fact, judging from print news coverage included in this study, the National-led Government made it quite clear that it had no intention to lead the world in climate change mitigation (as reported, for example, by *The Australian*, 4 March 2009, and *The Guardian*, 12 November 2009). This was further highlighted by Key's intention not to attend the Copenhagen climate conference because he thought it was useless, as reported in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (20 November 2009).

Throughout 2009 and also in the following years, some critical references were made to Key's weakening of the emissions trading scheme, both in Australia,[40] the UK and the US. For instance, in the UK *The Independent* (21 September

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[40] *The Australian*, 7 March 2009; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 November 2009; *The Australian*, 8 July 2010; *The Australian*, 23 June 2011; *The Australian*, 28 November 2011.

2009) pointed out that NZ had no 2020 goal in place, while in the US *The Wall Street Journal* (10 July 2009) reported that concerns about high cost and lost jobs were threatening emissions trading schemes in both Australia and NZ. The same newspaper followed up on this some weeks later, observing signs of NZ backing out of the emissions-cutting framework, which the paper ascribed to self-interest (*The Wall Street Journal*, 21 September 2009).

Equally sceptical about NZ's environmental leadership, *The New York Times* (19 December 2009) noted that, because of some accounting strategy related to forestry practices, the country would actually get to increase its emissions by 188%, rather than having to reduce them. That NZ's performance under the Kyoto Protocol had become a sensitive political issue was suggested in an editorial piece in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (20 November 2009) that referred to an article in *The Guardian*[41] regarding a BBC interview with Key:

> At stake is the country's reputation for being clean and green. The only time Mr Key loses his smile is when mention is made of a recent opinion piece in Britain's Guardian newspaper which claimed New Zealand had offered "two fingers to the global community" for allowing greenhouse gases to rise 22% since signing the Kyoto treaty. …Mr Key calls the article 'bollocks' and the writer, Fred Pearce, a green activist. (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 November 2009)

In June 2011, and despite his declarations that NZ had no ambitions to lead in carbon reductions, Key was referred to as doing rather well for a conservative

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[41] This article will be discussed further in the next chapter on international news coverage of NZ's environmental brand positioning.

leader with regard to his stance on the need to reduce carbon emissions: "Mr Key is a conservative but his Government has introduced an emissions trading scheme" (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 June 2011). This favourable coverage coincided with Australian Prime Minister Gillard's referral to NZ's leadership in her urge for Australians to follow "the gutsy kiwi lead" on carbon pricing (*The Australian*, 21 June 2011). Two articles quoted her saying that, unlike Australia, NZ had an ETS installed, which "should make us a little bit ashamed of ourselves, I think. We don't like New Zealand getting in front of us, do we?" (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June 2011; *The Australian*, 13 July 2011). These comments were likely triggered by Key's declarations at that time that the ETS in NZ had been running successfully and that it provided certainty to business, led to more renewable energy,[42] and had helped cut greenhouse gas emissions.[43]

In November 2011 Tim Wilson, climate change policy director of the Australian Institute of Public Affairs and a regular contributor to *The Australian* during the analysis period, wrote an opinion piece in which he pointed out that NZ's already impotent ETS would be made even weaker after John Key's re-election (*The Australian*, 28 November 2011). Some weeks later, *The Australian* again wrote that NZ's ETS had been weakened under Key's conservative Government and was now effectively stalled: "New Zealand National Government's re-election ensures its uncapped emissions trading scheme will be watered down" (*The Australian*, 10 January 2012). Perhaps to counter such observations, at the end of that month, NZ's Finance Minister, Bill English, was quoted in another newspaper, *The Age* (30 January 2012), lauding the success of the scheme as

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[42] *The Canberra Times*, 21 June 2011; *The Age*, 22 June 2011; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 August 2011; *The Age*, 6 August 2011; *The Age*, 12 August 2011.
[43] *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 June 2011; *The Age*, 2 August 2011; *The Age*, 6 August 2011.

"pretty generally accepted, not because people like a carbon price so much as it gives people certainty about what the climate change policy is."

A notable change in coverage related to NZ in connection with the Kyoto Protocol occurred towards the end of 2012 (*Figure 15*), following a declaration by NZ's Government during the Doha climate conference that it would not commit to legally binding emissions reductions under a second term of the Kyoto Protocol.
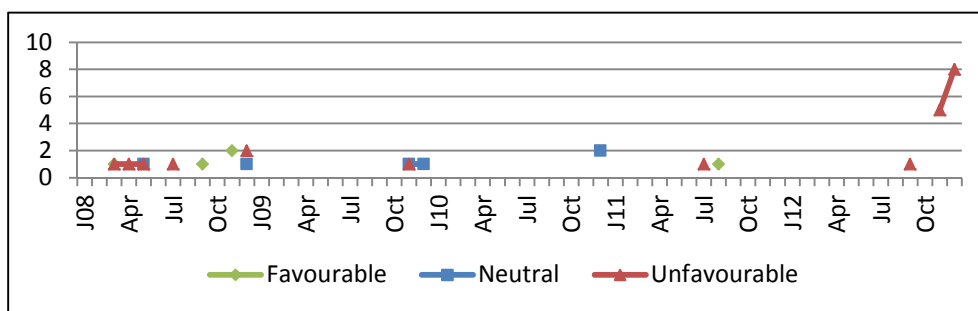
Figure 15. NZ Kyoto–Change in tone of coverage/month (all countries)

However, while those declarations and their coverage cast a negative light on NZ's environmental credibility, articles were not as critical as one might expect, considering the country's previous strong support of the Kyoto framework. An indication for the reason that triggered this U-turn in NZ's climate policy was provided by NZ's Climate Change Minister, Tim Groser, quoted in *The Guardian* (3 December 2012) as follows: "This excessive focus on Kyoto, Kyoto, Kyoto, Kyoto, was fine in the 1990s. But given that it covers only 15% of emissions, I'm sorry, this is not the main game."

A similar declaration by the same Minister to journalists in Doha appeared in the same newspaper one day later, reiterating the Government's stance with regards to the Kyoto Protocol:

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> I think it's time for green groups around the world to start to analyse this
> problem on the basis not of the rhetoric of the 90s, but some numerical
> analysis of where the problem lies today. (*The Guardian*, 4 December
> 2012)

While one could argue that this position is not entirely unjustified, considering that major emitters, such as the US and China, were not participating in the Kyoto Protocol, those declarations nevertheless mark a significant change in NZ's political discourse and climate policy, from staunch support under Helen Clark's Labour Government,[44] to opting out of a globally binding agreement altogether only a few years later.

There were also signs of a change in priorities within the Labour party itself. At least in one instance party spokesperson for climate change, Greg Hunt, was cited as supporting the delay of the ETS "because consumers and business cannot currently afford it" (*The Australian*, 4 July 2012, also 5 July 2012). If cited correctly, this would suggest a departure from the party's sustainability ambitions under the leadership of former Prime Minister Helen Clark, but also a change in policy priorities across political benches.

One of the most striking, or surprising, findings of analysis of international print media coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions was that none of the articles included in the study referred to the "colossal fossil" award given to NZ's Government delegation at the Doha conference early December 2012 by the International Climate Action Network for being particularly unhelpful in global

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[44] The Fifth Labour Government of NZ lasted from 10 December 1999-19 November 2008. Source: http://www.parliament.nz (accessed 19 November 2013).

negotiations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as already mentioned in section 5.5. Possible reasons for the non-coverage of what would be expected to be a major event in the context of NZ and carbon emissions, and the implications, both practical and theoretical, will be discussed in the following chapter.

In sum, findings presented in this section on international news coverage of NZ's political leaders and Government in connection with carbon emissions showed that coverage was mostly linked to the Australian carbon tax debate and, apart from that, tended to follow discursive events, such as John Key visiting Australia and his speech to the Australian Parliament, or NZ's declaration during the Doha climate conference in Qatar that it would not commit to a second term of the Kyoto Protocol. Comparatively broad coverage was given to declarations by NZ ministers that the ETS was working well. Astonishingly, the "colossal fossil" award was not taken up by any of the newspapers included in the study. The study also showed that coverage of NZ's political leaders or Government was considerably less frequent in the US and the UK, compared to Australia. Instead, UK and US coverage was more concerned with the issues of *carbon footprint*, *food miles* and, to a lesser extent, *air miles*, as illustrated in the following section.

6.1.7 Coverage of NZ and carbon footprint, food miles and air miles

In addition to analysis of international news representations of NZ's businesses and political leaders in connection with carbon emissions, Australian, UK and US articles included in this study were also analysed for mentions of *carbon footprint*, particularly in the context of *food miles,* the greenhouse gas emissions linked to the transport of food (McClaren, 2010). As indicated in the previous chapter (section 5.2.2), these had become a concern for NZ exporters as they had received

some unfavourable press, particularly from the UK. Judging by the small amount of coverage dedicated to these terms during the 2008-2012 period, such concerns appeared to be no longer warranted. What is more, not only was media interest in the issue restricted to the earlier years of this study, with no mentions detected after 2010, mentions were also mostly favourable toward NZ.

Some articles referred to the publication of a study by Lincoln University in NZ (Saunders & Barber, 2007), showing that the carbon footprint of NZ lamb and apples was actually lower than that of the same produce sourced locally in the UK. For example, a representative of the UK Food Ethics Council was quoted in *The Times* (2 August 2008) as follows: "The difference between buying an air freighted apple from NZ and a shipped one from Europe will be so trivial, it's hardly worth worrying about." Likewise, the *Financial Times* (7 February 2009) came to the defence of NZ wine, stressing that much of the energy used in NZ was coming from renewable sources and that ocean transport caused relatively few emissions compared to road transport in Europe.

With regard to the carbon footprint connected with air travel (*air miles*), hardly any mention was made in Australian, UK and US newspapers during 2008-2012. The only exception was two articles reporting concerns by Air New Zealand chief executive Rob Fyfe in 2008 that long-haul travellers might shun NZ as a destination because they were worried about their carbon footprint (*The Australian*, 8 February and 4 April 2008). Judging from the absence of critical press coverage of NZ linked to food miles and air miles, those concerns do not seem to be warranted. In fact, as the following section illustrates, global

environmental expectations or the responsibility of individual countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, received little traction in the news articles analysed for the present study.

6.1.8 Summary

The questions addressed in the first part of this chapter were: 1) whether and how international newspapers covered NZ's environmental performance (carbon emissions) during 2008-2012, and 2) how such coverage changed over time and differed across countries. Overall, results indicate that there was a shift in coverage from predominantly favourable to comparatively more neutral or critical mentions over the five-year period. The most significant change in both frequency and tone occurred during mid-2011, triggered by NZ's Prime Minister, John Key, emphasising the success of his country's ETS during a speech to the Australian Parliament. Apart from this peak, the amount of coverage both regarding NZ businesses and political leaders (Government) in connection with carbon emissions decreased during the analysis period. Australian coverage of NZ and carbon emissions, accounting for 84% of the 230 articles analysed for this study, was dominated by domestic political debates, and economic and financial concerns. In the UK and US, NZ's carbon footprint and the food miles issue received some coverage, which was mostly critical of the concept and favourable toward NZ. Themes such as NZ's responsibility in the global community to comply with the Kyoto Protocol, or to reduce its carbon emissions, did not track any noteworthy amount of coverage. In particular, the "colossal fossil" award to NZ's Government during the Doha climate change conference in 2012 for failing to support a global emissions reductions scheme went uncovered.

6.2 Coverage of NZ's Environmental Positioning

This second part of the chapter addresses the questions whether and how Australian, UK and US newspapers covered NZ's *clean, green* image and its *100% Pure* branding during 2008-2012.

6.2.1 Coverage of *clean, green* NZ

From a total of 20 articles mentioning *clean, green* and *Zealand* during 2008-2012, 12 appeared in Australian newspapers, followed by six in the UK and only two in the US. Coverage was strongest in 2009 and 2010 with a total of seven articles in each of those years. Very few mentions were made in 2008, 2011 and 2012 (*Figure 16*).
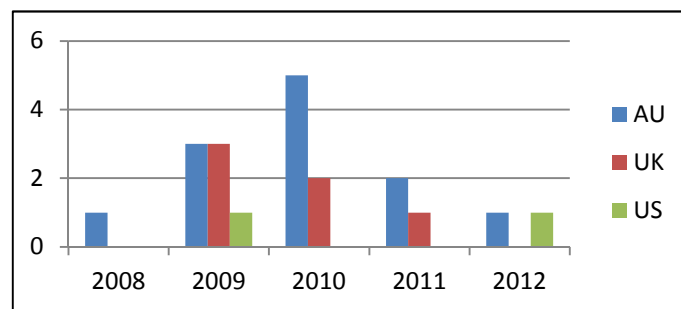
Figure 16. NZ and *clean, green*–Number of articles by country/year

In Australia, the tone of coverage of *clean, green* NZ was mostly favourable. To the contrary, UK coverage was equally favourable and unfavourable, only one neutral and one unfavourable mention were detected in the US newspapers. In 2009, unfavourable mentions outnumbered favourable or neutral ones, while in 2010 most mentions were favourable (*Figure 17*).
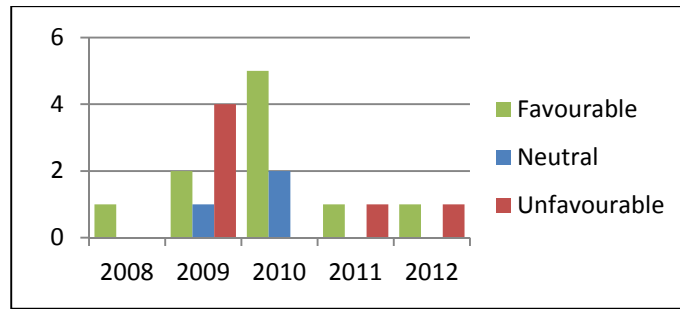
Figure 17. NZ and *clean, green*–Tone of coverage/year (all countries)

The comparatively large number of unfavourable mentions in 2009 was caused by some articles critical of the NZ Government's attitude towards climate change negotiations and carbon emissions in the run-up to the Copenhagen climate conference that took place in the Danish Capital from 7–18 December that year. The most critical article was written by environmental journalist Fred Pearce for *The Guardian* (12 November 2009), who took up remarks by NZ Climate Change Minister, Tim Groser, that the NZ Government would not try to be a leader in climate change. In the article, Pearce accused the country of showing "the most shameless two fingers to the global community by selling itself round the world as 'clean and green', while at the same time proclaiming that it would not try to be 'leaders' in climate change." Some days later, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (20 November 2009) picked up on this article and Key's intention not to attend the Copenhagen conference, stressing that "the country's reputation for being clean and green" was at stake.

Interestingly, apart from this isolated article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (20 November 2009), all coverage critical of NZ's *clean, green* proposition appeared in UK or US newspapers, while Australian coverage took a mostly uncritical stance. This was demonstrated, for example, by *The Australian* pointing out how well NZ was positioned with its *clean, green* image, while at the same time

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dismissing concerns about a risk that NZ's carbon emissions record could damage its environmental image:

> New Zealand already boasted one of the world's most pristine environments before it passed cap-and-trade last year. The best advertisement for New Zealand isn't to support ideas that make the country poorer. Instead, Mr Key's Government would do better by focusing on encouraging strong economic growth to support a vibrant, entrepreneurial society. That way, tourists may want to come to New Zealand and stay. (*The Australian*, 9 September 2009)

The economic and financial success of the *clean, green* brand, rather than whether NZ's environmental performance actually lived up to this proposition, was the topic of discussion in Australian coverage, and referred to as an example to follow. An indication of the perceived importance of *clean, green* as umbrella brand for a range of New Zealand export products was provided by an article in *The Age* (11 June 2009): "Such is its strength that other businesses are tapping into New Zealand's clean, green image. From frozen peas and beer to vodka and butter – they are all out there marketing their pure credentials."

In 2010, articles referring to NZ's *clean, green* image saw it as a major opportunity for NZ to profit from deteriorating environmental or health conditions in other countries. For example, as a research consultant quoted in *The Australian* (15 January 2010) put it: "With the recent baby milk formula food scare, more

Chinese companies are heeding the Government's call to invest in Australia[45] and New Zealand, which are renowned for their clean and green food industry."

Similarly, in the UK *The Daily Telegraph* (23 October 2010) referred to *clean, green* as the reason for NZ's ability to charge premium prices: "This country…forged a reputation based on quality, persuading us to spend a bit more to buy a mouthful of its clean, green land, as the slogan goes." In 2012, *The Australian* (2 June) wrote that the *clean, green* image allowed NZ to profit from anticipated growing demand for organic food. These references indicate that, apart from functioning as quality assurance, the *clean, green* image plays a key role for NZ's ability to secure access to the global market and for being able to charge premium prices.

However, in an article in *The New York Times* (17 November 2012), prompted by the upcoming premiere of *The Hobbit* feature film, *clean, green* NZ was covered in a more critical light. Essentially, the article stated that the country's *clean, green* proposition increasingly "clashes with realities" and that NZ's branding was a desperate attempt of an isolated country to compete in world markets, though unfortunately not reflecting the actual condition of its environment. Rather than triggering positive coverage about NZ's environmental credentials, the country's re-branding as *Middle Earth* for the film premiere of *The Hobbit*, a film drawing heavily on NZ landscapes, was thus used as an opportunity to emphasise a growing legitimacy gap. Overall, however, articles critical about NZ's

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[45] One interesting finding not directly related to NZ was that some Australian articles used clean and green to describe their country's own products and reputation. All of those were published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (27 March and 19 December 2008; 11 April, 6 June, 26 August and 27 August 2009; 24 April and 7 May 2010; and 15 October 2012).

environmental performance in connection with its image were rare, and in consideration of the total amount of coverage analysed for this study, outnumbered by the largely uncritical Australian coverage, most of which referred to *clean, green* NZ as an economic asset.

Another interesting finding consisted of the different ways in which political leaders referred to *clean, green*, as reported in international press coverage. For example, in 2008 then NZ Prime Minister, Helen Clark, stated: "We take pride in our clean, green identity as a nation and we are determined to take action to protect it" (as quoted in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 June 2008). In 2009, this stance was reflected in two articles referred to *clean, green* as a main reason for attracting skilled migrants to the country:

> New Zealand's environmental credentials are no secret: Nearly half of all skilled migrants to the country cite its "climate or the clean, green environment to be a main reason" for moving there, according to a survey conducted by the nation's Department of Labour. (*The Washington Post*, 23 February 2009)

However, later that year *The Guardian* (12 November 2009) reported that the image immigrants had of a new life in NZ did not always match expectations: "Only to find this clean, green idea that they had of the country a mirage."

Contrary to Clark's 2008 reference to *clean, green* as NZ's national identity, in 2010 NZ Climate Minister Nick Smith was quoted referring to *clean, green* as a brand (*Canberra Times*, 2 July 2010), which illustrates how different the perceptions of the term were within the country. The view of *clean, green* as a

marketing-focussed country-of-origin brand, rather than national identity, was also taken up in *The Australian* (8 July 2010), stressing the link between NZ's ETS and the *clean, green* country-of-origin branding:

> The scheme was conceived in part as an element of the strong branding of New Zealand as the epitome of a clean, green country – with consequent benefits for tourism and for the marketing of many products, led by foods.

Similar references to *clean, green* as a product and place brand appeared during 2011 and 2012. For instance, *The Australian* (26 February 2011) wrote that NZ "prides itself on being clean and green…and uses this as a core marketing strategy for its tourism and its agricultural products." Additionally, *The Australian* (2 June 2012) stated: "In anticipation of growing regional demand for organic food…New Zealand [has] successfully branded [its] food products as clean and green." In summary, analysis showed that the meaning given to *clean, green* ranged from national identity (Helen Clark) to national image and, from 2010 on, was increasingly referred to as a brand used for destination and product marketing. In this regard news representations of *clean, green* are closely linked to NZ's *100% Pure* campaign, whose coverage in Australian, UK and US newspapers over the 2008-2012 period is summarised as follows.

6.2.2 Coverage of *100% Pure* New Zealand

In order to be able to determine the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of NZ's global environmental positioning, the present study also included analysis of international print news media coverage of the *100% Pure NZ* branding campaign, used to promote the country's environmental credentials

overseas. From a total of 30 articles referring to *100% Pure* and *Zealand* in Australian, UK and US newspapers during the 2008-2012 analysis period, 23 appeared in Australia, followed by five articles in the UK and two in the US. Most coverage occurred in 2009 (*Figure 18*), following a call for proposals by the Australian Government for a new country brand that could match the success of NZ's *100% Pure* campaign.
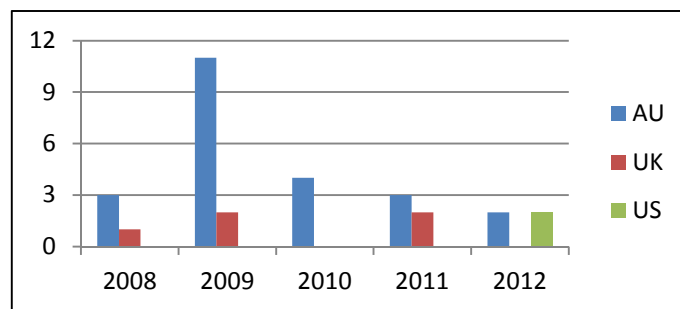
Figure 18. NZ and *100% Pure*–Number of articles by country/year

In terms of tone of coverage, *Figure 19* illustrates that most articles referred to NZ's *100% Pure* branding favourably, particularly in 2009.
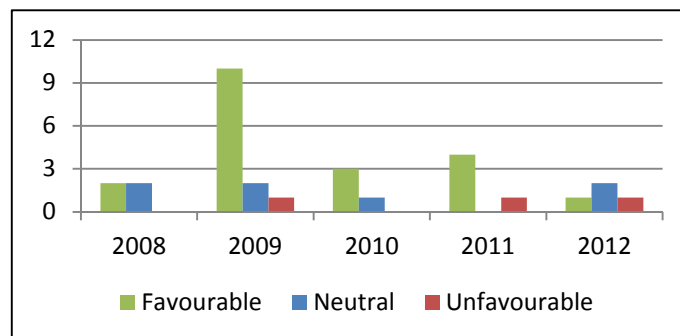
Figure 19. NZ and *100% Pure*–Tone of coverage/year (all countries)

Almost all of the favourable references to *100% Pure* appeared in Australian newspapers, often expressing envy and admiration for the brand's success. For instance, *100% Pure* was referred to as "a piece of marketing genius" (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 December 2008), while in 2009 the consistency of the *100% Pure* marketing campaign was highlighted as example for Australia to follow (*The*

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Sydney Morning Herald, 11 April 2009). During that time, *100% Pure* was celebrated for its ability to capture "the essence of New Zealand", that it could be "hitched to a landscape, place, emotion or feeling" (*The Age,* 11 June 2009), and adapted "to any number of experiences and exports" (*The Australian,* 11 June 2009). According to *The Age* (26 August 2009), the Australian Government was eager to come up with a country image that could "rival the success of brands like *100% Pure* New Zealand." In 2010, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (24 April) reiterated a stance it had taken a year earlier, that NZ's *100% Pure* campaign was widely "acknowledged as one of the world's most successful tourism marketing campaigns."

In 2012, *The New York Times* (17 November) took a somewhat more critical stance on the *100% Pure* NZ campaign, citing a report by NZ green business lobby group *Pure Advantage*, which urged that "NZ's main priorities should be giving legitimacy to the 100% Pure branding." This was followed by a quote from Tourism NZ, the Government agency responsible for the campaign, noting that *100% Pure* was never just about the environment, but about a New Zealand experience and that, while "New Zealand does not have a completely untouched environment…we are better than most."

Moreover, there are some indications that over time perceptions of *100% Pure* had changed from viewing it as a "mere" tourism brand to something more encompassing. For instance, *The Australian* (5 September 2009) wrote:

> The most successful example of *nation branding* [emphasis added] has to
> be the 100% Pure New Zealand campaign, which was launched in 1999

with an apparent bottomless-pit global advertising and marketing campaign. This simple slogan suggests not just environmental purity but a core cohesiveness about the people and the place.

Similarly, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (7 May 2010) proclaimed that *100% Pure* had "evolved from a tourism [advertisement] slogan to become a national brand." Also clearly not related to tourism any more was *The Independent*'s assertion that NZ's violent gang culture would be unexpected in a country marketing itself as *100% Pure* (6 September 2011). In the same year, UK's *The Daily Telegraph* (19 November) followed the line of *100% Pure* as a national brand in its description of NZ wines:

> One country truly committed to sustainability is New Zealand. Its desire to create wines that reflect its pure landscape and climate has driven it to be a world leader in sustainability, and the nation aims to be the first in the world to be 100% sustainable.

This indicates how the meaning and use of *100% Pure*, while originally conceived as a tourist destination branding campaign, over the years has become more varied and encompassing in that it was also referred to as a country and national brand.

6.3 Comparison: Coverage of NZ's Environmental Performance and Branding

This section addresses the research question whether there were any evident links between the amount and nature of international press coverage of NZ's environmental performance and its branding during 2008-2012. Judging from the comparison of the results presented in the previous sections on Australian, UK and US coverage of *carbon emissions* as proxy for NZ's environmental

performance, and *clean, green* and *100% Pure* representative for its branding (*Table 6*) there does not seem to be any apparent link between the amount of coverage of carbon emissions and the amount of coverage of *clean, green* NZ.

Table 6. Comparison of International Coverage of NZ and Carbon Emissions, and Branding

Coverage of *NZ* and *carbon emissions*	Coverage of *clean, green* and *100% Pure*
Amount of coverage (overall) decreased during 2008-2010, peaked in 2011 (Australia), then dropped to its lowest level in 2012 (*Figure 4*).	***Amount*** of coverage of *clean, green* (overall) increased during 2008-2010 (75% of articles published during this period), then decreased during 2011-2012 (*Figure 16*). Amount of coverage of *100% Pure* (overall) peaked in 2009 (Australia), with very low but overall equal numbers in other years (*Figure 18*).
Tone of coverage (overall) was mostly favourable in 2008, almost equally favourable and unfavourable in 2009, with neutral and favourable coverage almost equal in 2010. Comparatively strong increase in (almost equal) favourable and neutral coverage in 2011 (Australia), followed by mostly unfavourable or neutral coverage in 2012 (*Figure 5*).	***Tone*** of coverage *clean, green* (overall) was comparatively more unfavourable in 2009, predominantly favourable in 2010, with only one favourable in 2008 and very few (equally favourable and unfavourable) mentions in 2011 and 2012 (*Figure 17*).
	The only noteworthy change in tone of coverage *100% Pure* (overall) was a peak in favourable mentions during 2009, with very few (mostly favourable or neutral) mentions in the other years (*Figure 19*).

While coverage of NZ's environmental performance peaked in 2011, 2010 was the year with most coverage linked to its environmental positioning. Moreover, there is no link between the tone of coverage of NZ and carbon emissions (which

was most favourable in 2008 and 2011) and the tone of coverage on *clean, green* NZ, with most favourable mentions in 2010.

In other words, 2010 was the "best" year (in terms of amount and tone) regarding international news media representations of NZ's environmental positioning, whereas 2011 was the "best" year (in terms of amount and tone) linked to coverage of NZ's environmental performance linked to carbon emissions. A further indicator for the fact that no apparent connection exists between the amount and nature of coverage of the country's environmental performance and its branding is that the tone of coverage in 2009 of both NZ and carbon emissions, and *clean, green* NZ was negative, whereas during the same year coverage of *100% Pure* was predominantly favourable.

6.4 Chapter Summary

The questions addressed in this chapter were: 1) how during the five-year period 2008-2012 Australian, UK and US newspapers reported NZ's environmental performance in connection with carbon emissions; and 2) how they covered the country's *clean, green* image and the *100% Pure* branding campaign during the same period. Findings presented in the first part of the chapter indicate that there was a shift in coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions from predominantly favourable to comparatively more neutral, or critical. The most significant change in frequency occurred during mid-2011, triggered by NZ's Prime Minister, John Key, emphasising the success of his country's ETS during a speech to the Australian Parliament. Apart from this peak, the amount of coverage both regarding NZ businesses and political leaders (Government) in connection with carbon emissions decreased during the analysis period. Australian coverage

of NZ and carbon emissions, accounting for 84% of the 230 articles analysed for this study, was dominated by domestic political debates, in which economic and financial concerns prevailed. In the UK and US, NZ's carbon footprint and the food miles issue received some coverage, which was mostly critical of the concept and favourable toward NZ. Themes such as NZ's responsibility in the global community to comply with the Kyoto Protocol, or to reduce its carbon emissions, did not track any noteworthy amount of coverage. Most surprisingly, perhaps, NZ's "colossal fossil" award during the 2012 Doha climate conference went uncovered in the international press.

With regard to overseas press coverage of NZ's environmental positioning, summarised in the second part of the chapter, results indicate that in Australia, NZ's environmental positioning as *clean, green* and *100% Pure* was mostly referred to favourably, namely an important economic asset for NZ and an example for Australia to follow. Apart from some isolated critical mentions in UK and US coverage, such as on the occasion of the 2009 climate conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the premiere of *The Hobbit* in 2012, favourable or neutral coverage of *clean, green* and *100% Pure* NZ also prevailed in the UK and US press. In fact, particularly in the US, there were very few mentions of NZ's environmental positioning or reputation.

The study further revealed that the way in which political leaders referred to *clean, green* ranged from national identity (Helen Clark) to a country image and, from 2010 on, a product and place brand. Curiously, during the same period

mentions of *100% Pure* in international news coverage changed from tourism slogan to a more encompassing country or national brand.

Moreover, comparison of results from analysis of Australian, UK and US coverage of NZ's environmental performance (carbon emissions) and its brand positioning during 2008-2012 revealed that there was no apparent link with respect to the amount and tone of coverage of these three search terms. The findings presented in this and the previous chapter are further discussed and elaborated in the following chapter.

Chapter 7

Discussion

Having presented the key results from the analysis of secondary data conducted to determine the origins and meaning of NZ's environmental image and brand positioning (research objective two) and the amount and nature of international news coverage (research objectives three and four) in the two previous chapters, the purpose of this chapter is threefold: First, results are discussed with regard to the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of New Zealand's global environmental positioning as *clean, green* and *100% Pure* (section 7.1, research objective five); Second, section 7.2 links back to the theories on factors influencing news coverage presented in chapter two, in a discussion of the reasons for changes in coverage over time and differences across countries (research objective six); Lastly, the chapter addresses the knowledge gap identified in chapter three regarding the role of news media representations in the discursive construction of national (environmental) reputation and place brand image (section 7.3, research objective seven).

7.1 NZ's *Clean, Green* Credibility at Stake?

One of the main purposes of the present study, as indicated in the introduction to this thesis has been to determine the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of NZ's global environmental positioning (research objective five), which the study has attempted by exploring its discursive representations within the country and in international news media coverage.

7.1.1 The view from inside

In chapter five I provided an overview of opinions within NZ linked to its environmental performance and self-representation as *clean, green* and *100% Pure*. While indicative rather than representative of positions within the country, as already mentioned, some key observations can be made on the basis of the secondary data analysed. First, it has been proposed that a brand's perceived authenticity depends on whether it lives up to its espoused values and commitments (Beverland, 2011; Napoli et al., 2013) and that local communities need to be able to identify themselves with the brand, since this will determine their commitment to support it (Aitken & Campelo, 2011).

Analysis of secondary data revealed that, whereas the *clean, green* values are widely considered an integral fabric of NZ as an imagined community (Anderson, 1983), there is also mounting evidence of a widespread awareness among New Zealanders of a gap between the *clean, green* self-conception, and NZ's actual environmental record. Moreover, not only are the views held by NZ's internal publics crucial when perceived as national brand ambassadors (Aronczyk, 2008), authentic brand stories also need to be at one with the local community (Beverland, 2011). In other words, as noted in section 3.5.2, a country's citizens need to act in alignment with the brand. Whether this is in fact the case in the *clean, green* context is questionable, taking into account the historically predominantly utilitarian attitude of many New Zealanders towards their natural environment, as noted in section 5.4, and the country's unfavourable ranking in terms of per capita carbon emissions, for example.

A place brand's espoused values need to be reflected not only in political leadership (Allan, 2011), but also in the attitudes and behaviour of key companies (Dinnie, 2008). As Allan (2011) has noted, how "leadership is practiced says a lot about the way the place is governed, its values, and…how it wants to be seen by the rest of the world" (p. 88). In addition, the actions and declarations of a country's political and corporate leaders "can attract or repel people, institutions, companies, investors, and tourists" (Allan, 2011, p. 82).

With regard to the role of a country's government as key influencer of the perceived credibility, integrity and thus legitimacy of a national brand, Roper (2012) stresses that, amidst increasing perceptions of environmental and social risk, "governments are required to rethink their core priorities and be seen to be acting in the 'public interest'" (p. 5). Roper further notes:

> Regardless of the fact that business and governments may or may not see a need for change, be it from an environmental, moral or economic perspective, the sub-political (Beck, 1997) uprising of society in response to risk can present an ultimatum: change or suffer a fundamental loss of trust, reputation and legitimacy. (2012, p. 3)

A very similar scenario is presented to business organisations who, according to Bonini et al. (2008, p. 1) "must act on global warming and other issues to narrow a general trust gap between them and the public." The political and business discourse linked to environmental issues within NZ during the analysis period, as presented in chapter five, illustrates the significant changes and strategic reorientation from sustainability and climate leadership to a preoccupation with economic growth that occurred during this time.

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However, while concerted action and collaboration among key actors is necessary to leverage off a green place brand (Fan, 2005; Giannopoulos et al., 2011; Roper, 2010), achieving this can be difficult due to the diverging interests of a multitude of stakeholders and players, such as business, communities, government, each of which might support or detract from the ambitions of a green place brand (Insch, 2011). The situation is further complicated by the fact that "business and governments face issues that stem from complex discursive struggles both within their own sectors and across other sectors, both nationally and internationally" (Roper, 2012, p. 4). The attitudes held on the issue of greenhouse gas emissions as a cause for climate change within NZ exemplify this issue well since they varied significantly both across Governments (Labour *versus* National) and industries (agriculture *versus* tourism).

Judging from the secondary data reviewed for this study, active collaboration is prevented, for example, by the diverging interests of the National Government and some of the country's key business leaders, represented in the *Pure Advantage* organisation. Furthermore, it has been suggested that brand authenticity requires "managing the tension between commercial imperatives and the espoused values of the brand" (Beverland, 2011, p. 288). While previous Governments, notably those with Helen Clark as Prime Minister, showed some leadership in addressing those tensions by promoting a sustainability strategy, political priorities of economic growth based on the extraction of natural resources under the National Government are clearly at odds with the national brand values of *clean and green*. With (organisational) legitimacy depending as much on the views of internal and external publics (Cheney & Christensen, 2001),

international news representations play an important part in the discussion of the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of NZ's national branding.

7.1.2 The view from outside: International press coverage

In chapter three, reputation was defined as the combination of an organisation's public prominence (to which extent it is recognised collectively), its public esteem, and the qualities or attributes associated with it (Rindova et al., 2005; Carroll, 2011b). As the sum of images over time (Passow et al., 2005), reputation was further conceptualised as the long-term impressions built around numerous images and actions (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). In this section I discuss NZ's environmental reputation and brand credibility from an international news media perspective. First, the amount of coverage awarded to NZ's environmental performance is used as an indicator for public prominence. Second, the tone of coverage, or connotation, serves as an indicator for its social and leadership appeal in an environmental context. Third, the attributes and qualities associated with NZ in connection with carbon emissions and the references to *clean, green* and *100% Pure* NZ in overseas media will be discussed.

Public prominence: Amount of coverage awarded to NZ

Overall, coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions as a proxy for its environmental performance was very limited during the 2008-2012 period, as detailed in section 6.1.1. Australian newspapers provided most coverage (84%), most of which was centred around June 2011, explained by news media's indexing tendency. Coverage in the UK decreased from 2008 onwards, while US newspapers hardly reported on NZ's environmental performance in relation to carbon emissions at all. Hence, judging from the amount of coverage, NZ's

environmental performance was considered of little importance by those newspapers analysed. Following the argumentation that the amount of coverage can serve as an indicator for public prominence, results from the present study suggest that NZ's environmental performance would have been of little concern to the public reached by the newspapers during the analysis period.

Those findings also suggest that NZ's public prominence in an environmental context was stronger in 2008 (UK) and surrounding specific events, such as the Copenhagen conference in December 2009, and critical discourse moments (Carvalho, 2007), like Prime Minister John Key's speech to the Australian Parliament, to which I will return later on. Evidently, this conclusion only applies in the context of the select number of newspapers, whose coverage might differ from other forms of news media. However, due to the special position of quality newspapers as among the most credible and trusted source of information (Bird, 2010; Corbett, 2006; Fishburn-Hedges, 2007; Newspaper Association of America, 2010) relied on by elites for decision making (Louw, 2010), coverage of NZ's environmental performance in those newspapers has to be considered particularly relevant.

Public esteem: NZ's perceived social and leadership appeal

Apart from the quantity, or amount, of news coverage awarded to an issue over time as an indicator for its public prominence, it has been argued that a country's social and leadership appeal, that is, its public esteem, plays an essential role with regard to its reputation. Indeed, as Anholt (2010a, 2010b) has highlighted, the public esteem dimension is increasingly important for nations and countries

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confronted with mounting expectations to act as responsible members of the global community. Social appeal and perceived business and political leadership therefore play a central role in the discussion of a country's environmental reputation.

With regard to NZ's social appeal linked to its environmental performance (carbon emissions), UK coverage provided the most apparent indication that, in the context of climate change and carbon emissions, perceptions of NZ as a responsible member of the global community had somewhat deteriorated during the analysis period. Whereas in 2008 the country's Labour Prime Minister, Helen Clark, was lauded for aspiring to make NZ a leader in sustainability, once the National-led Government had assumed power at the end of that year, coverage became more critical, reflecting the change in political priorities from environmental sustainability to a focus on economic growth, as illustrated in chapter five. The article that stands out in this context is the opinion piece written by *The Guardian* journalist Fred Pearce (12 November 2009), in which he condemned NZ's hesitant stance to taking a leadership role in the climate change context. However, the same article went a step further, pointing out that the image immigrants had of a new life in NZ did not always match expectations.

Yet, looking at the few isolated critical articles in a broader context of Australian, UK and US coverage combined, reveals that NZ's social appeal in connection with carbon emissions was considered of little importance. Having said that, the comparatively low amount of coverage specifically in the UK and, even more so, the US makes it difficult, if not impossible, to make a proper judgement about a

change in the country's social appeal, as represented in overseas press. What can be said, however, is that after 2008 NZ seems to have failed to generate the coverage necessary to distinguish itself as a responsible, caring member of the global community in the climate change context. As will be discussed later on, non-coverage of its environmental performance and leadership certainly is not helping NZ to bolster its brand positioning.

Further to social appeal, NZ's leadership appeal is the second dimension of a country's reputation with particular relevance for the present study. Leadership, as Allan (2011) has pointed out, can indicate how a place "is governed, its values, and what it wants to do for and how it wants to be seen by the rest of the world" (p. 88). Analysis of Australian, UK and US news coverage of NZ and carbon emissions revealed some significant changes regarding NZ's business and political leadership in connection with carbon emissions over the 2008-2012 period. Regarding business leadership, the study found a decline in the amount of favourable mentions of NZ business initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions during 2008-2012. For instance, while in 2008 Air New Zealand's pioneering move for the adoption of biofuels earned the airline favourable headlines both in Australia, the UK and the US, mentions of the airlines' environmental initiatives or performance ceased in subsequent years. Apart from a few positive stories linked to NZ wine growers coming up with some innovative initiatives to address the carbon emissions issue, NZ's agricultural sector was seen as a laggard throughout 2008-2012. Unfavourable coverage was mostly caused by its strong lobbying against being included in NZ's ETS, despite its significant contribution to the country's greenhouse gas emissions.

Taking into account the importance of symbolic actions – anything "especially suggestive, remarkable, memorable, picturesque, newsworthy, topical, poetic, touching, surprising, or dramatic" (Anholt, 2011, pp. 26-27) – as a means to create positive stories of places, the decline in media coverage portraying NZ businesses as leaders in the environmental sustainability field could indicate that such symbolic actions had become scarce. This would coincide with surveys conducted at approximately the same time that revealed a change in NZ business leaders' perceptions of environmental sustainability as no longer a top priority (Collins, Lawrence, Roper, & Haar, 2010; Collins, Roper, & Lawrence, 2010).

Changes also occurred in the way international news media referred to NZ's political leadership. As noted in chapter six, most of the favourable coverage regarding NZ's political environmental leadership can be traced back to former Prime Minister Helen Clark, applauded especially in UK newspapers for her commitment to making NZ carbon neutral and for having ratified the Kyoto Protocol. In stark contrast to Clark's insistence on making New Zealand a prime example for environmental stewardship, her successor as Prime Minister, John Key, was referred to in *The Australian* (4 March 2009) saying that New Zealand does not want to be a global leader in climate change, which was reflected in observations that New Zealand's ETS had been delayed and watered down to near insignificance (for example, Bertram & Terry, 2010; Martin, 2012; Roper, 2012).

Curiously, this did not stop Key's Australian counterpart, Julia Gillard, from urging Australians to follow "the gutsy kiwi lead" on carbon pricing (*The Australian*, 21 June 2011). What is more, the scaling back of NZ's ETS might

have even helped Gillard with her Australian carbon tax in that she could use it in her argumentation that the economic consequences of carbon pricing would not be as bad as feared. Prior to and after 2011, coverage of NZ's leadership was much less frequent, which exemplifies the role Australian domestic politics played regarding the interest of the country's journalists in the environmental performance of their small Tasman neighbour.

The perception of New Zealand as a leader in climate change mitigation clearly has faded, judging by the non-coverage of New Zealand's declaration at the 2012 Doha Climate Conference not to commit to a second term under the Kyoto Protocol, and its "colossal fossil" award during the conference. The very few critical articles in the UK and US newspapers about New Zealand failing to walk the talk of its environmental positioning only confirm this impression. For example, as discussed in chapter six, *The Guardian* (12 November 2009) criticised New Zealand for failing to live up to its environmental brand positioning by refusing to take a lead in climate change mitigation. In a similar line, two years later the upcoming premiere of the *Hobbit* film prompted *The New York Times* (17 November 2012) to reassess New Zealand's *clean, green* proposition, concluding, among other things, that this increasingly "clashes with realities."

Carroll and McCombs (2003) proposed that news coverage can influence reputation in the following ways: First, the greater the amount of coverage, the greater public awareness; Second, attributes emphasised in media coverage become attributes the public uses to define a firm, or in this case, a country; And

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third, the valence of news coverage, positive or negative, is reflected in corresponding public perceptions about those attributes.

With regard to the study at hand, public awareness of NZ as environmental leader linked to carbon emissions has decreased, with sustainability attitudes promoted by Helen Clark replaced by the attitudes of the National-led Government not to act as a leader in climate change mitigation. Aside from the peak in Australian coverage in mid-2011, international coverage turned from predominantly favourable to unfavourable during the 2008-2012 period. Following the argumentation put forward by Carroll and McCombs (2003), those findings suggest that NZ's environmental image in those countries would thus also have deteriorated, whereas the comparatively small amount of coverage overall suggests that public awareness of NZ's environmental performance in those countries is at best limited. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine whether this is indeed the case. Ultimately, rather than being concerned with NZ's environmental leadership, what critical articles, such as *The Guardian* (12 November 2009) and *The New York Times* (17 November 2012), denounced was that NZ's environmental performance and the political attitude towards the carbon emissions issue did not match the values and qualities associated with its global brand positioning, as discussed in the following section.

International news perceptions of NZ's place brand legitimacy and integrity

With regard to place brand legitimacy and integrity, academic literature suggests that brand values need to be reflected both in political leadership (Allan, 2011) and in attitudes and behaviour of key companies (Dinnie, 2008). Few of the

Australian, UK and US articles that refered to *clean, green* and *100% Pure* NZ during the 2008-2012 analysis period reported a close link between the country's brand values and its political or business environmental leadership. To the contrary, the criticism of *clean, green* NZ expressed in *The Guardian* (12 November 2009) appeared to be triggered by the *lack* of demonstrated political leadership to sustain the country's brand proposition.

It is striking how coverage differed between the US and the UK on the one hand, and Australia on the other, where the vast majority of articles referred to NZ's branding uncritically, similar to the country's neutral or non-critical reporting of NZ's environmental performance in connection with carbon emissions. Instead, Australian articles highlighted the financial value and economic success of *100% Pure* and *clean, green*, with some referring to *100% Pure* campaign as exemplary and a model to follow. Whether NZ was actually living up to its espoused brand values and commitments hardly played a role in Australian coverage of NZ's brand positioning.

In contrast, some of the coverage of NZ's branding in UK and US newspapers did address discrepancies between the country's environmental record and its *clean, green* image, thus putting into question the legitimacy of its global environmental positioning. Having said that, those articles were limited to only a few occasions, arguably the most vocal being the already mentioned articles in *The Guardian* (12 November 2009) and *The New York Times* (17 November 2012).

Whereas those articles only represent a small fraction of coverage overall (dominated by the favourable Australian coverage, see section 6.1), they do suggest that, at least in the UK and the US, the integrity and legitimacy of c*lean, green* and *100% Pure* NZ was viewed critically during the analysis period. As noted before, even isolated negatives in media coverage should not be dismissed as irrelevant, as "these dissonances may signal nascent patterns that, when they become obvious, may have assumed an immoveable logic of their own" (Murphy, 2010, p. 233). Some of the potential consequences of a loss of brand credibility are discussed in the following section.

7.1.3 So what? *Clean, green* NZ at the crossroads

Following the theorisation of (news) discourse as a constitutive force in the social construction of our perceptions of social reality, this section discusses the potential implications of the research findings for New Zealand from both a material and a normative angle. As Roper (2012, p. 14) has argued in a business context:

> There will be material as well as symbolic consequences. If New Zealand business, overall, does not buy into the business case for sustainability – that is, does not see the economic benefits of taking a leadership role – then getting beyond compliance is difficult.

In the national context, academic literature has made it quite clear that the environmental performance of places and nations is increasingly important for their competitiveness (Morgan et al., 2011). Considering the economic value of *clean, green*, as discussed at length in chapter five, for NZ the potential financial implications of losing its environmental image and with it one of the country's

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key competitive advantages are evident, even more so since exports of goods and primary produce play such a crucial role for the country's economy.

For tourism, as pointed out in chapter three, representation and image mean everything, since "symbols, images, signs, phrases and narratives provide the ideas that fuel the commodification and consumption of tourist sites" (Edensor, 2002, p. 13). Moreover, being located "on the edge" of the world economy (Stringer, Tamásy, Le Heron, & Gray, 2008), *clean, green* also helps to reassert distinctiveness (Anholt, 2010a) and to nurture the favourable image needed to overcome the distance barrier (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009) that separates New Zealand from its key markets.

Linking back to the country-of-origin effect discussed in section 3.3, namely the premise that people attach stereotypical perceptions to other people and countries (Balabanis et al., 2002; Maheswaran, 1994; Nagashima, 1970, 1977), a growing legitimacy gap (Sethi, 1979) between NZ's environmental performance and its brand proposition is worrying, particularly since the articles that have stated their concerns about the legitimacy of *clean, green* NZ appeared in leading international newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*.

As Roth and Romero (1992) have pointed out, consumers are more willing to give preference to products from a specific country if the type of product or service offered is consistent with the country's image and reputation. If its environmental credibility is lost, *clean, green* and *100% Pure* might turn from a guarantor for admiration and premium prices (halo effect) into a reason not to buy products

with NZ as country-of-origin (black cloud effect), as suggested by Balabanis et al. (2002). National branding can be transferable to the image of a range of the country's assets, with a strong brand advantaging products in the eyes of consumers (Future Brand, 2008; Gnoth, 2002).

Analysis of Australian, UK and US print news coverage of *clean, green* and *100% Pure* during 2008-2012 (chapter six) clearly showed that those are not seen internationally as a mere export brand or tourism slogan respectively, but are also referred to as national image, identity, and country brand. Thus, while NZ's *100% Pure* positioning might have been targeted primarily at increasing tourism to the country, it has also had a strongly positive effect on other industries, including agriculture and exports of a range of natural products, as consumers associate *clean, green* with food quality and safety (Clemens & Babcock, 2004). From this perspective, addressing the brand credibility issue by reframing its core message, or by abolishing the *100% Pure* slogan altogether, would hardly be the best option. After all, tourism is one of the few economic activities that can actually enhance a country's image (Anholt, 2010a), which underlines the value of the *100% Pure* campaign for NZ's *clean, green* reputation.

As *The Economist* (2010) has pointed out, although growing environmental concerns affect all countries to some extent, "the dilemma New Zealand faces…is particularly acute in a country so dependent on the export of commodities and landscape-driven tourism" (para. 9). As noted in chapter three, together with a country's citizens, businesses have the potential to act as brand ambassadors

(Aronczyk, 2008), and thus they have a special responsibility to keep up and maintain the country's environmental reputation.

In addition, while overall criticism of "*clean, green* NZ" was rare in international press coverage, this by itself is hardly satisfying, since the absence of (favourable) coverage means a lost opportunity to profile NZ as a leader in environmental best practice and emissions reduction, needed to maintain the credibility of the *clean, green* and *100% Pure* proposition. In this regard, implications of the perceived credibility of *clean, green* NZ reach beyond the economic realm. Apart from attracting consumers, tourists and foreign investment (Anholt, 2007), a place's image also determines how the world treats it (Anholt, 2003). If the environmental values that are unquestionably linked to NZ's global branding, as discussed in chapter five, are not represented in the actions and declarations of its business and political leaders, then the notion of the *clean, green* country might be regarded as a *place myth* (Coyle & Fairweather, 2005) and *100% Pure* nothing more than *greenwash* (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Insch, 2011). Such a loss of credibility and unfavourable perception would not only impact NZ's public esteem within the global community, but could also have a damaging effect on the imagined community (Anderson, 1983) that holds the nation of New Zealand together.

Furthermore, dismissing criticism of *100% Pure* as overreaction because it was just a slogan and therefore not to be taken literally, as NZ Prime Minister John Key was reported to have said (Davison, 2012, para. 1), prejudices the aspirational value and potential of the *100% Pure* place brand to direct unified action towards increased sustainability within the country as a whole (Westgate, 2009). If media

representation is integral to social construction of place *identities* (Hallett et al., 2010; Milne et al., 2009) and the functioning of nations as imagined communities (Anderson, 1983), then positive stories are not only needed to maintain a favourable image overseas, but also to create awareness and self-consciousness among New Zealanders regarding the value of their natural environment. Those opinions present in discourse within the country featured in chapter five indicate that the country's environmental proposition is hardly considered credible among New Zealanders. Lastly, if global environmental concerns and expectations, such as those related to carbon emissions as a cause for climate change, are not taken seriously, then this might prejudice public diplomacy efforts and NZ's ability to win the hearts and minds of the international community (Morgan et al., 2011).

In sum, results from the present study on views within the country and international news representations linked to NZ's environmental performance and the *clean, green* proposition suggest that, since critical articles overall were (still) comparatively scarce, there is still room to re-establish the country's environmental reputation and its brand credibility and integrity. Because a positive reputation and a trusted place brand are not earned by words but actions (Anholt, 2010c), maintaining this highly valuable image will require full integration of the environmental values and promises into national policy, as well as being reflected in the attitudes and behaviour of key companies (Dinnie, 2008, 2011). In other words, by far the best way to ensure brand credibility is by keeping the brand promise (Hankinson, 2007; Hosany, Ekinci &Uysal, 2006).

7.2 Reasons for Changes in Coverage Over Time and Differences Across Countries

The aim in this section is to discuss the results of the present study with regard to the factors that influenced news coverage of NZ's environmental performance and place brand image, particularly in terms of the reasons for the changes over time and the differences of such coverage across countries (research objective six).

7.2.1 News media's indexing tendency

Bennett (1990) has observed that the amount and framing of coverage of a specific issue in the news usually reflects the amount and nature of attention it receives in high-level political debate. Judging by the apparent link between the number of articles and the political debate about a carbon tax in Australia, news media's indexing tendency clearly played a role in the Australian context and as such is perhaps one of the most significant factors that influenced the differences in coverage over time and across countries. The most apparent example for indexing practice at play was found in Australian news coverage of NZ and carbon emissions in mid-2011. At that time, the number of Australian articles peaked, while UK and US newspapers hardly provided any coverage.

In the case of news coverage of a country's environmental performance, indexing theory would suggest that the amount of coverage will be determined by the degree to which this plays a role in governmental and political discourse of the newspaper's home country. Put differently, if a topic, such as a country's environmental performance, is featured prominently in parliamentary debates, it is more likely to receive media attention, whereas absence of an issue from political discourse is likely to result in the issue being ignored by mainstream news media,

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no matter its wider environmental or societal importance. Indeed, as the findings presented in chapter six show, indexing played an important role in the amount and nature of (Australian) coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions, and how the topic was covered, showing a tendency to echo statements made by political leaders in the Australian Government. A prominent example of this is Australian press coverage of Gillard putting forward a positive view of NZ's ETS to serve her own purpose (getting support for her carbon tax proposal). Furthermore, Bennett's (2012) observation that political activists and groups not established in policy processes have much more difficulty making it into the news was demonstrated in the non-coverage of the "colossal fossil" award to NZ's Government by the International Climate Action Network in 2012, as discussed in chapter six.

In addition to news media's indexing tendency, several other aspects relevant in the context of environmental news coverage were identified in the academic literature reviewed in chapter two, namely intertextuality as intrinsic characteristic of news texts, plus journalistic norms and ideals, news values, issue cycle and media attention span, and ideological convictions. In the following sections I briefly discuss each of these regarding their relevance, as apparent in international news coverage of NZ's environmental performance and place branding.

7.2.2 Intertextuality

In chapter two, intertextuality - the ways in which texts tend to relate to and build on each other (Fairclough, 1992) - was introduced as a characteristic of news media coverage. With regard to the present study, some striking occurrences of manifest intertextuality were found, that is, documents making explicit reference

to other documents to draw support from or contest argumentations made in those earlier documents (Fairclough, 1992). Arguably the most telling example was provided by Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard's remark during her 2011 carbon tax campaign to follow "the gutsy kiwi lead" on carbon pricing, as reported in *The Australian* (21 June 2011). As noted in chapter six, those comments were likely triggered by NZ Prime Minister John Key's declarations around the same time that NZ's ETS had been running successfully and that it provided certainty to business, led to more renewable energy, and had helped cut greenhouse gas emissions. This example of intertextuality illustrates news media's involvement in the process of influence between decision-makers in different countries. It also demonstrates how through the news media rhetorical strategies can lead to collaboration in the construction of arguments among leaders pertaining to differing political ideologies in order to support their cause.

7.2.3 Journalistic norms and ideals

Journalistic norms and ideals, such as the journalistic drive for fairness, balance and objectivity, were identified by various studies as significant factors in the way environmental issues are covered in the news (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007; Boykoff & Smith, 2010; Corbett & Durfee, 2004; Moser & Dilling, 2007; Stoehrel, 2012). Yet, since journalists form part "of a social institution that's a profit-making business that must sell subscriptions and audiences to advertisers" (Corbett, 2006, p. 245), various scholars have raised doubts about the existence of truly unbiased and objective news reporting (for example, Frost, 2000; Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Bowman, 2008).

Some indication of this was represented in the way the food miles issue was covered. While the issue was awarded some attention in the UK press in the early years included in the present study, coverage in connection with NZ almost entirely ceased following the publication of a report from NZ showing that the concept was essentially flawed, because apple and lamb produced and shipped from NZ to the UK could have a smaller carbon footprint than products sourced from within the UK, as discussed in chapter five. The comparatively broad coverage of this report in UK media suggests that public relations activities on the part of NZ or its export industries might have influenced such coverage. The same can be said about coverage of measures taken by NZ businesses to reduce their carbon footprint, such as Yealands' use of sheep to cut the grass between the vines, or Air New Zealand's test flights with biofuel (see section 6.1.5).

Moreover, it has been pointed out that news is "produced by people who operate, often unwittingly, within a cultural system [that]…incorporates assumptions about what matters, what makes sense, what time and place in which we live, and what range of considerations we should take seriously" (Schudson, 1995, p. 40). Adapted to the context of the present discussion, this could serve as an additional explanation for the way in which carbon emissions were discussed predominantly in economic terms in Australian coverage, with little reference to the moral responsibility of countries to reduce their carbon emissions as a part of the broader global community. These observations, however, are merely speculative, since the scope of this study does not extend into more detail regarding the journalistic norms, ideals and other influences at play. In comparison, the role of news values was easier to ascertain, as discussed below.

7.2.4 News values

Corbett (2006) points out that traditional news values, such as proximity, prominent people and places, human interest and drama, unusualness, trends, impact, importance, and "hot topic," play a significant role in what environmental stories are chosen as news. Indeed, news articles analysed for the present study confirmed the role of specific events and newsworthiness as a key criteria for the amount of coverage of NZ's environmental performance and place brand image. In fact, most coverage across the three countries was linked to specific events, ranging from the Copenhagen Climate Conference in December 2009 (UK coverage), the film premiere of *The Hobbit* (US coverage) and, most importantly, NZ Prime Minister John Key's visit to the Australian Parliament in June 2011 (Australian coverage). Hence, specific events clearly played an important role regarding the extent to which international press considered NZ's environmental performance newsworthy.

Moreover, the same can be said about its *clean, green* and *100% Pure* brand positioning, references to which were usually linked to specific events, such as the aforementioned. Non-coverage of the "colossal fossil" award to NZ in 2012, from a news values perspective, then indicates that NZ's environmental performance and position in the context of climate change negotiations were not considered newsworthy by the newspapers for their own audiences. In these cases, the (limited) news value of a specific story, such as NZ's lagging leadership ambition or not living up to its environmental promise, could be as much a reason for the amount of coverage as news media's tendency to index elite views.

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In addition, because environmental issues, such as climate change, are "on-going, omnipresent, and often too complex to present as two distinct 'sides' or as a single, dramatic event" (Corbett, 2006, p. 224), they are inconsistent with the tendency of mainstream news media to be event-driven and with a strong focus on "human-interest" stories (Green, 2007). Dennis (1991) noted that the media have always found it difficult to cover "the environment," not only because it "cuts across all news beats and topics (business, outdoors, legislative, health, science, and so on)," but also because "environmental stories are viewed as 'a snore', pushed aside in favour of more exciting topics like scandal and celebrities" (p. 62). International news coverage of NZ and carbon emissions illustrates this point. As described in section 6.1.3, political reporters provided most coverage (20%), followed by environmental reporters (17%) and business, economic or finance reporters (15%). In this view, it is surprising that the 2012 "colossal fossil" award to NZ went entirely unreported in the newspapers analysed since it clearly would have fitted with news media's preference for environmental issues that can be framed along simplistic and sensational story lines (Roper, 2010; Stoehrel, 2012). In this instance, news media's indexing tendency and the limited newsworthiness of the award for the newspapers' audiences were likely the more dominant factors influencing the amount and nature of coverage.

With regard to geopolitical and cultural proximity as aspects influencing the newsworthiness of a particular story, or country, and the amount and nature of news coverage (Hansen, 2010), it is not clear from the present study to what extent these proximity news values determined international press coverage of NZ's environmental performance and its place branding. While Australia's

geographical proximity to NZ played some role in Australian coverage, as evident in comparisons of the Australian carbon tax with the NZ ETS, for instance, the fact that coverage was considerably more scarce in the UK, despite its long history and close ties with NZ, raises doubts as to what extent geopolitical and cultural proximity really plays a role for the amount and nature of international news coverage awarded to a country's environmental performance or place brand credibility. After all, hardly any reference was made in UK coverage that would have indicated a perceived political or cultural closeness to NZ in the context of this study. Having said that, the way in which Gillard referred to the NZ ETS and NZ Prime Minister John Key, as reported in Australian press during 2011, does indicate political and economic closeness between the two countries.

7.2.5 Issue cycle and media attention span

Further to the factors and drivers for news coverage of environmental issues already discussed, namely indexing, journalistic norms, and newsworthiness, issue cycles and media attention span are two additional points to take into consideration. As noted in section 2.3.4, Downs' (1972) article on the cyclical nature of media attention awarded to environmental issues has been used on numerous occasions to explain such coverage (Brossard et al, 2004; Hall, 2002; Kuttschreuter et al., 2011). In the climate change context, variations in media reporting were observed for example by Cottle (2009b), whereas Lester (2010) has described the different phases of environmental news coverage in general. As discussed at length in chapter three, quite a few of the key "critical discourse moments" (Carvalho, 2007) of climate change as an issue occurred in the years 2006 and 2007, including Al Gore's book and documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth*, the publication of the *Stern Review on the economic impacts of climate*

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change and the IPCC's *Fourth Assessment Report* in 2007. According to Cottle (2009b), since then climate change has become recognised as a global crisis in most of the world's news media, and entered a post-sceptical phase which led to the transformation of climate change discourse from a formerly purely scientific into a public debate (Lester & Cottle 2009).

While Downs' issues cycle model has been criticised for granting too little importance to cultural differences between countries (Brossard et al, 2004) and "the journalistic norms that undergird news production" (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007, p. 1195), it might serve as an explanation for the fact that during the period covered by the present study, carbon emissions were no longer considered as topical as in previous years, hence there was less media interest and coverage. The most likely scenario has been described by Boykoff and Boykoff (2007), pointing out that "real-world issues, events, and dynamics must interact with journalistic norms in order to successfully translate into media coverage" (p. 1195).

Closely linked to what has been said above, media's "limited carrying capacity" (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988) and the tendency of wars and major economic crises to push the environment off or down the media news agenda (Boykoff, 2009; Hansen, 2011), could have played a role in terms of the amount of international news coverage of NZ's environmental performance and positioning. This would explain the predominant concern with economic aspects, particularly in Australian coverage of NZ and carbon emissions, and the absence of the global responsibility theme from the articles analysed. The issue of carbon emissions as a cause for global warming might have been "diluting from screaming headlines to a

ubiquitous background noise that is present in various sectors" (Lyytimäkia & Tapio, 2009, p. 731). What can be said with certainty from the analysis of international press coverage in this study is that news discourse on carbon emissions has diversified (Hansen, 2011) in the sense that it has moved from the scientific into the economic realm (Boykoff, 2009). Whether it has also "integrated into everyday cognition and discourse," as Olausson (2011, p. 283) has suggested, is beyond this study to ascertain.

7.2.6 The role of ideology

Chapter two discussed the role of ideologies in environmental discourse, offering Dryzek's (1997) categorisation of world views as a guideline. With regard to the ideologies apparent in political and business discourse relevant in the context of the *clean, green* NZ case, previous research has shown that there were some significant changes over time, both in the political and business context. For example, Roper (2012) discussed how discourse of economic growth and modernisation gained dominance in NZ politics when the National-led Government took over from the previous Labour Government following the general election in late 2008. Similarly, Tapia-Mella (2012) observed how references to environmental sustainability all but disappeared in ministerial speeches at that time.

A change in perception regarding the importance of sustainability for companies was also evident in a business context (Collins et al., 2010), albeit perhaps not as clear as in politics. While some of the key companies have been actively lobbying and calling for a green growth economic strategy for NZ under the umbrella of the *Pure Advantage* group, the discourse used is still within the limits of ecological

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modernisation (Roper, 2012), that is, adherence to the neoliberal market ideology and focus on economic growth (Dryzek, 1997).

From news media's indexing tendency follows that the dominant political ideology is represented in the news coverage of a specific issue. Indeed, international press coverage of NZ's environmental performance and place branding reflected the changes in political discourse from sustainability in 2008 to mostly economic considerations under the NZ National Government. Moreover, Australian references to *clean, green* and *100% Pure* were almost exclusively from an economic, business perspective. This is revealing considering that news media coverage tends to reflect national views and prejudices about global concerns (Hachten & Scotton, 2007). In this regard it is perhaps concerning that hardly any of the Australian, UK or US press articles used a global responsibility frame, as noted in chapter six, nor did they discuss NZ's poor environmental performance in the carbon emissions context, and its *clean, green* branding, from a moral or ethical angle. Corbett (2006) has made a valid point that instead of viewing mainstream news media as a liberal *watch dog* and champion of social change, their role or acting was better described as *guard dog,* a protector of the established interests and the dominant power structure.

Moreover, insofar as news coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions is concerned, the findings give substance to Jamieson's (2001) observation that "the debate about reducing GHG emissions centres on self-interest and national interest rather than on appeals to morality," and that the debate "has been

dominated by hypersensitivity to the domestic politics of which sectors would win and which would lose as a result of controlling GHGs" (p. 294).

Another interesting finding from the study was that the articles most critical of NZ's environmental positioning were published in left-leaning newspapers, namely *The Guardian* in the UK, and the *New York Times*. Overall, however, findings were not conclusive enough for a proper judgement of the role of newspapers' political leanings or ideological convictions with regard to their influence on the amount or nature of coverage.

In sum, the discussion of the study results illustrates that the factors influencing international news representations of national environmental performance and place brand image varied in the extent to which they were evident. While indicators for news media's indexing tendency were strongest during 2011 in Australian coverage, journalistic norms, such as objectivity, balance and fairness, might have prevented critical coverage of NZ's environmental performance. Similarly, scarce coverage, such as that of the "colossal fossil" award, might be because this was not considered newsworthy for the newspapers' Australian, UK and US audiences. Moreover, in a post-sceptical phase (Lester & Cottle 2009), climate change and carbon emissions from a moral, or global responsibility perspective might be of less interest to the news media. Having said that, the number of potential factors makes it difficult to ascertain their respective influence on the amount and nature of news coverage of national environmental performance and place branding.

7.3 The Role of News Media Representations in the Discursive Construction of Country Reputation and Place Brand Image

In this final part of the chapter, results from the analysis of international press coverage of NZ's environmental performance and its *clean, green* and *100% Pure* branding are discussed with regard to the role of media representations of national environmental performance and branding in the discursive construction of a country's reputation and its place brand image (research objective seven). In section 3.6 it was suggested that media representations play a crucial role in the place image context, since perceptions of places, including countries or tourist destinations, are influenced by the ways in which they are represented by the media (Boisen et al., 2011). Moreover, while images are constructed and communicated through multiple channels, including direct experience, word-of-mouth and audio-visual media (Hudson & Brent-Ritchie, 2006), the mass media are one of the main means by which information is disseminated (Anholt, 2010a). Indeed, as Hall (2002) stresses, the media play "a major part in informing consumers' images of destinations…either directly in terms of being read, heard or watched, or indirectly through the advice given by friends, relatives and other sources" (pp. 458-459).

Regarding the amount and nature of media coverage of places, Avraham and Ketter (2008, p. 30; see also Avraham, 2000) – drawing on Manheim and Albritton (1984) – have proposed that places either 1) receive much negative coverage, 2) are not covered by the media except in a negative context, usually related to crime, social problems, natural disasters, etc., 3) receive much positive coverage, such as cultural events, tourist activity, or investments, or 4) are largely

ignored by the media but when noticed are covered in a primarily positive light. In the case at hand, none of these categories seem to fit the way NZ was covered in connection with carbon emissions. International coverage of the country's *clean, green* proposition was closest to the fourth scenario, namely largely ignored by the media but, when noticed, covered in a predominantly positive light.

However, since the amount and nature of coverage differed considerably across countries and also changed over time, it is questionable to what extent international news coverage of a country's environmental performance or its place branding can be reduced to such broad categorisation. The usefulness of those four scenarios is further limited by the observation that the reputation of an organisation, or country in this case, in the media develops over time and through a complex social process (Deephouse, 2000), and that it is constantly challenged and evolving (Murphy, 2010). Having said that, judging from the largely uncritical coverage in Australia, the study also confirms the inert nature of place image and reputation (Anholt, 2007, 2011), and the view that core images tend to be persistent and stable (Shields, 1991; Coyle & Fairweather, 2005). This observation is further backed by the absence (apart from very few exceptions) of any evident link between international press coverage of NZ in the carbon emissions context and coverage of its brand positioning, as highlighted in section 6.3. In other words, news representations and resulting perceptions of NZ's brand were not influenced by coverage of its actual environmental performance.

Where countries are remotely located, such as in the case of NZ, previous scholarly work has suggested that their dependence on media coverage to become

known to the outside world is even stronger (Avraham, 2000; Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Choi et al., 2007; Dinnie, 2008; Kotler & Gertner, 2011). This was explained through the fact that the media's portrayal of distant places is mostly accepted as their "true" nature by those not living there (Adoni & Mane, 1984; Avraham, 2000; Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Burgess & Gold, 1985; Gold, 1980; Pocock & Hudson, 1978; Relph, 1976). In this regard, the media also function as a primary source for stereotypes and images associated with distant places (Dahlgren & Chakrapani, 1982; Gold, 1994).

That media reporting can also turn remotely located places into areas of possible concern even for people living thousands of kilometres away (Chouliaraki, 2006; Cottle, 2009a, 2009b) was demonstrated by the *food miles* controversy and, in a global responsibility context by the article in *The Guardian* (12 November 2009) accusing NZ of failing to align its climate change policies with the *clean, green* branding. Study results also align with the observation that the ability of places to become known through the media is limited by the tendency of the latter to exclude peripheral regions (Avraham, 2003; Lahav & Avraham, 2008). This was exemplified by the very limited – and in the case of two newspapers (*USA Today* and *San Francisco Chronicle*) non-existent – coverage of NZ's environmental performance and its branding in US newspapers. In fact, perhaps the most revealing finding from the study of Australian, UK and US news coverage of NZ's environmental performance linked to carbon emissions was how little coverage the country received throughout the 2008-2012 analysis period, and that the "colossal fossil" award to NZ during the 2012 Doha climate conference, as referred to earlier, went entirely uncovered.

Following the argumentation that topics are given more or less significance by the public depending on the amount and type of coverage provided (Hall, 2002), and that perceptions of places are influenced by the ways they are represented in the media (Boisen et al., 2011), the following question arises: *to what extent does non-coverage play a role in the discursive construction of national environmental performance and place brand images?* Mass media coverage is considered crucial for bringing environmental issues to the attention of the public (for example, Anderson, 2009; Hansen, 2010, 2011; Lester 2010). Carvalho (2005) has argued that even the absence of certain issues in the news can have implications. Indeed, if media coverage of environmental issues can initiate a social production and construction of reality that reaches beyond national boundaries (Beck, 2009; Cottle, 2009b), then the impact of non-coverage might be just as important on people's perception or their social reality, be it with regard to a country's perceived national enviornmental performance or its place branding.

In the NZ context, lack of coverage may, on the one hand, help maintain the *clean, green* image – or myth, according to Coyle and Fairweather (2005), by turning New Zealand's environmental performance into a non-issue (McManus, 2000) in the global mind. On the other hand, Anholt (2010a), among others, has made it quite clear that media coverage plays a crucial role for perceptions of places and functions as a main carrier of country reputation. In this sense, less or no news coverage of NZ in the environmental arena presents a lost opportunity to sustain the *clean, green* proposition.

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From a mild social constructionist perspective, both the presence and absence of discourse – in this case news coverage of NZ's environmental performance – can have implications. What is more, those implications reach beyond national boundaries. For example, Australia's carbon price might not have made it through legislation without John Key's positive remarks about New Zealand's ETS and its general acceptance in the NZ business community, and Julia Gillard being able to refer to the kiwi scheme as an example to follow. Not only does the discourse of political leaders have a constitutive role when picked up and echoed by the news media, but the news media themselves also have a constitutive role by disseminating the discourse. In this regard, intertextuality adds a dimension to news media's indexing tendency as formulated by Bennett (1990).

Another example for the potential material implications of news coverage – or non-coverage – of environmental issues is provided by the food miles debate, and the way it was represented in the media, in that it exemplifies the global reach of such discourses and the potentially substantial economic or political implications for countries like NZ. Yet, while non-coverage has the potential to turn something into a non-issue, as Carvalho (2005) and McManus (2000) have observed, scarce coverage and low salience do not necessarily mean that those issues are of no concern to the public (Carroll, 2011a). An indication for this was provided by the "colossal fossil" award to NZ in December 2012. While not covered in the newspapers included in this study, it clearly shows that NZ's attitude and performance linked to climate change was regarded with concern by the civil society associations that comprise the International Climate Action Network, responsible for the award.

7.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter tied together key results from the analysis of the historical, political, economic and discursive context of *clean, green* New Zealand (research objective two, chapter five) and the findings from analysis of international news media coverage (research objectives three and four, chapter six), for a discussion of these results alongside the literature reviewed in chapters two and three (research objective one). First, I discussed the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of New Zealand's global environmental positioning. Considering the widespread awareness within NZ of the need to live up to the brand promise, and the fact that, overall, critical articles in international newspapers mentioning NZ's environmental performance and the *clean, green* proposition were comparatively scarce, there are hopeful signs that the country's environmental reputation and its brand credibility and integrity can be maintained, so long as citizens, businesses and political leaders gear their actions towards giving the proposition their full support.

In section 7.2, research objective six was addressed by a discussion of the factors most likely to have had an impact on international news coverage of NZ's national environmental performance and place branding, particularly regarding the changes over time and differences across countries. The factor most evident from the findings was news media's indexing tendency, especially during 2011 in Australian coverage. Furthermore, it was argued that scarce or non-coverage might be due to NZ's environmental performance not being considered newsworthy for the newspapers' Australian, UK and US audiences, thus indicating the importance of news values for the amount and nature of coverage.

Moreover, now in a post-sceptical phase (Lester & Cottle 2009), a discussion of climate change and carbon emissions from a moral, or global responsibility perspective might have been of less interest to the news media, which could explain the decrease in the amount of coverage during the analysis period. This would align with the changes in political environmental discourse and the prevalent ideologies in NZ during the analysis period, as illustrated in chapter five.

Lastly, section 7.3 discussed the role of news coverage of national environmental performance in the discursive construction of a country's environmental reputation and place brand image (research objective seven). Overall, there was very limited coverage in international press of NZ's environmental performance and branding during 2008-2012, despite the considerable change in discourse and shift of political priorities within the country during the same period. It was proposed that both the presence and absence of news coverage can have implications considering the constitutive role of discourse. In the NZ case, the overall little or no coverage of its environmental performance and branding presents a lost opportunity to sustain the *clean, green* proposition, which can only be maintained through demonstrated leadership. Interestingly, a comparison of coverage of NZ's environmental performance and its branding revealed no apparent link between the two, which, as was argued, confirms the stable, inert nature of place (brand) images.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Like it or not, Brand New Zealand, the intangible association that has developed between New Zealand and clean, green and pure, is one of the most valuable assets the country has. Consequently, the onus falls on everyone in the [agribusiness] industry to act in a consistent manner with the spirit of the message. Failure to do so can bring accusations of 'greenwash' from our international competitors and risk access to our markets.

This quote by business consultancy KPMG (2011, p. 11) summarises the critical situation that NZ faces. Amid calls for national environmental responsibility in today's risk society (Beck, 2009) and the increasing dependence of nations and places on their ability to convince audiences both domestic and overseas of their environmental integrity in order to remain competitive globally (Anholt, 2010a; Morgan et al., 2011), NZ has to ensure the credibility, integrity and legitimacy of its global environmental positioning, arguably its most valuable asset. As a main carrier of country reputation and national image, the media play an important role in the discursive construction of a country's national environmental reputation and its place brand image (Anholt, 2010a).

In alignment with the overall Marsden research project to which the present study has contributed, the principal aims pursued with this thesis were: 1) *to shed light on the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of New Zealand's global environmental positioning*; and 2) *to explore the role and significance of news media representations in the discursive construction of a country's environmental*

reputation and its place brand image. Guided by a mild social constructionist perspective, this task was addressed through a combination of reviewing secondary data in order to establish the historical and discursive context of the NZ case study, and analysis of the amount and nature of Australian, UK and US press coverage during 2008-2012, a period of significant changes in political leadership within the country. In this final chapter, I attempt an overall conclusion of this thesis by outlining its contributions to theory, implications for policy and, in acknowledgement of the limitations of this study addressed in chapter four, by offering some recommendations for possible avenues to develop this research further.

8.1 Theoretical Contributions

8.1.1 Discourse theory

The thesis provides an example of how discourse theory can be used for a better understanding of the constitutive role and productive nature of discourse, its discursive and non-discursive, material consequences and implications, as suggested by Ashcraft, Kuhn and Cooren (2009), Fairclough (2006), Roper (2012) and Saarinen (2004), among others. In particular, the discourse of political leaders was found to have a constitutive role when picked up and echoed by the media. The media, in turn, by disseminating the discourse, also have a constitutive role. For example, coverage in Australian newspapers of Key's declaration about the apparent success of the NZ ETS, picked up by his Australian counterpart to back her carbon tax bill.

The thesis has further illustrated that, from a discourse and social constructionist angle, both the presence and absence of news discourse matter insofar as non-coverage of an issue, such as food miles, or a country's environmental performance can have implications globally. In other words, the study has shown that the persuasive power of (media) discourse should not be underestimated, both in terms of global reach and regarding its potentially substantial economic or political implications. Both the food miles debate summarised in chapter five, and Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard's referral to the apparent success of the NZ emissions trading scheme in 2011, according to her NZ counterpart John Key, serve as examples.

8.1.2 Media studies

The thesis has contributed to indexing theory by providing further proof how mainstream news coverage tends to follow declarations and discourses of political elites (Bennett, 1990, 2012), and that this happens at the cost of "political activists and groups that are not established players in policy processes" (Bennett, 2012, p. 121). The study also confirms findings by Carvalho and Pereira (2008) regarding the predominant focus on governmental discourse and actors in media representations of climate change, and that mentions of political alternatives are relatively rare.

Some of the most notable findings from the analysis of international news coverage were the striking difference both in the amount and the tone of coverage of NZ's environmental performance and its place branding across Australia, the UK and the US during the 2008-2012 analysis period. News media's indexing tendency and newsworthiness were identified as the main reasons for changes in

international news coverage of national environmental performance and place brand image over time and across countries. The role of ideology in news coverage of environmental issues was confirmed in the dominance of economic and financial concerns expressed in Australian coverage of NZ in connection with carbon emissions, with an almost complete absence of coverage looking at the country's deteriorating environmental performance from a global responsibility angle.

The thesis further provided evidence in support of the argumentation of Corbett (2006), among others that, rather than viewing mainstream news media as a liberal *watch dog* and champion of social change, their role or action is better described as that of a *guard dog*. In other words, analysis of news coverage revealed the news media as a protector of the established political and economic interests, of which the news media form an integral part. This point was emphasised by non-coverage of NZ's "colossal fossil" award in 2012. Moreover, the study found the theme of global responsibility almost entirely absent in coverage of NZ and carbon emissions, despite the country's U-turn in climate change policy and its comparatively high per capita greenhouse gas emissions, as discussed in chapter five.

8.1.3 Place reputation and branding

Further to its contributions to discourse theory and media studies, the thesis has added to the comparatively scarce literature on the role and nature of media representations of place branding and national reputation. In chapter three it was argued that, while the importance of a favourable national (brand) image and reputation – both from a moral, or normative, and an economic perspective – has

been highlighted by Anholt (2010a, 2010b), among others, little is known about news media representations of a country's environmental performance and branding. In particular, a knowledge gap was detected regarding the role and potential implications of news media representations in the discursive construction of national reputation and the perceived credibility of a place brand.

First, judging from the largely uncritical coverage in Australia, the study confirms the inert nature of place image and reputation (Anholt, 2007, 2011), and the view that core images tend to be persistent and stable (Shields, 1991; Coyle & Fairweather, 2005). This observation is further backed by the finding that, apart from very few exceptions, there was no evident link between international press coverage of a country's environmental performance and coverage of its brand image during the same time, despite the significant changes in political priorities within NZ that occurred during that period.

Second, Avraham and Ketter (2008) have proposed that places are covered in four different ways. While some places either receive much negative coverage or are not covered at all by the media except in a negative context, other places might receive much positive coverage or be largely ignored by the media but when noticed are covered positively. None of these four scenarios fit coverage of NZ in an environmental and branding context, suggesting that a reduction of coverage of places to those four categories is perhaps too simplistic.

Third, the thesis highlighted the importance of both coverage and non-coverage of national environmental performance and branding in the discursive construction

of country reputation and place brand image. In the NZ case, this was amplified by the country's remote location and economic dependence on media coverage to become known to the outside world, and consequently to sustain a favourable brand image.

Lastly, the study has shown that, if a small country leads on "green" matters, it can generate favourable press coverage and have an impact beyond national borders, whereas if it does not lead, it forgoes the chance of self-representation and brand prominence by being ignored by the international news media.

8.1.4 Software-assisted qualitative data analysis

Last but not least, the thesis contributed to existing academic literature on software-assisted qualitative research by illustrating how software packages, such as NVivo, can be employed for a discourse analysis and qualitative content analysis of news articles, and how software tools can increase analytical flexibility and transparency of the qualitative research process. By discussing the theory and application of software-assisted qualitative data analysis in considerable detail, the thesis addressed a concern of insufficient description of software use in methodology chapters and research papers (Johnston, 2006; Kikooma, 2010; Thompson, 2002).

8.2 Implications for Policy

Secondary data reviewed to establish the historical background and socio-political context (case study) for the analysis of news coverage revealed growing concern within the country as to the credibility of the *clean, green* and *100% Pure* global environmental positioning. Together with changes in political discourse from

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sustainability to economic growth built on measures not easily compatible with the branding, this clearly leaves the country at a critical juncture regarding the legitimacy of its global environmental positioning.

The study provided new insight into the potential vulnerability of *clean, green* NZ by illustrating the changes in international news coverage of NZ's environmental performance during the 2008-2012 analysis period, from supportive to critical or largely ignored. Judging from Australian media coverage, NZ's environmental reputation was still largely intact there, while in the UK and the US isolated negative coverage could be a first signal of a shift in perceptions, especially taking into account the small amount of coverage overall in those countries. In the absence of not only symbolic actions (Anholt, 2011) coming from the country's business and political elite, and lack of coverage needed to maintain the *clean, green* image and reputation, NZ's global environmental positioning has become more vulnerable.

Essentially, the study showed that, while UK and US press coverage indicated a change from referring to NZ as a leader in the environmental context in 2008 to less frequent and less favourable mentions in subsequent years, during the same time Australian coverage was found mostly favourable or neutral towards NZ's environmental leadership, often expressing admiration for the success of its *clean, green* and *100% Pure* branding. Since unfavourable coverage of those terms was comparatively scarce, it was suggested that there is still an opportunity to maintain NZ's environmental reputation by backing it up with business and governmental leadership in the environmental arena.

Perhaps the most important contribution of this thesis as relevant to public policy makers, and business and political leaders more generally – apart from stressing the apparent need to align their actions with the national brand for it to maintain credible – is its demonstration that even a comparatively small, remote country can have sustained effects on a global scale. After all, analysis of media texts indicates that, while NZ's success – or failure – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions might be insignificant on a global scale, political actions and declarations from small countries like NZ can have an impact far beyond national borders.

Bold visions (such as former NZ Prime Minister, Helen Clark's, sustainability leadership ambitions) and symbolic actions, such as Air NZ's biofuel tests, can provide inspiration and arguments for others to follow suit. Put differently, the study showed that, if as a small country you lead on "green" matters, you are in the news and impact others, whereas if you do not lead then you forgo the chance of self-representation and maintaining a favourable reputation overseas. NZ's economic and political leaders and policy makers should keep this in mind, especially considering their country's economic dependence on a favourable environmental image.

It is important to note that the conclusions presented in this thesis with regard to the perceived credibility and potential vulnerability of NZ's global environmental positioning are no final word on the issue. Until the very last moment of submitting this thesis, events linked to *clean, green* and *100% Pure* have been unfolding, likely to add significantly to the overall picture and therefore may

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require a reconsideration of the data presented here. An example is provided in the afterword to this thesis.

8.3 Further Research

As indicated in section 4.8, the present study was limited in several ways, with ample room for further research. With regard to studies on media discourse, further research is needed to gauge the importance of intertextuality for the amount and nature of coverage, in addition to a deepening analysis of the various influencing factors. Furthermore, this thesis could only touch on New Zealanders' own perceptions, or their declared support of the *100% Pure* branding. Considering the importance of a broad support for the national brand within the country to be credible, as noted in chapter three, analysis of both news texts and social media discourse within NZ would be a useful addition to the study presented here. Moreover, a comparative study among several countries with characteristics similar to NZ, such as Uruguay, would support a theorisation of international news media representations and discursive constructions of country reputation and place brand image.

8.4 Concluding Remarks

Finally, apart from making a useful contribution to the Marsden project, hopefully the research presented in this thesis will help NZ's internal publics appreciate the immense value of their country's *clean, green* image and convince its political and economic leaders that critical voices, as isolated as they might (still) be, should well be taken seriously. Analysis of secondary data relevant for the NZ case study revealed the economic, but also social and normative importance of the *clean, green* proposition, and the growing concerns about the branding's

legitimacy within NZ. Demonstrated environmental leadership, such as alignment of business practices and NZ Government policies with the *clean, green* proposition, will be vital to maintain the country's hitherto successful global positioning in a world increasingly confronted with and sensitive to environmental issues, such as climate change.

Afterword

In August 2013 several international newspapers questioned the credibility of the *100% Pure* New Zealand brand, following the warning by NZ dairy giant Fonterra that some of the milk powder it was selling both domestically and overseas could be contaminated with botulism, a bacterium able to cause potentially fatal food poisoning. Although, according to Fonterra, no health issues resulting from consumption of contaminated milk powder had been reported (Rabinovitch & Hume, 2013) and the botulism scare turned out to be a false alarm (Gray, 2013), the issue nevertheless generated highly unfavourable and critical coverage in international news media. Particularly in China, a country highly sensitive to food scandals not least due to previous issues with contaminated baby milk powder, news media used the occasion to question not only Fonterra's hygiene practices, but the credibility of NZ's *100% Pure* positioning in general.

For instance, in one article China's state-run news agency accused the NZ Government of being blinded by a laissez-faire market ideology and by wanting to increase its export market at any cost, rather than putting the focus on building trust (Xinhua, 2013). Referring to criticism within NZ regarding the deteriorating state of the country's natural environment, the same article noted that the *100% Pure* tourism campaign was becoming "a festering sore." The article also disagreed with NZ Prime Minister John Key's response to criticism that, like other brand promises, such as McDonald's *I'm lovin' it*, the *100% Pure* slogan should not be taken literally (as discussed in chapter five) stating: "No, Mr Key, it needs to be fixed before your trading partners just stop 'loving it'"(Xinhua, 2013).

The Chinese coverage was taken up by other news agencies. For example, *Reuters* wrote:

> For a country that markets itself to the world with the slogan *100% Pure*, New Zealand's environmental credentials are not as impeccable as many would think. The majority of its rivers are too polluted to swim in. Its record on preservation of natural environments is among the worst in the world on a per capita basis. And it is the only OECD country that does not produce a regular national report on its environment. (Tajitsu & Feast, 2013)

Several observations can be made from coverage of the milk powder issue in August 2013 with regard to the study presented in this thesis. First, it highlights the economic importance of a strong and credible country-of-origin brand. In the case of China, 90% of the country's milk imports come from NZ, according to the *Financial Times* (2013), which noted that, "even without an outright ban, the image of New Zealand dairy in China is at risk." Second, the way in which the milk powder scare was covered reflects the trend observed in international news coverage of NZ's environmental performance (carbon emissions) during 2008-2012 that, at least in the UK and the US, NZ's environmental performance had been referred to increasingly unfavourably, wary of a growing gap between the *100% Pure* brand promise and the country's actual environmental record. Third, the event illustrates how an issue affecting one company can transcend into and trigger critique of other sectors, or the country's competitive positioning as a whole.

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