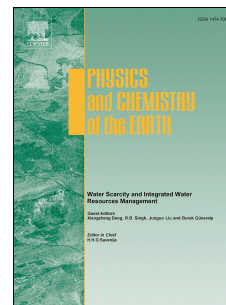


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## Perceptions on the Use of Bottled Water in Restaurants in Harare's Central Business District (CBD)

by

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### Abstract

Bottled water use continues to expand worldwide and in the last two decades, a significant number of consumers have shifted from tap water to bottled water due to *Cryptosporidium* outbreaks. Bottled water consumption has increased in Harare due to erratic tap water supplies. Since 2011, forty bottled water brands have been banned because of failure to meet safety and quality standards due to contamination, unsuitable packaging, and wrong labelling. Nevertheless, the bottled water industry continues to thrive as local authorities fail to adequately purify municipal water. The study assessed the perceptions on drinking bottled water in restaurants within Harare's CBD. Demographic and social factors associated with bottled water users were established and the role and influence of stakeholders in bottling and distribution of water documented. A field survey through the administration of questionnaires to fifty restaurant users was carried out to assess the perceptions of people on the use of bottled water in terms of its safety and potential health benefits. Key informant interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview with ten local water bottling companies as well as representatives from the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and Standards Association of Zimbabwe (SAZ). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and logistic regression analysis. Standard descriptive statistics were generated, with 95% confidence intervals (95% CIs). Consumers used bottled water as their primary drinking water source when they perceived that tap water was not safe. Perceptions of purity of water, bottled water convenience, and tap water unavailability seemed to determine consumption patterns among users. Females in the 18-48 age groups were more likely to think that bottled water was cleaner, safer, tasted better and was more convenient than tap water. Consumers regularly purchased bottled water for drinking and used bottled water as their primary drinking water source regardless of cost implications. Government and local authorities need to ensure that pure and clean water is available in Harare. In addition, the public must be engaged in recognizing the relationships that exist between water quality and the capacity of local authorities to maintain taste and safety standards.

**Keywords:** bottled water, perceptions, purification, tap water quality, water quality

### 1. Introduction

Access to safe drinking water is critical to human development, and this is clearly articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 6; which aims to ensure access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all by 2030 (United Nations, UN, 2015). In sub-Saharan Africa, challenges exist in water provision with 31.9% of the population still lacking access to reliable drinking water sources (World Health Organization, WHO, 2015). In

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