EXAMINING TAP VS BOTTLED DRINKING WATER PREFERENCES AND HOW TO OVERCOME UNSUSTAINABLE HABITS

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Bottled water is extremely unsustainable, but the consumption of it has increased dramatically over the last few decades. Although bottled water may be the only way for some to access clean, healthy drinking water, those who have readily available tap water continue to buy single-use plastic water bottles. These bottles require huge amounts of energy and end up in landfills, recycling facilities, and the natural environment. The purpose of this study was to research the reasons people purchase plastic bottles instead of utilizing tap water and reusable water bottles. I achieved this by sending out a survey to friends and students at the University of Washington: 235 people completed this survey about opinions, preferences, and the reasoning behind drinking water habits. Convenience and forgetfulness, safety, and taste were the most frequently stated reasons behind choosing single-use bottled water over tap water. To further investigate the reason for taste, I conducted blind taste tests between bottled water and tap water, asking participants which they preferred. I found that less than half stated that they preferred the taste of bottled water over the tap water. To reduce plastic water bottle usage and to increase tap water usage, there must be more public education on the impacts drinking water has on the environment, as well as other methods to reduce plastic bottle consumption. This study will hopefully raise awareness of the simple changes that people can make to lessen their impact on the one planet we inhabit.