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The role of involvement in the use of information
and labelling in the context of Fairtrade foods

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT
IN THE SUBJECT OF MARKETING
FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By
Claire GARCIA
April 2011

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Abstract

The UK market for fair trade products has grown substantially in recent years but the reasons behind this growth are unclear. The Fair Trade movement claims it is a result of growing consumer ethnocentricity but penetration and purchase frequency of Fairtrade products remains low, whilst the range and distribution of fair trade products has increased significantly and many household brands have added fair trade lines to their portfolios. Understanding how these different factors have affected market growth is critical for the longer term development of the fair trade market. Growing ethnocentricity implies greater involvement in purchasing decisions and an increasingly important role for certification and labelling, as shoppers seek reassurance that the benefits of fair trade products are passed upstream to primary producers. However, if the growth of the Fair Trade market is the result of existing consumers buying more or more often, accidental or inadvertent purchases of (new) fair trade variants of established brands or choice editing by retailers leaving shoppers with no option other than Fairtrade, then the role of fair trade certification and labelling changes substantially and the longer term development of the Fair Trade market relies more on the decisions of food manufacturers and retailers than individual consumers. This thesis addresses this issue by exploring the nature and extent of information search amongst fair trade consumers and the extent to which product and purchase involvement influence the use of information in general and the use of fair trade labelling in particular.

Food is widely categorised as a low involvement category of fast moving consumer goods, for which purchase decisions are considered as simple, habitual and easily comprehensible. However, the growing interest in credence attributes (e.g. food safety, animal welfare, environmental sustainability and ethical purchasing), signals a potential increase in the level of involvement in food purchasing behaviour. The Fairtrade label provides consumers with a guarantee that producers in developing countries are receiving a just price for their produce and promotes poverty alleviation and sustainability. Thus, if more consumers care more about where their food comes from and how it is produced, it is

reasonable to assume that food purchasing decisions will become more involved and greater use will be made of information, including certification labelling that mitigates the risks associated with credence attributes, which cannot be experienced directly by the consumer. This thesis explores the mediating role of involvement in the importance attached to and use made of fair trade labelling by fair trade consumers and the potential for fair trade labelling to act as a catalyst for change – raising awareness of ethical purchasing and consequently increasing the level of involvement in food purchasing behaviour – a process that is consistent with the claimed increase in ethical consumerism.

The primary research undertaken provides a methodological contribution to the study of consumer purchasing behaviour, highlighting the importance of multi method and the fundamental limitations of research that relies exclusively on claimed behaviour. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods are used to determine the precise nature of fair trade purchasing behaviour (**what** people buy) amongst supermarket shoppers, the drivers of specific product choices (**why** they buy what they buy) and the role that involvement and fair trade labelling play therein.

The results of the research provide strong counter-evidence to the claims that fair trade consumers are motivated by ethics and that the fair trade label is an important source of information for fair trade consumers. Penetration, frequency and scope of fair trade purchasing behaviour remains limited and largely confined to higher socio-economic groups and whilst awareness of the fair trade label is high, its influence in the food purchasing decision-making process is distinctly limited.

Acknowledgements

A PhD thesis is often qualified as a rather individual piece of work, although many others intervene in the process. Over the past four years, I have been very lucky to receive the support of a number of people. Without their constant encouragements I would probably still be striving trying to finish this piece of work.

I am grateful to everyone I have had the pleasure and chance to meet in this PhD journey, regardless the nature of the support (material, affective or moral) they provided.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Andrew Fearn. His knowledge, vision and precious advice have guided me throughout the thesis. It has truly been a privilege to discuss ideas with him and learn from his expertise.

I am also grateful to my co supervisor, Lisa Wood, who has been supportive all the way throughout; I am thankful to her for her availability - day or night- in responding to my 'self-confidence crises', providing a much needed calm head in times of confusion. The trust and freedom they both gave me, encouraging me to develop my own ideas were very much appreciated.

I am especially grateful to James and Melanie, the two poor souls who have proofread patiently and meticulously earlier versions of this manuscript and contributed in correcting my English. They here should see how appreciative I am.

I would like to thank my friends for the motivation they provided throughout this thesis and for keeping my social life active. Thank you Lena, Elodie, Martino, Claire for your friendship and for the good laughs we shared. May other PhD students should find here my deep thanks for the always-welcome coffee breaks over which we debated so much the idea of giving up our research altogether but never actually did.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the unhesitating and constant support of my parents and of my brother who I have always looked up to and tried to emulate. They should be thanked for being so encouraging and always pushing me to achieve my goals despite the hard times encountered along the way.

Glossary

Fairtrade: This term is used to describe the certification and labelling system governed by the Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International.

Fair Trade: This term is used to refer to the Fair Trade movement as a whole and can be used to describe both labelled and unlabelled goods and the work of Alternative Trade Organizations (ATOs), Fair Trade federations and other networks.

fair trade: This term is a broader term often used to describe one or many of the above, and is also used to refer to trade justice issues.

FAIRTRADE Mark : an independent consumer label which appears on products to signify that Fairtrade standards have been met.

FG: Focus Groups

CVP: Concurrent Verbal Protocols

RVP: Retrospective Verbal Protocols

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the 90s, significant coverage by the media increased awareness of a range of food issues. However, it also reduced consumer confidence and stimulated interest in ethical concerns and resulted in growing demand for assurances. These include: better traceability systems, indication of provenance, certification of production process or even labour rights and conditions, to name a few. Fair trade, organic and free-range are examples of foods with credence attributes. The existence of such attributes cannot be directly assessed, even after consumption (Darbi & Karni 1973). These authors further suggested to classify as credence, any good that are “laden with” credence characteristics. However needed this condition is, it is not sufficient. Indeed, to be qualified as credence, one needs to take into account the importance of the credence attributes in the consumer perception. When confronted to a choice, a consumer might consider several attributes (of which some might be of credence nature); those are latent characteristics. However, the attributes used to reach a decision, are the important ones. An attribute is considered as latent if it does not influence the consumer behaviour, and manifest if it does influence the behaviour. The food will be considered as credence goods, only if among these attributes, one credence attribute dominates and strongly influences the choice (Pascucci, 2010). As it is impossible to know if the Fairtrade attribute is the most salient one in the consumers’ decision, we will therefore, for the remainder of this dissertation, consider Fairtrade foods as foods with credence attributes.

The Fair Trade movement has been growing year on year. This might be a trend that will disappear shortly. However, if this is durable, like environmentalism years ago, marketers should aim to better understand the phenomenon, so as to satisfy consumers’ information needs. In consequence, this thesis is about information search activities of shoppers buying Fairtrade foods and consumers’ different approaches to information search and use according to their level of involvement.

In this dissertation, *involvement* is viewed as the degree to which consumers are engaged about a product or an issue. This follows Antil (1984) who defines involvement as ‘*the level of importance and/or interest evoked by a stimulus (or stimuli) within a specific situation*’ (1984, p. 204)

Different conceptualisations of involvement propose that

- *consumers* can be more or less involved (e.g. people suffering from allergies, food lovers tend to choose their food more carefully than others) (Kassarjian, 1981)
- *products* can be more or less involving (e.g. fresh meat compared to salt) (Rathz & Moore, 1989)
- *situations* can be more or less involving (buying for self or for someone else) (Mitchell 1983, 1981)

Across these approaches though, food is considered as a low involving category. Traditionally, purchasing decisions for everyday products are considered as simple, habitual and easily comprehensible. Fair trade adoption and commitment by consumers might be a potential catalyst of change for involvement. Indeed, involvement has been recognised to be an important determinant of consumer decision making for Fairtrade products (Bezençon & Blili 2006). It might also change information needs, wants, and use.

Both academic and business literatures reflect the expansion of the market: papers have looked at the consequences of the growth of ethical market, but few focussed specifically on fair trade until the end of the nineties. From then on, the literature studied the fair trade movement from different perspectives: economics (Grankvist & Biel 2007, Arnot, Boxall & Cash 2006, De Pelsmacker, Driesen & Rayp 2005, Loureiro & Lotade 2005), theology (Raynolds 2002), agriculture or psychology studies, (Grankvist & Biel 2007, De Pelsmacker *et al.* 2006, De Pelsmacker, Janssens & Mielants 2005), but failed to integrate these elements altogether.

Even though the relationship between involvement and information search has long been researched in the literature, very little has been published on if (and how) the relationship is changed in the context of goods with credence attributes. There is therefore a rationale to explore this issue within this specific context. The present study aims to investigate and provide answers to the following research questions:

Is there a relationship between information search and involvement in the context of Fairtrade food purchases?

What role does the FAIRTRADE Mark play in influencing the choice of Fairtrade products and how does the level of consumer involvement affect this role?

A parallel, yet important, research objective of the study is to explore the differences between self-reported and actual behaviour. A preliminary review of the literature revealed that situational characteristics have an important influence on the attention paid by supermarket shoppers to information. Numerous inconsistencies between what people report as their behaviour and their actual behaviour exist in the literature. Hence, this study specifically examines this issue and proposes to compare claimed behaviour (self-reported) with actual behaviour (at the point of purchase). Thus, the study aims to

Explore the differences between what people say (attitudes, perceptions and claimed behaviour) and what people actually do (revealed behaviour).

Specific attention is paid to the role, importance and use made of the FAIRTRADE Mark – signalling the fair trade nature of the product to the shopper- during the purchasing decision process.

This chapter introduces the notions of food choice and elements explored in this research. It then reviews the justification for such research, and highlights the contributions (conceptual, methodological and practical) made by this thesis.

1.1 FOOD CHOICE

1.1.1 Increasing concerns

The issue of food choice is a topic long studied in the field of Consumer Behaviour. Many models have been developed (Shepherd, Magnusson & Sjöden 2005, Shepherd 1999, Furst et al. 1996) and recognise the influence of three main groups of factors: product-related, consumer-related, and environment-related factors. Motives for purchase are numerous and varied: they may be highly personal, may result from word-of-mouth recommendation (peer or expert); or may be spontaneous. In theory, there can be as many motives as there are consumers.

In recent studies reviewing factors influencing food choice, consumers are said to attach greater importance to attributes associated with quality, nutritional content, provenance and methods of production when making food-purchasing decisions (Verbeke & Ward 2006). However, the assessment of *credence* attributes and their role in ethical food choices has received limited attention in the consumer behaviour literature (Shaw *et al.* 2005).

1.1.2 Involvement

Some consumers might become more involved in food than the literature suggests. Specifically, Verbeke and Roosen (2009) argue that greater interest in credence attributes may affect consumers' level of involvement in the food purchasing decision-making process. It follows that, fair trade products, as an example of credence foods, may trigger a higher involvement purchase decision. For instance, an individual highly involved with food purchasing and ethics is likely to be more knowledgeable about the range of available products than an individual with a lower level of involvement. Furthermore, a highly involved consumer is also likely to search for and use information sources differently than a consumer who is less involved (Nelson, Dyson & Paul 1985). This is explored in the present study.

1.1.3 Information search

Difficulties in accessing information and existing products are barriers that may influence food purchasing behaviour. Most information about fair trade is conveyed in specialist media such as ethical magazines, networks or dedicated websites. The majority of consumers do not rely on these sources to gather information about products before or after the purchase process, because it requires an excessive effort with regards to the task at hand. Rather, they use packaging information – in-store or subsequently at home - and advertising to inform and confirm purchase decisions (Wright & Heaton 2006). In this respect, Williams (2006) argues that these barriers deter some groups of consumers from buying fair trade foods and that consumers buying fair trade products may not be the ones who derive the greatest benefits (in (Tallontire, Rentsendorj & Blowfield 2001)).

1.1.4 Labelling strategies

Quality signals, such as product labels, help transform credence characteristics into search attributes, thereby, in theory, enabling buyers to assess more clearly product quality

(Drichoutis, Lazaridis & Nayga Jr 2007) and to form a judgment about the product. Because labelling is direct information from the provider to the consumer it appeals to manufacturers and policy-makers. It is also proposed to be an effective tool to answer consumers' ever increasing demand for assurances (Mintel 2008). Consequently, there has been a significant growth in recent years in the number of labels in the food industry. Support for this increased use of labels, which is believed to encourage responsible purchasing is found in Schlegelmilch (Schlegelmilch, Bohlen & Diamantopoulos 1996) and D'Souza (2004). However, there is still limited evidence that labelling is an effective means of providing information to all consumers (Shaw *et al.* 2005).

As an example, when Starbucks launched its certified coffee, the FAIRTRADE Mark was displayed on the front of its cups, but subsequently, the name of the product was changed and the fair trade nature of the product has been somehow minimised, and the Mark moved to the side of the packaging (Elliott, 2004). Similarly Davies (2007) reports that Cafedirect's rebranding of its instant coffee, from Cafedirect to 5065, was accompanied by evocative branding marketing and a reduction both in the size of the FAIRTRADE Mark and in the space allocated to growers' comments on its product packaging. This suggests that the FAIRTRADE Mark was not adding value for consumers, illustrating its potential failure in conveying information to shoppers (Mintel 2009b). Additionally, the consumer role is often passive in the design process of assurance labels. Salaün and Flores (2001) argue, therefore, that understanding and recollection of the information provided through such labels might be limited. Indeed, research shows that even among people who are likely to agree with the ideals behind fair trade, entrenched shopping habits sometimes prevent them from consciously looking for and choosing new fair trade products.

Thus, there is something of a paradox when it comes to the use of food labels. For consumers who already care about specific credence attributes and know what they are looking for, labels may be effective in reducing search costs. However, for consumers who are not 'involved' in the product or the purchase decision, labels may be wholly ineffective in instigating behaviour change, as for these consumers product labels are likely to be ignored and credence attributes unlikely to be rated as important. It is this paradox that constitutes a major motivation for this research and the primary reason for investigating consumers' reaction to information in general, and labels in particular. The underlying hypothesis is that consumer awareness of, attitudes towards and interest in credence foods

is heterogeneous, which means communication strategies, of which information labels are a part, need to be appropriately customised to ensure effective communication at different levels in the purchase decision-making process.

Previous studies have predominantly investigated label use after forced exposure, from a conscious information-processing point of view. Moreover, researchers have generally viewed fair trade as a 'product augmentation' characteristic rather than viewing the production process as an intrinsic attribute. Brinkmann and Peattie (2008) argue that this might have resulted in a biased view within decision choice models. In particular, a considerable amount of literature focuses on consumers' perspective and proposes an investigation of beliefs, attitudes and intentions about purchasing (Nicholls & Lee 2006, Ozcaglar-Toulouse, Nil, Shiu & Shaw 2006b, De Pelsmacker *et al.* 2005, Padel & Foster 2005) using choice experiments studies and willingness-to-pay evaluation. Even though the literature on fair trade exists, little research has looked at consumers' actual behaviour (d'Astous & Mathieu 2008) outside laboratories. Similarly, there is a scarcity of studies analysing the purchase process from a psychological perspective. Examples of such studies include: (Vermeir & Verbeke 2006) who succeeded in increasing consumers' level of involvement in relation to sustainable consumption and Bezençon (2008) who explored differential levels of involvement amongst Fairtrade consumers in Switzerland.

The purpose of this research is to contribute further to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of information where it matters most- at the point of purchase. Information search and involvement are clearly interlinked but how this relationship manifests itself in the context of fair trade foods has not been researched to date.

1.2 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH

Whilst nutritional information is the most important labelling attribute leading to unprompted information search by consumers, the literature suggests that the production process and intrinsic properties of food (credence attributes) are gaining importance in consumers' choices. A study by the Institute of Grocery Distribution (2006) reports that 33 percent of shoppers in the UK view themselves as 'ethical activists' (those taking into account ethical considerations when making food purchase decisions) having their choices dictated by beliefs and lifestyle, yet the penetration of Fairtrade products in the UK's

largest supermarket (Tesco) is only 27% (dunnhumby, 2010). Conversely, 25 percent of shoppers have reported not being ethically sensitive. This outlines existing opportunities to expand the market.

The literature on ethical food choice fails to explain the gap between attitudes and behaviour. In addition, few studies have attempted to explore ethical consumerism from cognitive or psychological perspectives. Indeed, economic models that use choice experiments studies and willingness-to-pay methods dominate the literature. Apart from the recent study by d'Astous and Mathieu (2008) little research has looked at consumers' actual behaviour outside the laboratory environment.

This thesis seeks to make a contribution in addressing these theoretical and methodological issues by focusing on the influence of personal and contextual variables using qualitative research methods.

Previous researchers have encouraged such research to be conducted. For example, Tallontire *et al* recognise that

'an under-researched question is whether different types of consumer respond to different types of information, different media and which sorts of information are most effective and credible for consumers'. (Tallontire, Rentsendorj & Blowfield 2001, p. 25)

Fair Trade was chosen as the context for this study because

- The Fairtrade Foundation states that the FAIRTRADE Mark

'is the only consumer label that focuses on ensuring farmers in developing countries receive an agreed and stable price for the crops they grow, as well as additional income to invest in community development programmes' (Fairtrade Foundation)¹

- The Fairtrade Foundation has an established label, widely recognised
- The Fairtrade market has grown substantially in recent years, resulting in a more heterogeneous consumer base with different levels of involvement and different approaches to information search and utilisations.

¹ Statement On George Alagiah as Patron of the Fairtrade Foundation, 5th of August 2009

By examining these issues, the present thesis makes the following methodological and practical contributions.

1.2.1 Methodological contributions

No study has yet tackled the role of the FAIRTRADE Mark across several categories using ethnographic methods. Observation of consumer behaviour at the point of purchase is increasingly popular (Healy *et al.* 2007). This study contributes to this emergent branch of consumer behaviour and research.

Specifically, the research makes the following contributions:

1) It determines the importance of involvement in the context of information search for Fairtrade food purchases, with the aim of proposing an explanatory model.

2) It applies a comprehensive research design by applying both qualitative and quantitative methods. The complementary use of qualitative methods with quantitative data is expected to yield robust findings and to offer a fresh perspective on the issue. As such the differences between claimed and actual behaviour are revealed and explanatory factors are sought.

3) It finally, supports the usefulness of a commercial database (dunnhumby Ltd) in the context of academic studies. It combines quantitative measures of *who* buys *what* in the context of Fairtrade foods, through the analysis of dunnhumby (sic) (supermarket panel) data with qualitative measures of *why* people buy or do not buy Fairtrade products and the role of involvement and the FAIRTRADE Mark in the purchasing decision making process.

1.2.2 Practical contributions

In addition to the theoretical contributions highlighted above, this study is also of practical relevance. Specifically, findings of this research may also impact managerial activities. The main practical contributions can be summarised as follows:

1) A deeper understanding of consumer behaviour, that is relevant for companies in terms of new product development, innovations and communications management.

2) A better understanding of how people differ in their use of information labels which could be useful for the purpose of segmenting the market, if the information could be more efficiently targeted.

3) Guidance on activities Fair Trade stakeholders should engage in, to best allocate the resources to maximise the effectiveness of information. Whether it be through messages that draw on self interest, concern for others, or the intrinsic value of the environment; and whether those messages are structured using rational cognitive arguments, emotional cues or a combination of the two (see Hartmann *et al.* 2005) cited in (Riethmuller & Buttriss 2008).

4) An understanding of what motivates consumers' decisions in store, and why increasing their involvement in food purchase decisions might be crucial for marketers.

The methodology applied in this study is now reviewed.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

At the outset of this study (2006) there was a lack of observational studies in the fair trade context. It was therefore deemed appropriate to adopt an exploratory line of enquiry in order to develop new ideas in this area. This research context required an unstructured approach allowing theory to emerge from the researched data (Glaser 1992).

The use of an interpretive research design permits a richer understanding of key motives of behaviour, and an explanation of how to embed authentic information flows within marketing messages. A multi method approach is adopted to understand if and how a credence claim can impact consumers' information search processes and involvement. The conjoint use of qualitative and quantitative methods increases the external validity of the research.

Specifically, this thesis utilises a three-stage approach:

- **Stage one** involves the use of the dunnhumby (supermarket panel) data to identify key measures of market performance for specific categories of Fairtrade foods and key characteristics of shopping behaviour, including the profile of Fairtrade shoppers.

- **Stage two** entails the use of focus groups which aim to gain detailed insights into the motives for buying or not Fairtrade products, the use of information and the role of the FAIRTRADE Mark in the purchase decision making process. Thematic analysis of the results is conducted using Nvivo 8.0.

- **Stage three** builds on the focus groups' findings to gain deeper insights through the use of accompanied shopping by observing directly certain discussants whose profile appears interesting, witnessing shopping activities as they unfold, thus, enabling a more complete picture of actual purchasing behaviour.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

This thesis is structured in eight chapters.

Chapter 1- presented an **overview of the study**.

Chapter 2 presents the **background of the research**. The origins and evolution of the fair trade movement are reviewed. The most recent market developments are presented and the range of products available and communication activities are described, along with a summary of previous attempts to profile the fair trade consumers.

Chapter 3 is a **theoretical overview** of the relevant literature. The chapter starts by examining the literature on information search before moving onto the concept of involvement and its associated literature. Gaps in the literature are identified and variables and constructs of interest are presented. The chapter concludes with implications for the development of a research proposition.

Chapter 4 presents the **philosophical approach and methodology** of the study. The research plan is justified, each method used is described, and its implementation detailed.

Chapter 5 presents the findings from the **analysis of the dunnhumby** (supermarket panel) database. The chapter highlights key performances measures and shoppers' profiles for Fairtrade foods and their non-labelled substitutes.

Chapter 6 presents the **findings of the focus groups**. In particular, chapter 6 reviews consumers' knowledge, attitudes and information search with regard to Fairtrade foods, with reference to the constructs detailed in chapter 3.

Chapter 7 presents the **results of the accompanied shops** conducted with a subset of Fairtrade buyers recruited from the focus groups. The focus here is on the information search process at the point of purchase and the role of the FAIRTRADE Mark in 'shopping' Fairtrade products- prompting purchase or reducing search costs.

Chapter 8 is the final chapter, which presents the **main conclusions** established throughout the research. It summarises the theoretical, practical and methodological contribution(s) of this thesis and ends by highlighting limitations of this study and suggesting areas for further research.

1.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research involves the study of individuals at different levels of aggregation. Any research involving human subjects should make sure that ethical issues have been considered and that informed consent had been obtained from the subjects. All necessary precautions to inform and protect subjects have been taken. Due to the qualitative nature of the research, a specific attention was given to the involvement of the researcher, aiming at limiting risks and concerns for subjects involved (Bowen, 2005).

An ethical approval form was filled in and submitted to the Ethical board review of the University of Kent. This allowed to provide evidence that a range of ethical issues had been anticipated: risk, confidentiality of data, sponsorship, issues relating to culture, religion, gender, monetary considerations and rights for the participants to obtain feedback and to consult the findings of the research. Ethical approval was obtained. The procedure is further detailed in chapter 4.

1.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the area of research of this thesis. It has established the research problem, statement and question, provided a justification for the research, proposed an outline and has set the boundaries of the research.

This research adopts a mixed method, interpretative approach aimed at a global understanding of information search behaviour and the role of involvement therein.

The study of the relationship between information search and involvement is both an important and widely researched field. However, the specific case of information search for actual Fairtrade foods' purchases has received little attention to date. Its potential to differ from other goods supports the need for further research.

Chapter 2 now presents the contextual background of this study.

Chapter 2

Contextual background

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets the context of the study. Starting with a brief historical account of the Fair Trade movement, it then presents the current state of the market both in the United Kingdom and in the rest of the world. The chapter closes with a review of previous attempts to profile fair trade food consumers and an explanation of different aspects of consumer behaviour.

2.2 HISTORICAL ACCOUNT- ORIGIN OF THE MOVEMENT

Today's fair trade market is considerably different from what it was when the movement was launched some 60 years ago. Fair trade has developed into an established movement and has gained recognition at both a political and corporate business level. This section summarises the milestones of the evolution.

The earliest records of fair trade in Europe date back to the late 1950s when Oxfam GB began selling crafts made by Chinese refugees. In the 1980s, Mexican coffee growers developed the idea of a Fairtrade label as a means of regulating the market. In 1988, the 'Max Havelaar' label was established in the Netherlands. Products bought, traded and sold respecting fair trade conditions were granted the right to use the label. The guarantee (for consumers) that the products conformed to specific standards contributed towards market growth: indeed, the impact of the label was observed regardless of consumer knowledge about the label's ownership structure (Davies, 2007).

Originally, fair trade products were sold through mail order or in specialised locations (churches, schools, city halls, Oxfam shops) with limited or no marketing strategy, appealing to a small fringe of shoppers. Although these points of sale are still

important, today, about 90% of sales are made through mainstream distribution (e.g. supermarkets).

Although - and maybe because - a wide literature has been published on the topic, from many different perspectives, a consensus is yet to be found on a definition of fair trade (Jones, Comfort & Hillier 2004). Each approach tends to highlight different elements regarding diverse interests. In the present research, we adopt the definition of FINE² (an association of four international fair trade networks) to which fair trade labelling organisations most commonly refer. For them, fair trade is

“a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, which seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers, especially in the South” (FINE, 2001).

In its essence, the Fair Trade movement aims to re-establish the social and economic balance between producers and buyers while also considering environmental issues. This objective is achieved by implementing more stringent criteria in social and environmental issues than the free market (Gould 2003).

Broadly, the market is divided in two main categories: the craft and the commodity sectors³. The craft sector does not have a universal labelling system. Thus, the focus of this study is on the commodity sector, principally audited by the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation (FLO). FLO certifies companies and awards them the right to use the FAIRTRADE Mark, given they comply with standards. The FAIRTRADE Mark is the UK version of FLO's international certification label which itself is a European registered trademark (No. 0026 06 994). The use of the FAIRTRADE Mark on products and promotional material by companies is subject to strict regulations and norms that are codified in a Manual for Promotional material (Fairtrade foundation, 2008)⁴. In the UK,

2 Four labelling organisations: Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International, World Fairtrade Organization, The Network of European Shops and European Fairtrade Association forms FINE

3 Crafts include toys, furniture, books, commodity beverage, foodstuffs and cotton based products.

4 http://www.Fairtrade.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2008/p/promo_mark_guidelines.pdf accessed on 9th, October 2008.

the Fairtrade Foundation licenses companies to use the FAIRTRADE Mark on products that comply with international Fairtrade standards and contractual requirements. With respect to food, three broad categories of goods are applied different requirements:

- Finished or consumer products, composed of one ingredient only or raw ingredients, are allowed to carry the FAIRTRADE Mark, if they are sourced from Fairtrade certified producers.

- Blended products- i.e. finished or consumer products composed of two or more similar products mixed together- can carry the FAIRTRADE Mark only if all ingredients are sourced from Fairtrade certified producers.

- Composite products- i.e. manufactured or processed finished or end-consumer products that made of more than one ingredient of which at least one is not sourced from Fairtrade-certified producers, it is mandatory to indicate the percentage of Fairtrade ingredients by dry weight (or volume). Several situations can be distinguished:
 - The FAIRTRADE Mark may be used if more than 50% of its ingredients, by dry weight, are sourced from Fairtrade-certified producers.
 - A less stringent rule is applied when a significant ingredient (e.g. oranges for orange juice, or cocoa for chocolate powder) and if this ingredient represents more than 20% of the product's dry weight. It is important to note that the significant ingredient may be different from the main ingredient.
 - Finally, when considering liquid composite products, the FAIRTRADE Mark may be used if more than 50% of its volume is sourced from Fairtrade-certified producers.

The specific standards of Fairtrade labelling are set and agreed by the FLO and aim to:

- ensure a guaranteed minimum price which is agreed with producers⁵
- provide an additional premium which can be invested in projects that enhance social, economic and environmental development
- enable pre-financing for producers who require it
- emphasize the idea of partnership between trade partners
- facilitate mutually beneficial long-term trading relationships
- set clear minimum and progressive criteria to ensure that the conditions for the production and trade of a product are socially and economically fair and environmentally responsible.

In short, these standards are minimum social, economic and environmental requirements, which producers must meet to gain the accreditation. They also encourage improvement in social conditions by setting out progress requirements.

Additionally, over the last years, alternative ethical labels have been introduced (e.g. Rainforest Alliance, Equitrade). With a great number of ethical labels in the market, communicating ethical issues could potentially become confusing for consumers (Connolly & Shaw 2006). Further, the risk that Fairtrade becomes institutionalised in the mainstream market mechanisms and becomes of lesser importance to consumers was highlighted (Davies,2007).

The next section presents an overview of the market for fair trade foods.

⁵ The Fairtrade Minimum Price is a guaranteed price that is said to cover the costs of sustainable production. The set Fairtrade Price is always the minimum price paid but rises if market prices are higher. It is not calculated as a proportion of the final retail price; price which is negotiated between the product manufacturer and the retailer (Mintel 2009a)

The Fairtrade Premium is a separate payment designated for social and economic development in the producing communities. The producers themselves decide how these funds are to be spent. It is generally used for improvements in health, education or other social facilities, although it may also be used for certain development projects to enable farmers to improve productivity or reduce their reliance on single commodities.

2.3 THE FAIRTRADE FOOD MARKET

2.3.1 Facts and figures

1) In the world

The estimated retail value of Fairtrade products accounted for almost €2.9 billion in 2008 which is an increase of 22% from 2007 (FairtradeLabellingOrganizationsInternational 2009).

The constant introduction of new product lines has participated greatly to the growth of the market worldwide. Overall the value of the fair trade⁶ market is monitored on a country per country basis (see Table 2.1 below):

- The UK is the largest market
- Sweden, Norway and Australia are the fastest growing markets
- Per capita spending is highest in Switzerland (£14.25/year in 2007).

⁶ Both labelled and non-labelled goods.

Country	2007	2008	Growth rate
AUS/NZ	10,800,000	18,567,280	72%
AUSTRIA	52,794,306	65,200,000	23%
BELGIUM	35,000,000	45,780,141	31%
CANADA	79,628,241	128,545,666	67%
DENMARK	39,559,534	51,220,106	40%
FINLAND	34,643,000	54,445,645	57%
FRANCE	210,000,000	255,570,000	22%
GERMANY	141,686,350	212,798,451	50%
IRELAND	23,335,678	30,131,421	29%
ITALY	39,000,000	41,180,027	6%
JAPAN	6,200,000	9,567,132	44%
LUXEMBURG	3,200,000	4,249,301	33%
NETHERLANDS	47,500,000	60,913,968	28%
NORWAY	18,069,198	30,961,160	73%
SPAIN	3,928,213	5,483,106	40%
SWEDEN	42,546,039	72,830,302	75%
SWITZERLAND	158,101,911	168,766,526	7%
UK	704,314,576	880,620,304	43%
USA	730,820,000	757,753,382	10%
TOTAL	2,381,127,046	2,835,903,918	22%

Source: Fairtrade Labelling International (2009)

Table 2-1: Fairtrade market value 2007 and 2008, foods and non foods

Despite being the best performing market in the world (according to these figures), the United Kingdom remains a niche market, as does the whole ethical consumerist movement. The particularities of the United Kingdom will now be explored.

2) The United Kingdom Market

In the last decade, fair trade sales in the United Kingdom have increased exponentially (Keynote 2008). This appears to be the result of multiple factors:

- A larger offer, with an increase in the number of products certified by the Fairtrade Foundation
- A wider distribution (specialty and multiples are now selling products)
- An increased involvement of stakeholders.

The increased availability of Fairtrade products in supermarkets has been a key factor in improving accessibility. The Fairtrade Foundation has licensed over 6000 products with 1,500 new ones in 2008 alone. This rapid increase in the number of certified products has led the market to double in value every two years between 2000 and 2006. Still, in 2007, Mintel reported that year on year sales grew by 70%, when the retail value of the market for fair trade foods and beverages reached an estimated £424 million (Mintel 2009b). In 2008, the growth rate fell below 50% (Fairtrade Foundation, 2008), indicating possible market saturation.

Table 2.2 illustrates the evolution of the different food and drinks categories from 1998 to 2009 in the retail sector as published by the Fairtrade Foundation.

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Coffee	13.7	15.0	15.5	18.6	23.1	34.3	49.3	65.8	93.0	117.0	137.3	157.0
Tea	2.0	4.5	5.1	5.9	7.2	9.5	12.9	16.6	25.1	30.0	64.8	68.1
Chocolate/	1.0	2.3	3.6	6.0	7.0	10.9	16.5	21.9	29.7	34.0	26.8	44.2
Honey	n/a	n/a	0.9	3.2	4.9	6.1	3.4	3.5	3.4	5.0	5.2	4.6
Bananas	n/a	n/a	7.8	14.6	17.3	24.3	30.6	47.7	65.6	150.0	184.6	209.2
Flowers	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.3	5.7	14.0	24.0	33.4	30.0
Wine	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.5	3.3	5.3	8.2	10.0	16.4
Cotton	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.2	4.5	34.8	77.9	50.1
Other	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.2	3.5	7.2	22.3	30.3	45.7	90.0	172.6	219.4
Total	16.7	21.8	32.9	50.5	63.0	92.3	140.8	195.0	286.3	493.0	712.6	799

Source: Fairtrade Foundation, 2009

Table 2-2 : Estimated United Kingdom retail sales by value 1998-2009 (£ million)

*The figures against these products represent the cocoa part of all products containing cocoa, and the honey part of all products containing honey

Several points are noted:

- Over the period coffee, tea, and chocolate dominate the market,
- Although they only entered the market in 2000, bananas are now the best selling produce in volume terms,
- Exponential growth of ‘other’ category, partly due to the proliferation of new product launches.

The impressive observed growth is largely due to the adoption of sustainable issues by companies in their marketing mix, which for some has included the creation of Fairtrade ranges in their offer. In practice, this means that products are getting the Fairtrade

certification and pushed into the market by companies. Consequently, consumers are *de facto* made Fairtrade buyers.

Supermarkets first stocked Fairtrade products in 1994 (Davies, 2007). Nicholls (2002) documents the rapid growth and interest from retailers and argues that four simultaneous factors (i.e. political, academic, cultural, informational) have driven growth.

Fairtrade products were among the latest products with ethical credentials to enter the retail sector. On ideological grounds, the shift from a ‘niche market’ to a ‘mainstream’ one is considered by some authors to be risky (Low & Davenport 2005 , Golding & Peattie 2005). Although the easier access to supermarket distribution channels has accelerated market expansion, the core message was at risk of being weakened, as the Fair Trade movement originally has positioned itself as an alternative trade model trying to remain outside of the traditional trade system.

Today, the mainstream activity and the multinationals’ commitment have become essential in maintaining the sustainability of the market and its future success. However, although many retailers offer Fairtrade products, their motives for doing so remain under question (Low & Davenport 2005). Some of the major companies that have adopted Fairtrade have rebranded their products and implemented a new marketing strategy with the intention of extending their market. This is demonstrated in the Figure 2.1.

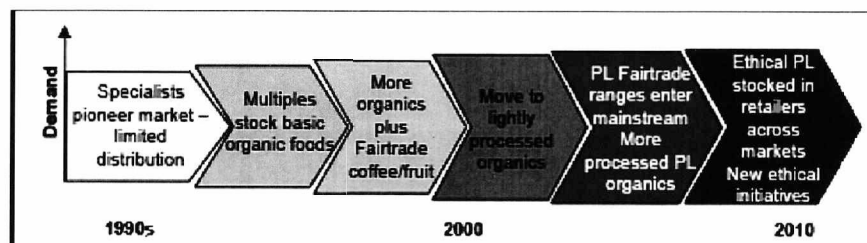


Figure 2.1 : Ethical private label development, (BusinessInsight 2007)

Private label Fairtrade ranges were first introduced from the beginning of the 2000s in response to the initial offer of branded products. Two factors contributed to this: an increasing interest for these products from consumers and a lower risk perceived by retailers in stocking them (Mintel 2008). The launch of these product lines has been an important driver of volume growth. It also participated in decreasing average prices paid for Fairtrade products.

Looking in detail at UK retailers we note that the performance is heterogeneous: the Co-op is recognised widely as the leading supermarket chain for Fairtrade foods with more than 230 products on offer. JS Sainsbury's stocks about 120 Fairtrade foods but had the highest retailer Fairtrade market share in value in 2007 (29% of the Fairtrade market compared to 15% for Tesco). Marks & Spencer stocks about 100 Fairtrade foods. Waitrose was the first supermarket to sell loose Fairtrade bananas. Tesco, the largest retailer in the UK, stocks 195 Fairtrade products of which around 40 are own-label and 128 are food products (Berg 2008).

Research conducted by the market research company Mintel in 2008 suggests growth of the market and positive performance of the key indicators.

- A fifth of main shoppers purchase four or more types of products
- Consumer penetration has increased from 61% to 70% over the last year (from 15.2 million households to 17.5 million) for fair trade foods. This average is to be looked across categories with gaps between mature and new categories.
- In addition to this, the number of shopping trips in which a household purchases fair trade foods has increased by 4.5 trips.

Figure 2.2 below illustrates that the majority of supermarket shoppers buy two or less fair trade food/drink products. This supports the view that efforts to develop the market further should be focussed on increasing purchases amongst existing shoppers across broader categories.

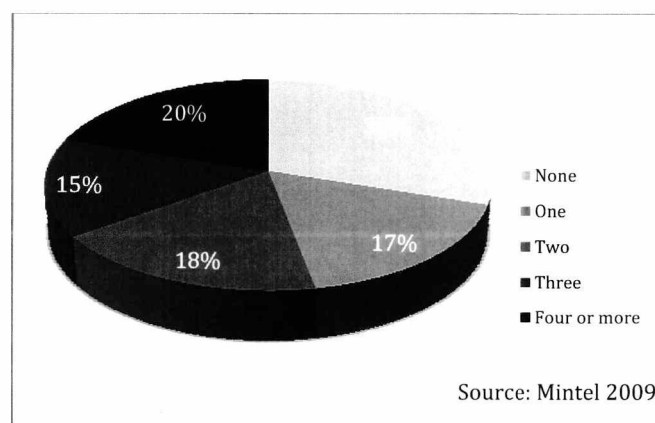


Figure 2.2 : Number of types of Fairtrade food and drink products purchased at the supermarket/local store, November 2008

However this analysis is based on reported behaviour obtained through surveys – therefore, potentially not accurate.

Nowadays, there are over 6,000 Fairtrade certified products (including foods and non foods) available to consumers across 26 categories. The dunnhumby database (supermarket panel) allows access to actual sales data -for each category- of Tesco (the largest supermarket in the United Kingdom)⁷. Key performance indicators such as customer penetration, purchasing frequency or repeat rate are presented in Tables 2.3 and 2.4 (negative year on year changes in the key measures have been highlighted in dark grey and bold font used, whilst increases have been noted with italic font and light grey).

⁷ Tesco, the U.K.'s largest retailer by sales, has a market share of 30.7% as of July, 21st,2010, source Kantar World Panel and IGD Analysis.

Category	Market share		Sales per store		Number of stores selling		Number of products				
	C	FT	C	FT	C	FT	C	FT	FT	FT	
			(£)	(£)	index	index	differ	index	ence	differ	index
Beer	99,93%	0,07%	26202	158	110	90		98	0		100
Breakfast cereals	99,97%	0,03%	8431	59	109	83	-8	86	-1		90
Canned fruit	100%	0%	3096	0	111	100	7	130	-1		100
Cereal bars	99,01%	0,99%	25257	113	113	131	-20	85	-2		67
Chocolate bars	68,60%	31,40%	14503	6690	108	108	-16	74	-1		90
Coffee R&G	85,75%	15,00%	12789	945	111	98	-3	97	-2		93
Fruit	98,04%	2,03%	244586	11955	107	102	13	108	-3		75
of which bananas	93,98%	6,02%	65217	9709	110	104	1	113	-1		67
Fruit and nuts mix	98,66%	1,34%	12791	105	109	165	-3	97	-2		50
Honey	99,46%	0,54%	11055	101	110	94	-29	69	-1		67
Hot chocolate	96,27%	3,73%	10446	974	110	92	-14	82	-1		83
Ice cream	98,23%	1,77%	14383	768	113	97	-31	80	-1		86
Instant coffee	98,62%	1,38%	58047	1263	108	100	4	104	-1		96
Jams and preserves	99,90%	0,10%	12692	166	109	72	-36	79	-4		43
Long life juice	99,86%	0,14%	30641	258	109	95	-22	79	-1		50
Marmalade	99,78%	0,22%	5968	203	107	71		74	-1		50
Nuts	96,60%	3,40%	12 791	1199	109	104	-3	97	0		100
Oil	100,00%	0,00%	18854	11	110	28	-26	78	0		100
Rice	100%	0,00%	15500	7	110	0	-5	88	-1		30
Rice cakes	96,35%	3,65%	9257	1087	108	100	-8	91	-1		67
Sauces and vinegars	100%	0%	10	0	1	0	-1	50	-1		100
Spices	98,71%	1,29%	5228	169	109	94	-38	73	-9		35
Spread	99,67%	0,33%	2759	110	110	86	0	100	0		100
Sugar	48,53%	51,47%	1258	3254	110	105	-4	69	0		100
Tea	98,15%	1,85%	59527	1686	108	104	-59	86	-3		89
Wine	99,40%	0,60%	88895	1697	180	73	-8	96	1		111
Total	N/A	N/A	608907	18406	108	108	-369	85	-38		78

C: non FT labelled

negative YOY change

positive YOY

non significant change

FT: FT labelled

Source : © dunnhumby 2010

Table 2-3: Key Performance indicators, 52 weeks ending 14th June 2010

Category	Customer penetration		Frequency of purchase		Average price (£)		FT premium (index)
	C	FT	C	FT	C	FT	
Beer	14.19%	0.01%	2.95	1.30	3.56	1.86	52
Breakfast cereals	13.91%	0.01%	3.17	1.25	1.48	2.32	150
Canned fruit	17.07%	N/A	2.50	N/A	0.52	N/A	
Cereal bars	26.13%	0.59%	4.36	2.18	1.6	1.63	102
Chocolate bars	31.23%	15.49%	3.27	2.67	1.18	1.54	131
Coffee	9.98%	0.63%	3.74	2.56	2.49	2.54	102
R&G	77.84%	15.75%	15.96	2.43	1.02	1.26	124
Fruit	66.11%	12.91%	11.81	2.48	0.72	1.22	169
of which bananas	19.74%	0.71%	2.60	1.73	1.78	1.26	71
Fruit and nuts mix	19.28%	0.14%	2.54	1.42	2.02	2.93	145
Honey	22.82%	1.37%	2.60	1.63	1.07	1.62	151
Hot chocolate	17.57%	0.47%	2.51	1.68	2.34	2.78	119
Ice cream	44.42%	2.39%	4.68	2.66	2.82	2.73	97
Instant coffee	34.60%	0.05%	2.94	1.93	1.16	1.33	115
Jams and preserves	30.71%	0.06%	5.35	3.45	0.9	1.09	121
Long life juice	19.41%	0.05%	3.06	1.98	0.94	1.38	147
Marmalade	19.74%	1.17%	2.60	1.75	1.78	1.96	110
Nuts	0.01%	0.01%	2.66	1.02	2.3	0.64	28
Oil	29.02%	0.0%	3.13	1.0	1.55	0.69	45
Rice	20.80%	1.30%	3.71	2.51	0.83	0.94	113
Rice cakes	0.00%	N/A	1	N/A	0.01	N/A	
Sauces and vinegars	20.25%	0.30%	2	1.05	0.95	2.07	218
Spices	7.39%	0.12%	2.09	1.35	1.63	1.97	121
Spread	5.74%	5.58%	1.93	2.03	1.01	1.08	107
Sugar	54.34%	2.90%	5.30	2.49	2	1.63	81
Tea	30.14%	0.69%	4.18	1.26	4.12	4.57	111
Wine	30.14%	0.69%	4.18	1.26	4.12	4.57	111
Total	82,51%	34,38%	17,14	3,36	1,45	1,55	107

C: non FT labelled negative YOY change positive YOY change
 FT: FT labelled non significant change

Source: © dunnhumby 2010

Table 2-4: Key Performance indicators (ctd), 52 weeks ending 14th June 2010

Before getting into a detailed analysis of this table, it is necessary to explain how this data is arrived at. This table summarises sales that have occurred in any Tesco store

(that is including all stores formats and channels from Express to Metro via online) over the two years period chosen. The table looks at the first and second 52 weeks performances and establish year on year comparisons. In order to do so, an index- taking as its base value (base value=100) the figure of the first 52 weeks- is used. In looking for significant changes, attention is drawn to key performance indicators that have changed by at least 10%. This allows summarising in a table the factors contributing most to changes for each category where Fairtrade alternatives exist. With the aim of comparing the categories, a similar operation is conducted for Conventional (i.e. non Fairtrade certified) categories.

Looking into more detail at the table, the focus is on the best performing category, i.e. bananas. Looking across Table 2.3 we can see that Fairtrade bananas only represent 6% of the total amount of bananas sold in Tesco over the year, but that this has been stable over the period investigated. Tesco are continually expanding and opening new stores. Therefore it is expected that sales will naturally increase over time due to an increase in a number of stores selling the products. In order to reduce the impact of this on the final dataset, since the database gives also access to the number of stores selling each product, the sales value was divided by the number of stores selling the product each week to create the variable sales value per store. This shows that sales value, as well as distribution, have been relatively flat over the period. Next the number of products referenced in each category will influence both sales value and volume; in the specific example of bananas, Tesco referenced an additional product non-Fairtrade certified over the period, whilst they delisted one in the Fairtrade category. Table 2.4 further looks at consumer specific indicators. For example the figure for consumer penetration for Conventional bananas (19,74%) is surprisingly low. This is so because the data presented did look at different format of stores, this is an aggregated figure for the whole UK during the period. It therefore includes all consumers who made a purchase in any Tesco store. This means that a customer who only stopped in Tesco to buy lunch is as important as a customer who does his weekly shop there regularly. As a result, the fraction of shoppers buying bananas out of the total number of Tesco shoppers over the period might well be relatively low. This figure would be well different if the analysis only looked at people shopping in Tesco Extra where one might expect almost everyone to buy bananas whilst on their weekly shopping mission. The same applies for the sales value per store value in table 2.3, even though not many sales might have occurred in such stores, the total sales figures is divided by the number of stores stocking the products considered. The frequency of purchase

represents the number of times a product from each category has been bought over the year.

The average price figure is arrived at by summing the individual prices of each product included in the category, on a weekly basis, and calculating the average over the period for the category. Although it does not permit to account for differences between branded and own label products, it allows broad comparison of the certified versus non-certified foods. From the table 2.4 we read that over the period, a conventional banana product was sold on average at £1,78 whilst Fairtrade bananas products were sold at £1,26. The figure for Premium is calculated following the ratio between Conventional and Fairtrade categories average prices; this is carried for the whole category and does not take into account variations at the product level. Keeping with our example of bananas, we can see that certified Fairtrade bananas are sold about 29% cheaper than conventional ones.

Overall -and to further exploit the richness of this data- the broad trends that can be extracted from the data are as follow:

The market share remains low and is rarely above 5% for most categories, highlighting the persistent niche market nature of Fairtrade products. The overall market share of Fairtrade foods in the supermarket is largely due to the success of a small number of product categories – bananas, the most well known Fairtrade product, has a market share of 6,35%. Sugar is the only category with a market share of over 50% (followed by chocolate bars– 31% and Roast and Ground coffee – 16%). Although in terms of retail sales, coffee is no longer the leading product (overtaken by bananas), it is still bought by more consumers than any other Fairtrade item.

The distribution of products has expanded with an increase of 8% in the number of stores selling Fairtrade products in 2010 compared to 2009. However, over these two years, 38 Fairtrade labelled foods have been delisted, an illustration of the poor performance of certain lines.

The low customer penetration figures highlight the low awareness and visibility of products in store, where a small number of Fairtrade product lines have to compete with a disproportionate number of non Fairtrade alternatives. Penetration remains limited for all categories besides fruit and chocolate bars, and the Fairtrade range is far from attracting as many consumers as non-fair trade foods.

The figure for frequency of purchase remained stable over the period considered for most of categories. Instant coffee, jams and marmalade and long life juice are the only three categories for which the frequency of purchase has changed for over than 10%. Low purchase frequency, indicates that Fair Trade purchases are more an exception than the rule. Habitual purchasing behaviour does not exist yet for these shoppers.

- The core purpose of Fairtrade automatically invites a premium. That is the most reported barrier to purchase. The dunnhumby (sic) data shows that certain Fairtrade labelled foods are cheaper than their non-labelled counterpart, and that the premium varies from 2% to 118%. However, by expanding the number of lines the production and distribution costs could be reduced. This, combined with a notable increase in food prices in 2008, has levelled and reduced the price differential of Fairtrade premium pricing.

2.3.2 The products

Looking in more detail across products categories, the three best performing categories in terms of year on year sales evolution (value, over 2007-2008) are, according to Mintel (2008)

- Juices (sales almost quadrupled)
- Sugar (sales doubled)
- Bananas (sales increase by 72%)

As mentioned earlier, over the years, the continuous introduction of Fairtrade products in new categories has driven market growth.

In terms of penetration and value, pioneer categories greatly outperform more recent ones. In the UK, Fairtrade coffee (instant and roast & ground) accounts for over 6% of the total coffee market, but still represents more than a fifth of roast coffee in a sector dominated by soluble coffee. This performance is related to a 10% occupation of retailer shelf space. For a few years now, the introduction of products made from Fairtrade ingredients has expanded greatly. This has allowed further expansion of the range. However, the performance of such products is still far from having reached its potential, which gives confidence about future performance.

2.4 COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

In the early days, most of the communication about fair trade was aimed at raising awareness about producers in the developing world with the identification of products seen as a secondary issue. From 1990 on, the Fair Trade movement adopted a more business-oriented approach, taking advantage of the niche market conditions. As the market expanded, competition increased and branding became an important issue.

Effective communication by the different stakeholders aims to raise awareness and to engage consumers already interested in the issue. In order to communicate appropriately to potential consumers, it is important to know how and when to best reach them. Market research suggests that consumer attitudes towards information schemes vary as they are under the influence of several factors. Communication strategies should be tailored to both consumer needs and to specific situations.

Mass media communication is fairly recent in light of the existence of the movement. Advertising on television is the main means by which retailers communicate about fair trade. It is suggested that promotional activities play an important role in raising knowledge. A market study conducted in France by AlterEco (2005) reported that the majority of people hear about fair trade for the first time through word of mouth (27.6%) followed by television and newspapers. Communication at the sales outlet was only mentioned by 14.8% of respondents. This illustrates the poor visibility of products in stores. In the same study, people reported identifying the products through on-pack labels, suggesting that this information is of utmost importance (Fliess *et al.* 2007).

Despite the global economic recession in 2008/2009 a report by the Fairtrade Foundation (2009) suggests that consumers did not shy away from fair trade products, although it was recognised that retaining existing consumers, let alone attracting new ones was a challenge. This is also supported by Carrigan and De Pelsmacker (2009) who highlight threats to ethical market because of the recession and also point out examples of strategies that have succeeded in maintaining a stable consumer base. It is suggested that strong personal values held by purchasers of Fairtrade foods is the main reason why Fairtrade products have not felt the impact of the global recession (Arnot, Boxall & Cash 2006, Carrigan & De Pelsmacker 2009). The degree of commitment to the fair trade concept has been cited as being the main driver of demand and used to establish

classifications of consumers. In line with this, the next section outlines the ways in which the academic and business literature have presented the characteristics of the Fairtrade consumer, and then goes on to contrast them with the actual profile of the buyers, extracted from the dunnhumby (sic) database (supermarket panel).

2.4.1 The Fairtrade consumer

The literature is rich in studies categorising fair trade consumers. Usually based on opinion polls or supermarket panel data, segments of consumers are built on approximations and statistical projections of previous trends, extrapolated from relatively small samples. Despite numerous studies, it is difficult to extract a consistent profile of fair trade consumers. It is argued that statistical tests can be manipulated to support certain claims as desired, and thus discredit the validity of the classifications. In general, demographics and socioeconomic factors are used to portray consumers. Although they are easy to access - which explains their heavy use- they are not necessarily helpful beyond indicating broad trends.

The lack of consistency can also be explained by other factors:

- An evolution of the shopper profile
- The failure to account for psychographics or contextual variables.

Trying to depict an average shopper is without value, with many factors capable of influencing behaviour. It is likely that portraying accurately *the* fair trade food shopper is very difficult. In fact, there might be as many stories to tell as there are shoppers. Smoothing out differences to produce broad trends might erase interesting disparities that better segment the market. The Fair trade market has expanded (from niche, it has now entered the mainstream retailing activity) implying a broader penetration into diverse consumers' segments.

The most interesting commercial studies available to the public all point to correlations that exist between fair trade consumption, fair trade knowledge, fair trade perception, income, education, age and gender. In parallel, the academic literature uses mostly attitudinal scales to profile shoppers. Having acknowledged in the previous section the drawbacks of such studies, the main characteristics of fair trade consumers found in the literature are now summarised.

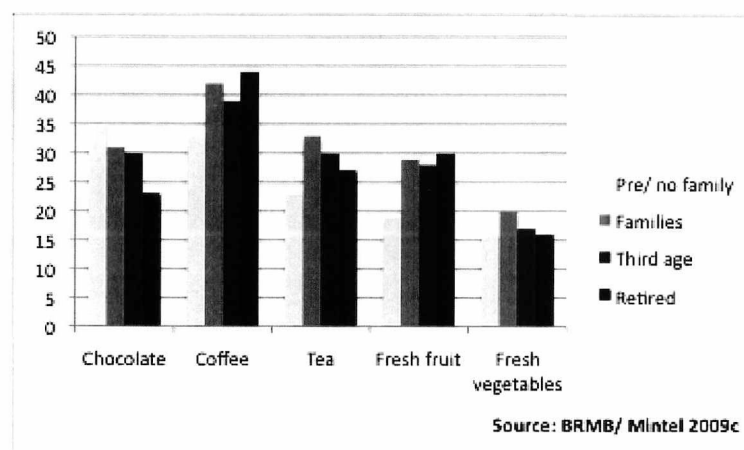
In essence, core fair trade consumers are identified as belonging to upper social class, being older, female, and having higher than average levels of education (Mintel 2006). According to Keynote, regular purchasers mainly belong to the AB socioeconomic groups (Keynote 2008). The Target Group Index reveals (see Table 2.5 below) that consumers in the B and C₁ socioeconomic groups are the keenest purchasers of Fairtrade products overall, with 1 out of 2 adults purchasing Fairtrade products. Other demographic factors such as the presence of young children, working status and household size are also reported as discriminating characteristics that potentially influence the penetration rate of product categories (Keynote 2008).

	Regularly	Occasionally	At all
All adults	13	36	49
Social grade			
A	20	29	49
B	21	34	55
C ₁	12	44	56
C ₂	9	36	45
D	10	31	40
E	13	25	38

Source: Keynote, 2008

Table 2-5: Purchases of Fairtrade products buy social grade and frequency of purchasing (% of adults)

Mintel reports that the propensity to purchase Fairtrade products is also likely to vary with lifestage (Graph 2.1)



Graph 2.1: Purchasing of selected fair trade food and drink products, by lifestage, November 2008

From the graph, we can read that

- Pre-/no-family adults are an important group for purchasing chocolate mainly but are the least attracted to other categories surveyed.

- Families are the best buyers of tea and fresh vegetables but are also very likely to buy in other categories as well.

- Third age shoppers have a similar purchasing behaviour to that of families, only buying slightly less.

- Retired consumers are the major buyers of both coffee and fresh fruit, two of the best-selling categories.

This supports the view that shoppers belonging to different lifestages shop differently across the range of Fairtrade products. The propensity to buy in certain categories seems to vary overtime and might be influenced by external factors or changes in preferences or household composition.

Mintel reports that 65% of surveyed consumers consider the FAIRTRADE Mark of the product as being an important piece of information on food and drink packaging (Mintel 2008). Likewise, Cowe et Williams (2001) report that -when asked- 5% of the British public say ethical considerations are their top priorities when making purchase decisions. However ethical issues are rarely spontaneously mentioned by survey respondents, unless prompted (Tallontire, Rentsendorj & Blowfield 2001).

Mintel has further considered ethical concerns reported by consumers. Even if Fairtrade products are considered, in many cases, the intention is not enough to motivate purchase (Chatzidakis, Hibbert & Smith 2007). Surveys, reports, questionnaires on awareness rely on the participant's memory and are subject to social desirability bias. The majority of studies use attitudinal scales to predict intention to purchase; this can also result in inconsistent results. As shoppers are not always conscious that they are buying Fairtrade, over and under reporting of purchases might also occur.

This exemplifies the well-known attitude-behaviour gap where intentions do not always translate into actions. The measurement and identification of values characterising purchasing intention of Fairtrade products is scarce in the literature. Two studies revealed the importance of universal, moral and self centred values (de Ferran & Grunert 2007)

while De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) pertain that Fairtrade food buyers are usually more idealistic than non-buyers.

How can such differences between the percentage of people recognising the brand and the size of the market be explained? The common reported deterrents to purchase include the cost, brand loyalty to other products and availability. Loyalty is described as a dynamic process developing throughout consumption experiences, true brand loyalty exists when customers have a high relative attitude toward the brand which is then exhibited through repurchase behaviour. In the literature, two main streams of research related to loyalty are encountered: determinist and stochastic. The former sees loyalty as being an attitude whilst the latter sees it as behaviour. Jacoby (1971) is the first to come up with a definition of loyalty integrating the two streams of research. He later defines brand loyalty as “(1) biased (i.e., non random) (2) behavioural response (i.e. purchase) (3) expressed over time (4) by some decision-making units (5) with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands and is (6) a function of psychological (decision-making, evaluative) processes.” (Jacoby, 1973, p 2) It has been pointed out that behavioural loyalty as reflected by repeat purchases does not adequately capture consumer loyalty (Jacoby, 1973). Several studies have attempted to examine the relationship between involvement and brand loyalty (Samudhra Rajakumar and Sritharan, 2008, Knox, 2003). In the present study, brand loyalty is considered as a deterrent of purchase of Fairtrade foods in that the brand of a product becomes more important than potential credence attributes of other products. Further, beyond price considerations, sensory characteristics and brand importance, the influence of context is often ignored.

By accessing the dunnhumby (sic) data that records weekly sales of products at a disaggregated level, we are able to compare profiles based on individuals' self reports with profiles derived from actual behaviour. The dunnhumby database, gives information about the geo-demographic profile of shoppers, based on CAMEO segmentation. Further information is given on this segmentation method and on the manner it is used in this dissertation in chapter 4 and chapter 5. Table 2.6 below summarises the evolution of key performing indicators over the past two years for the entire Fairtrade range.

Description	Customer Penetration	Spend per Customer	Frequency of Purchase	Repeat Rate %
Affluent Home-Owners	44,79%	£7,89	3,84	59,6%
Comfortable Mixed Neighbourhoods	38,70%	£6,73	3,49	55,7%
Less Affluent Families	38,06%	£6,29	3,34	54,9%
Less Affluent Singles and Students	34,40%	£5,81	3,09	52,4%
Poorer Council Tenants - Many Single Parents	30,75%	£4,90	2,83	49,3%
Poorer Family and Single Parent Households	34,68%	£5,66	3,12	52,3%
Poorer White and Blue Collar Workers	34,15%	£5,68	3,11	52,2%
Smaller Private Family Homes	41,98%	£7,11	3,60	57,6%
Wealthy Retired Neighbourhoods	45,51%	£8,18	3,86	60,1%
Young and Affluent Singles	35,20%	£6,01	3,04	53,1%

Source: © dunnhumby 2010

Table 2-6 : Key Performing Indicators of the Fairtrade range by CAMEO segments

What is evident from Table 2.6 is that it cannot be assumed that more affluent consumers tend to buy more Fairtrade products than less affluent consumers. This is confirmed by the

- Spend per consumer figures showing that the amount spent changes little from more to less affluent shoppers.
- Consumer Penetration figures showing that the differences between the best performing segment (Wealthy retired neighbourhoods) for which almost one in two shoppers buys Fairtrade foods- and the least performing segment (Poorer council tenants- Many single parents) in which almost one in three shoppers buy in the Fairtrade range.
- Repeat purchase rate is high for this range of products: over the 52 weeks (across all segments), one in two shoppers bought Fairtrade products in twice or more shopping occasions. This might be considered as an expression of loyalty- as defined above- towards Fairtrade foods.

This table looks at the entire range of Fairtrade products. In doing so, it erases the potential disparities that might exist across categories. This deeper analysis, looking at different product categories, aiming at a better profiling of Fairtrade buyers will be presented in chapter 5. For now, it is enough to remember that the differences in likeliness to buy across population are *not* as surveys and market studies report. The next section looks at more qualitative aspects of Fairtrade scheme and the awareness level in the population.

Understanding of fair trade

The Fairtrade Foundation reports that 70% of UK consumers recognise the FAIRTRADE Mark in 2008 compared to 57% in 2007 and 52% in 2005. Consumers also understood better both the meaning and the purpose of the scheme. This suggests that awareness campaigns are effective. Consumers accept the purpose of Fair trade, however, not much is known about the actual effects of consumer purchases on producers (redistribution and allocation of the money). This might potentially affect consumer perceived effectiveness and/or trust.

In this perspective, Ozcaglar-Toulouse *et al* (2006) conclude that the use of labelling allows the human and social connection between supplier and consumer and therefore should be maintained. They further propose that *'an increased sense of connection between consumer and producer would likely be critical to the conversion to higher level of engagement in fair trade'* (Ozcaglar-Toulouse, Shiu & Shaw 2006, p. 510). This assumes that different levels of engagement (involvement) already exist among consumers buying Fairtrade products.

Actual behaviour

Articles in Belgium by De Pelsmacker *et al* (2005) reported that only 10% of Belgium consumers were ready to pay the actual market premium for Fairtrade products. This is a major issue in most academic studies: relying on intention to buy can lead to overestimations of market potential. In a field experiment, exploring the actual purchasing behaviour of shoppers, when confronted with a choice between Fairtrade foods and non labelled products, social conditions have been found to have the greatest influence on consumer likeliness to choose the Fairtrade alternative (d'Astous & Mathieu 2008). This

reflects the importance of social desirability and bias in surveys when sensitive and/or ethical topics are dealt with.

Another important variable when studying actual behaviour is that of store choice. Previous studies have mostly focused on a single type of store, ignoring the potential impact of this variable on behaviour. The choice of the distribution channel or the store might be dependent on specific products needed. As 90% of Fairtrade sales are made in multiples and supermarkets, academic studies looking at this issue have mainly relied on supermarket shoppers. Samli supports this and further proposes that beyond reflecting income constraints, different lifestyles lead to different orientations considering product preferences and the choice of retail store ((Samli 1989) cited in (de Ferran & Grunert 2007)). This highlights another bias in the review of previous studies.

In the last section of this chapter, an account of the future of the Fair Trade movement in the UK retail sector is given.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to set the context of the dissertation. The origin and evolution of the Fair Trade movement were reviewed. An account of the status of the market was then given. Market particularities, consumers and products have successively been introduced. Consumer attitudes, intentions and actual behaviour -as reported in the literature- have been summarised. The final section has briefly looked at the communication activities used by the different stakeholders.

The Fair Trade movement has, over the sixty years of its existence in the UK trade system, grown from a non-important alternative way of trading goods to an important category of food products.

With constant innovations and new certified products launched every year, growth rates remain positive. Forecasts of positive growth should then be met thanks to these two factors even if the economic turmoil slows down their growth. Where fair trade is more developed, growth will come from more private label products and stronger establishment of branded products. This might also be supported by a supposed recent increased interest for credence food products from many consumers (Vermeir & Verbeke 2006). However, this should also be supported by adequate communication strategies from manufacturers.

This shows why it is of utmost importance to understand consumer uses and preferences in information provision. This provides justification for the present research.

The next chapter will present the review of the relevant literature.

Chapter 3

Literature review

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 has set the context of the study and justified the importance of the topic by reviewing the commercial literature, reflecting the immediate and practical implications of the study.

Chapter 3 begins with a synthesis of the models previously used to study consumers' ethical decisions. A detailed review of the Information search phase follows, outlining the different sources, the processing and the use of information. The importance of trust during all these stages is then explained in a fourth section. Finally, the fifth section addresses the construct of involvement, first introducing it generally and then looking at its role in relationship with labelling issues.

The chapter concludes by elaborating a research proposition of potential relationships between these constructs to explore, serving as a basis for the study.

3.2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

3.2.1 Importance of research

Consumer behaviour is a field of research interested in looking at the topic of home economics, looking at the issues of decision-making - including decision-making regarding food and nutrition- made on an everyday basis in order to satisfy basic and more satisfying needs. The field of Consumer Behaviour has considerably developed in recent years as purchase and choice processes can become more complex as a result of external and internal influences accumulated over time. Often, consumer behaviour is actually *consumption behaviour* where the humane aspect of decision-making and purchasing is of great importance.

Decision-making is a process, of which choice of a product is considered as some point in a particular course of actions undertaken by a consumer (Bettman & Park 1980a). Traditional decision-making models are based on a five stages approach (problem or need recognition, search for and processing of information, and evaluation of product alternatives). In order to understand that ultimate point, an examination of the preceding stages is needed.

In this PhD dissertation, a specific focus on two stages of the process is proposed:

- Information search
- Information use

The wide coverage of recent food scares by media has increased consumer awareness. It has also stimulated their discernment about their decisions. Their demand for guarantees has escalated and some consumers are prepared to pay for such guarantees. In doing so, they may demonstrate greater interest in credence attributes. This suggests that consumers might be more interested and involved in food choice than one may think.

In order to standardise and capture the processes involved in consumer decisions, models have been proposed. These are generally broad and generic, reflecting the basic processes of consumer process decisions taking specific approaches in certain settings.

The specific focus of this study is fair trade, an attribute considered according to Darby and Karni's classification (1973) as a credence attribute. This classification divides attributes in three categories

- Search attributes: attributes that are easily observable by the consumer and that do not involve high costs of information search (colour, shape, appearance).
- Experience attributes: attributes for those an opinion is not possible to make before purchase and use (consumption in the case of food). These attributes are easily assessed after experience (taste, freshness, tenderness). These attributes contribute to the formation of an opinion regarding the product and are an important element in the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of the consumer.
- Credence attributes are defined as attributes that cannot be directly assessed, even after experience of the good. In the case of food, these attributes can be related to production methods or to the origin of the raw materials or their use in the fabrication process. The resources (money, time, expertise) needed to ascertain the

exactitude of the claim would be too important for a consumer to engage in a verification process. These attributes, in the particular case of food, could relate to desirable characteristics of the product (e.g. Fair trade production or animal welfare friendly) or to non-desirable properties of the product (e.g. Genetically Modified Organisms).

This search-experience-credence framework offers a unique opportunity in positioning the products in a settled market and is used by consumers as a basis for differentiation between the products.

Grolleau and Caswell (2005) illustrate how an attribute can move from a category due to external factors or to changing contextual conditions (see Figure 3.1 below).

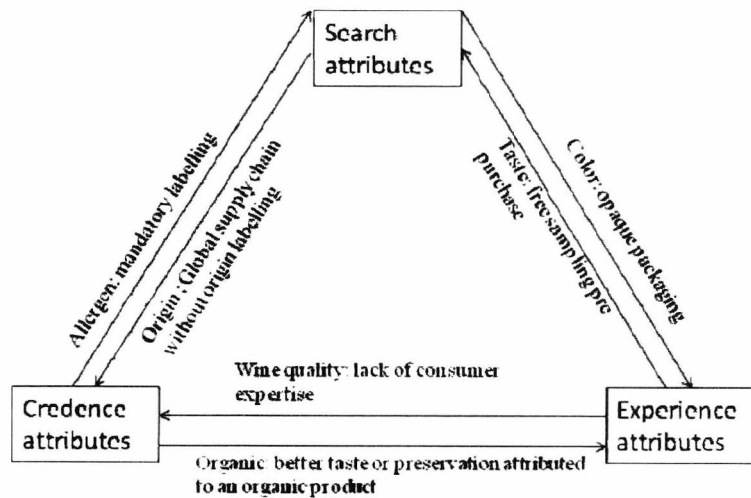


Figure 3.1 : Examples of switching of attributes in (Grolleau and Caswell 2005: pg3)

For instance, a lack of knowledge may impact the assessment of experience attributes and transform them into credence ones. Similarly, credence attributes could be transformed into search attributes thanks to labelling policies. In such cases, the purchase decision might be heavily dependent on the type and source of information used to communicate the presence of these attributes and the manner in which it is communicated. Quality signals, such as product labels, help transform credence characteristics into search attributes, thereby in theory enabling buyers to better assess product quality (Drichoutis, Lazaridis & Nayga Jr 2007) and to form a personal judgment about the product.

Therefore, it may be assumed that fair trade product choice (as an example of credence food) becomes a higher involvement decision process. Classic consumer behaviour models suggest that high involved individuals are more likely to engage in more extensive information search and information processing (Hawkins & Coney 2001, Engel & Blackwell 1982). This would imply a more extended problem-solving strategy is used to choose Fair trade goods.

The notion of a rational consumer is apparent in Strong's (1996) assertion that information is the key to ethical consumption. When studying consumer behaviour from the perspective of a rational consumer enables the elaboration of decision-making models. These models are tested and may further be refined. Consumers perceive needs, gather information, and develop behavioural intentions set in line with their attitudes. The next section provides an overview of ethical decision models that have previously been used in the Consumer Behaviour field.

3.2.2 Ethical consumer decision models: an overview

Over time several models have been developed in attempts to explain the importance attached by individuals to different types of attributes. The previous section helped us to make the distinction between search, experience and credence characteristics.

The purpose of this section is to review the perspectives from which the issue has been addressed. The section begins by looking at the main comprehensive models then carries on with the use of attitudinal theories in the context of ethical consumption and their extensions- including the Total food quality model. This helps then to draw conclusions.

In the marketing literature, three major comprehensive theoretical models have been developed to explain ethical decision-making process. Those are (Ferrell, 1985, Hunt, 1986, Hunt, 1993, Trevino, 1986). Each model is built around an initial variable that triggers the ethical decision making process and each identifies behaviour as the outcome of the process. Moreover, the integration of background factors strengthens the validity of the models and highlights their relative importance. In spite of these similarities, however, there are fundamental differences among the models.

Most importantly, the Trevino model and the Ferrell-Gresham model present individual decision making as a single factor leading to behaviour, whereas the Hunt-Vitell

model details the individual decision making process, presenting the various philosophical theories (deontology and teleology)⁸ that explain a decision maker's ethical judgments.

The Hunt-Vitell model explores in depth the processes occurring at the cognitive level, looking at the factors and rules explaining the choice of alternatives, whilst the Ferrel and Gresham model is concerned by demonstrating that ethical behaviour is the result of an interaction of the individual with the organizational components (Trevino 1986). Although the Ferrel and Gresham's model (1985) contributes in the understanding of the influences of different variables on the final decision, its applicability is context-bound (i.e. the organisation). The contingency framework examines and tries to integrate the determinants of decision-making such as individual and organisational factors.

In contrast, the Hunt-Vitell model is the only one that can be applied to individual contexts such as consumer behaviour. This is accomplished by eliminating the constructs of professional, organizational, and industry environments. This is what makes, the Hunt-Vitell (Hunt, 1986, Hunt, 1993) model the most appropriate theoretical model for testing research questions involving consumer ethics (Vitell, Singhapakdi & Thomas 2001) making-process. The Hunt Vitell model (1986) and the consumer ethic scale established have been widely used as a basic framework in the ethics literature. Most ethical judgments are a combination of deontological and teleological evaluation of alternatives: an empirical application of the model revealed that deontological norms were primarily used to form ethical judgments while teleological evaluation was used peripherally (Vitell, Singhapakdi & Thomas 2001). This perspective posits that consumers base ethical decisions more on principles than on consequences.

Another important model in the literature, helped in explaining food quality perception. In understanding subjective quality perception several models contributed to the elaboration of the Total Food Quality Model (TQFM) The TQFM was originally proposed by Grunert et al (1996) integrates the multi-attribute and the hierarchical approaches to quality perception. In addition, it integrates two other major elements of consumer behaviour theory, namely the explanation of intention to purchase, as a trade-off

⁸ Within the deontological framework, the individual tries to assess how much rightness or wrongness is inherent in choosing an alternative (comparing it with a set of established norms). This approach is more concerned with the reasons at the time of the choice. In contrast, the teleological dimension looks at the consequences of choice.

between give and get components (which appears as extensions of the multi-attribute framework, as in the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behaviour), and the explanation of consumer satisfaction, as the discrepancy between expected and experienced quality. The Total Food Quality Model proposes two major dimensions along which food quality perception is analysed: a horizontal and a vertical dimension. The horizontal dimension is a time dimension where 'before' (when quality expectations are formed based on cues available⁹) and 'after' purchase evaluations occur.

According to the Total Food Quality Model (TQFM), quality is not an aim in itself, but is desired because it helps satisfy purchase motives or values. A label- as an example of extrinsic cue- and its information may generate expectations about high eating. In this way, the TFQM integrates the means-end model of consumer behaviour. Expected quality and expected fulfillment of the purchase motive constitute the positive consequences consumers expect from buying a food product and are offset against the negative consequences in the form of various (mostly monetary) costs. The trade-off determines the intention to buy.

After the purchase, the consumer will have a quality experience, which often deviates from expected quality, especially when it is based on quality cues with a low degree of predictive power, as mentioned above. The experienced quality is influenced by many factors. The product itself, especially its sensory characteristics, the way the product has been prepared, situational factors such as time of day and type of meal, the consumer's mood, previous experience. The extent of confirmation or disconfirmation of pre-purchase quality expectations will determine consumer satisfaction and repurchase probabilities (Oliver, 1980).

Previous research has also examined how people's ethical attitudes influence their purchases in the context of the theories of attitude formation and of planned behaviour (TPB). The TPB offers a structured framework for predicting and explaining human behaviour by way of an understanding of beliefs and attitudes. The underlying assumption of these theories postulates that individuals develop evaluations for attributes as well as form beliefs associating these attributes to objects. The creation of attitudes and

⁹ consumers use the colour of meat to infer tenderness, the consistency of yoghurt to infer taste, and packaging in bottles (compared with cartons) to infer wholesomeness.

behavioural intentions is based on the evaluation of these attributes and beliefs thereof (Fishbein, 1967; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

The TPB (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen & Madden, 1986) is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (TRA), which predicts intention to perform behaviour from two predictors, personal attitudes towards the behaviour and subjective norm (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The TRA does not take into account situations where individual do not have total control of the situation. To address this issue, Ajzen (1985) developed the TPB by including perceived behavioural control as a third control variable. The TPB (Ajzen, 1991) highlights the impact of perceived barriers on carrying out successfully behaviour. It proposes to explain behavioural intentions via attitudes and subjective norms.

Shaw attempted to use the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to explain ethical decision-making (Shaw & Shiu 2003, Shaw & Newholm 2002, Shaw & Shiu 2002). The use of the TPB is states that behaviour is consequence of intention, which is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. A number of studies have used the Theory of Planned Behaviour has been applied to food studies (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992; Beale & Manstead, 1991; Lloyd, Paisley, & Mela, 1993, Arvola *et al*, 2007) and has been found to have a good predictive power, with the exception of Köster (2009), criticising its poor performance for validity, weak methodology and theoretical bias. It has been used too, to investigate ethical consumer decision-making.

Shaw and Clarke (1999) conducted an exploratory study into the formation of ethical beliefs, using a mixed methods approach to discuss aspects of ethical issues considered as important (via focus groups) and to obtain behavioural and normative beliefs, and control factors specific to fair trade purchases (questionnaires). The analysis highlighted that attitudes emerging from social sphere (such as family and friends), religious beliefs and corporations (such as ethical organisations and supermarkets) can have positive or negative effect on normative beliefs which themselves are under the influence of the quantity of information, labelling strategies and advertising.

A significant impact of attitudes on general purchasing intention was confirmed (Shaw, 2002) and further explained by separating positive from negative attitudes. Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) used a modified version of Jaeger (2000) to investigate consumer intentions towards sustainable consumption. Their model include individual and situational determinants of behaviour as of

- personal values, needs and motivation

- information and knowledge variables
- behavioural control

They investigated how the influence of involvement, uncertainty and personal perceived effectiveness could contribute to the attitude-behavioural intention gap and included psychological variables. They showed that the latter was positively affected. However, the study relates to intentional and not actual behaviour and, as such, findings should be considered with caution. Their findings justify the inclusion of involvement in the present study of which the focus is the actual purchase situation.

Additional concepts and elements have been added to the initial model: 'ethical obligation' (Sparks *et al.*, 1995; Shaw *et al.*, 2000; Shaw and Shiu, 2003; Ozcaglar-Toulouse *et al.*, 2006) and 'self-identity' (Sparks and Shepherd, 1992; Shaw *et al.*, 2000; Ozcaglar-Toulouse, 2006, Shaw, 2003) for example were both found to be pertinent in ethical consumption contexts. Using a structural equation model, Shaw and Shiu (2003) found that that ethical obligation and self-identity had a negligible effect on attitudes and therefore could not be seen as isolated antecedents to intention. Although, it improved previous models, still 48% of variance remained unexplained. This supports that ethical decision-making is a complex phenomenon that may be explained by a combination of several factors. Shaw and Shiu (2003) recommend to include the impact of information in models trying to describe and explain specifically Fair trade buying behaviour. Built upon findings of their previous research, the roles of information, advertising and labelling (and information processing thereof) have been found to participate in the formation of beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. Shaw *et al.* (2006) view the concept of 'information' as a relevant variable and reiterate their call to include it in models developed. In doing so, a larger amount of the variance could be explained.

One of the final conclusions of this series of papers by these authors suggested that the TPB was not an appropriate tool to use when looking at groceries purchase decisions (due to their main nature of low involvement). Despite these reservations, De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) have used an improved version of the TPB, including attitudes towards Fair trade not only in general but also towards specific products. They developed their model so as to investigate the role of perceived quality and quantity of information and specific product attitudes on Fair trade purchasing behaviour. The model builds upon a linear, core cognitive progression from beliefs to behaviour via attitudes and intentions, and adds social norms and behavioural control as moderators of intentions and behaviour.

Their findings supported previous studies: attitudes towards both general issues and specific products have a significant effect on buying behaviour (Vitell, Singhapakdi & Thomas 2001, Shaw & Clarke 1999). Further, they found that the quantity of knowledge as well as its quality it was led to less scepticism and more concern towards fairly traded goods. This concern for fairly trade products directly led to an increase in purchases, which they then put in context of the TPB. This study showed that product interest was an important construct to consider when attempting to model purchasing behaviour. The authors also proposed that *'people who frequently buy Fair trade products may have different persuasion routes from those who do not'* (De Pelsmacker & Janssens 2007, p. 376). Although the model suffered from poor predictive ability, it participated research conducted using different sources of information. This would allow the assessment of preferences, and of the relative influence of each source on the general and product specific individual attitudes.

By assessing the importance of a specific source of information (on packaging label) and its impact on subsequent information search, and use of other information sources, we aim to explore this issue in the present research. It seems reasonable to infer that psychological variables have an impact on purchase decisions in the domain of organic food. However, psychological models are needed that explain the mechanisms behind the purchase decision. Exploratory research is therefore needed to capture in the first instance the variables of interest.

An important criticism is the variability of attitudes. Potter and Wetherell's (1987) demonstrated how people portray a variety of contradictory attitudes around the same topic. This implies consumer attitudes may not be constant, so it is difficult to predict behaviour from them.

This section has reviewed previous decision-making models with a specific focus on ethical decision-making models. In doing so, it appeared that ethical behaviour is a highly complex issue that is difficult to explain by traditional attitude methodology. There has been limited success in building a predictive model and some areas still remain overlooked, such as the role of values (Shaw *et al* 2005). Therefore, we propose to explore ethical consumerism from a different approach, using qualitative methods. Chatziddakis, Hibbert, and Smith (2007) used such an approach to study ethical consumerism referring the neutralisation theory, trying to reveal the different justification techniques people use to justify their absence of actions (Sykes & Matza, 1957). This study was limited because, like Shaw *et al.* (2000), their analysis was deductive rather than inductive (data led).

Departing from Shaw's work, De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) have included the '*impact of information*' variable in their model. However, as these authors recognised, the influence of specific sources of information has yet to be investigated. Vermeir and Verbeke (2006), using a different model of consumer decision-making found, that the manipulation of psychological constructs could positively influence behavioural intentions (purchasing intentions) but the actual behaviour was not considered in their study. De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) also propose that product interest is likely to exert an influence on product attitudes, and consequently impact buying decisions. Product interest has been found in the literature to be an antecedent of involvement. This justifies the inclusion of involvement in our study.

This synthesis of research enabled the identification of under-explored areas of research as well as the variables of utmost importance that need to be taken into integrated in the research so as to improve the predictive ability of the models.

Therefore, we will propose to use a qualitative approach to study information search and use an involvement model because it is closely related to motivations and is a known motor of behaviour. This will enable to investigate the impact of involvement and its influence on the purchasing behaviour of Fairtrade foods. Next, the studies on information search processes are presented.

3.3 INFORMATION

Bateson defines information as being '*whatever appears to be significant whether originating from an external environment or a (psychologically) internal world.*' (Bateson, 1972 cited in (Case 2006, p. 40)). In others words, information is a message -transmitted in some way- that has the potential to affect the behaviour of the receiver. Other researchers view information differently. The majority of the encountered differences across definitions could be summarised as issues with truth, uncertainty physicality and intentionality. According to neo classic economics, information aims to reduce risks associated with a transaction. It is a crucial asset in the formation of consumers' opinions, attitudes and judgments.

Individual differences, situational influences, interest or perceived relevance might influence the way in which information is attended to, processed and understood. The moderating role of these variables in perception and interpretation of information has been evidenced before in consumer decision process.

Information is usually classified as of internal or external nature. Individuals acquire information for two different reasons: as on-going information search in order to increase their personal knowledge; or as a goal-oriented situation, to make a better informed choice. Information search is core in the decision-making process. It is defined as the '*process by which the consumer surveys his or her environment for appropriate data to make a reasonable decision*' (Solomon *et al.* 2006 p. 265). Actions involved in this stage of the decision-making process consist in gathering pieces of information with the aim to integrate them in order to reach potentially best decisions (Schmidt & Spreng 1996).

Numerous models have been proposed in order to explain factors involved during information search activities. Consequently, we can distinguish three major streams of consumer search information in the literature:

- The expectancy theory (Vroom): sees the information search process as an activity that is dependent on cost and benefits.
- The psychological/ motivational approach: includes behavioural aspects such as individual, product class and tasks related variables.
- The Consumer Information Processing approach: focuses on memory and cognitive information processing limitations of humans.

The economics of information approach (including Vroom theory) suggests that consumers will carry on with the active process of information search until the obtained benefits outweigh the costs incurred. The ability of processing great amount of information known as 'information overload' may be a limiting factor that will end prematurely the search process. This has first been characterised by Jacoby *et al* arguing that there exists '*finite limits to the ability of human beings to assimilate and process information during any given unit of time*' (Jacoby & Kohn 1974, p. 33) beyond which the information processing will be more difficult if not impossible and as result behaviour will be disorganised. This approach views the rationality at the centre of human behaviour and does not allow for external factors to influence the extent to which one looks for information.

Alternatively the behavioural approach aims to investigate the motives and reasons influencing the information search behaviour. In this respect, not only cognitive activities but also affective and emotional components have a great influence on consumer reaction to stimuli. The differentiation between the information processing and the psychological

approach is tenuous: it is proposed that the ability to process may be considered to fall under the psychological approach requiring both motivation as well as search activity in itself.

3.3.1 Information search: Models

Existing models of information search have first approached the issue through the rational view highlighting its functional role. Within this perspective it is assumed that an individual is only seeking information to solve a problem, when there is a consideration of alternatives. Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) proposes that there also exist social, aesthetics and innovation needs for information. Such needs are those occurring when the individual has decided to buy or plan to buy in the near future and is considering options as well as tradeoffs. These models have been tested on durable goods, mostly automobiles. The same cognitive processes are assumed to occur regardless the categories of good, with only strength and preferences variation observed across individuals and situations. However with non-durable goods such as food products, reliability may be questioned.

A brief review of the models is presented next.

The predominant theoretical framework has been Stigler's (Stigler 1961) economics of information model. In this model, consumers will acquire information until the benefit of doing so is higher than the cost. Two types of costs are suggested by this approach:

- External (monetary, time resources) costs under the influence of the situation and beyond individuals' control.
- Cognitive costs represent the cognitive efforts one engages in to gather, process, understand and use information.

The central proposition is that acquisition of information varies with the nature of goods and knowledge of products. Additionally, there might exist asymmetries in information between knowledgeable individuals and non-knowledgeable individuals. Several models have been developed within this paradigm.

In Assael's model (1984) (in Figure 3.2 below), consumers' characteristics and contextual variables are seen as inputs that affect information acquisition. During the information-processing phase, the information is divided to facilitate its understanding and assimilation in memory for later retrieval. Various factors, such as availability of

resources, influence the process. The evaluation step might be moderated by previous knowledge. The fourth stage features brand evaluation, where the consumer might integrate emotional attachment to the brand or preferences (i.e. loyalty). The fifth stage signifies the actual purchase and use of the product.

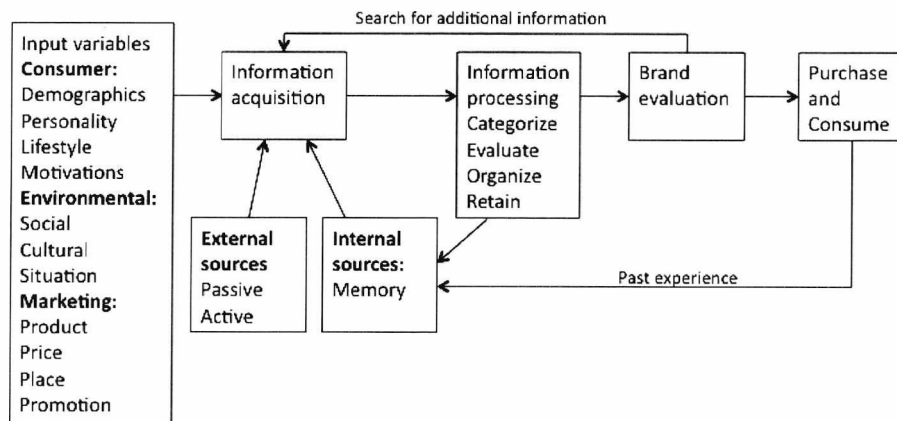


Figure 3.2 : Assael's consumer information acquisition and processing model (1984)

In line with previous research, this model views information search as a high functional activity. Such activity occurs when the individual has decided to buy, or plans to buy in the near future and considers all the available alternatives. On going information search might be conducted for leisure or other reasons and not be related to any purchase planned.

Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) adapted Assael's model and proposed a conceptual model taking into account additional needs of product type. Vogt and Fesenmaier's model was applied to tourists' information search context and therefore broaden the investigation to communication contexts.

Schmidt and Spreng's (1996) proposed a more complex approach of external consumer information search. The model (Figure 3.3 below) attempts to integrate the psychological/motivational and the economics approaches in order to establish relationships across variables. It proposes the antecedents of information search and includes over twenty determinants of external search. This degree of complexity allows for a more comprehensive model. A set of four interrelated factors influence the external information search: perceived benefits to search, perceived costs of search, perceived

ability to search and motivation to search. However, these authors argue that it is difficult to separate pre purchase and ongoing information search.

The distinction between ongoing and goal oriented information search is important in the context of the present study. At the point of sale the attractiveness of on pack information (e.g. format, colour, presentation) might be more important than the information itself. That is why, whilst this model adds to the holistic perspective of information search, it is not suitable for the present study.

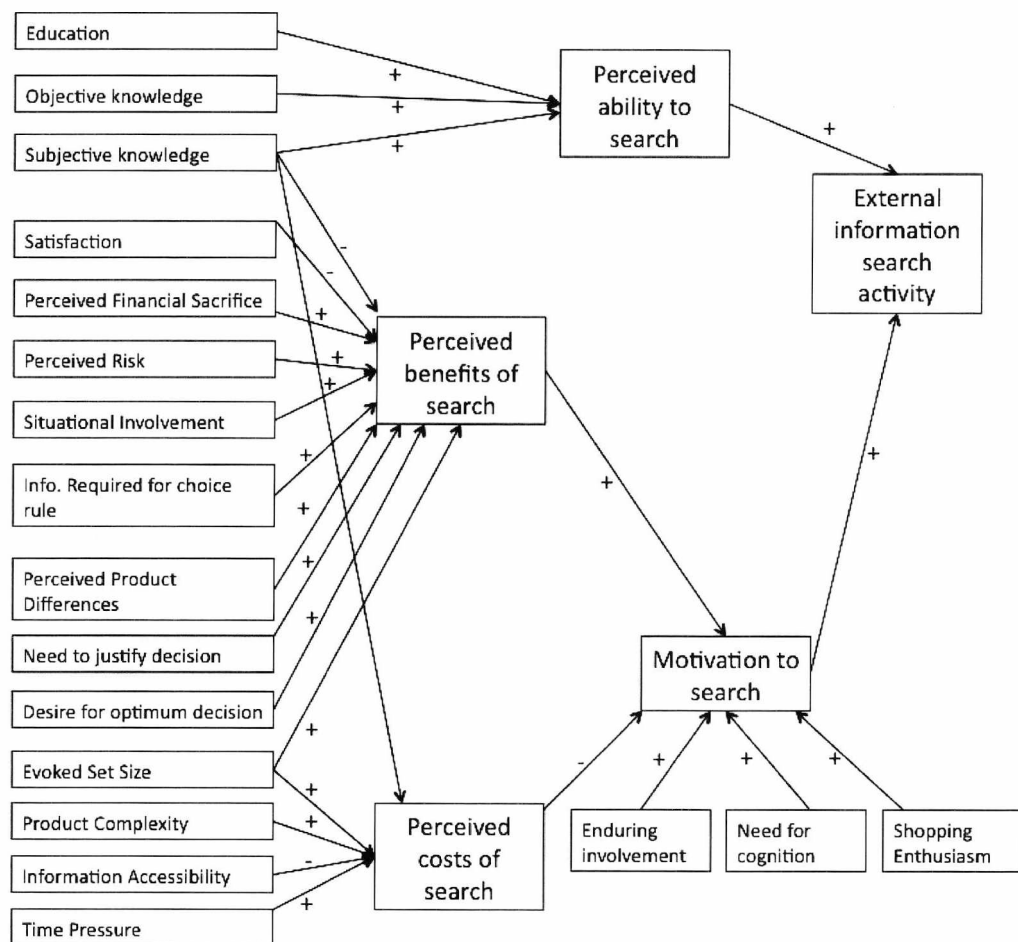


Figure 3.3 : Schmidt and Spreng's model of information search (1996)

These models have illustrated that information search behaviour is a network of interrelated behaviours.

A different approach is that of the information-processing approach, extended from the field of psychology. Bettman and Park (1980b) differentiated the information acquisition process according to the source of information used. Internal information is stored in the memory (which could subsequently be divided between short and long term memory) and could be learnt (knowledge) or acquired (prior product experience). External search involves seeking information from the environment. Within this dichotomous view, sub categorisations exist and have been proposed based on the strength of the influence, the accessibility of the information and the validity of the information transmitted.

The individual has two main options to acquire information: actively search for it, or be exposed to it. Active search can be further broken down into internal search (where information is retrieved from memory) and external search (where information is sought from the environment). This approach affirms that information search will be conducted only if the consumer has both ability and motivation to conduct the search.

The literature is replete with studies testing variables affecting the amount of information searched as well as potential relationships. Those variables could be classified as consumer related (perceived risk, education), product related (price, attributes), contextual (time pressure, end consumer) or even market related (extent of range, price). Attempts to test these interrelationships have for example used Structural Equation Modelling to describe relationships and characterize their strength. Guo (2001) concludes that, of the relationships specified in empirical research, all are bi-variate in nature and that the research theorized four kinds of relationships existing between different antecedent variables and information search: positive, negative, U shape and inverted U shape. Other studies have failed empirically to find a relationship between certain variables and information search. These inconclusive results encourage further research that test the issue in other contexts as it is important to investigate relationships in specific settings where the variation of magnitude and direction of relationships might be different and need to be controlled.

These general models have provided a solid basis for the exploration of the research questions. However, the specific context of Fair trade purchases encourages us to consider other factors that may be relevant to this context. Before developing and integrating those elements in section 3.6, we further details components of internal and external search of information.

3.3.2 Internal search: memory, prior experience and knowledge

Internal search is defined as the use of information already stored in memory, that is prior knowledge and experience (Bettman & Park 1980a). When confronted to a situation where information is needed the individual scans his memory in order to retrieve relevant information to help the decision-making process. This is further divided in theoretical information (knowledge) and experiential information (prior experience). The theory of Lancaster (1966) posits that the objective of an individual is to maximise his utility, which imposes that resources are used in the best efficient way. Internal search is first performed before information is searched externally.

Product class knowledge is 'the individual's perceived knowledge and understanding of products within a particular product class. It includes experience with the product class' (Beatty & Smith 1987, p. 88). Its influence on consumer decision processes is well established. Different operationalisations of knowledge have been attempted: perceived self and objective (Bonti-Ankomah & Yiridoe 2006, Bettman & Park 1980a, Bettman & Park 1980c) whilst familiarity and expertise reflect the prior product knowledge in Alba and Hutchinson (1987). Although these two components are related it is crucial to recognise that they are different (Raju & Mangold 1995). Wagner (2003) details several dimensions of knowledge: complexity, comprehensiveness (amount of knowledge), specificity (literal knowledge and identification of particular brands) and technicality of the language used. The different types of knowledge and the amount of knowledge needed have an influence on sources used.

Prior knowledge reduces the effort engaged by an individual in the acquisition of information and predetermines future information needs (Drichoutis, Lazaridis & Nayga 2005). Despite evidence that knowledge and information processing activities are related, no consensus has been reached yet on the nature/direction of the relationship. Moorman *et al.* (2004) argues for a positive relationship between prior knowledge and information processing activities while Moore and Lehmann (1980) found previously these variables to be negatively correlated. The importance of knowledge has been found to moderate the use of on product packaging labels in the case of food purchases (Drichoutis, Lazaridis & Nayga 2005, Nayga Jr, 2000). By definition, consumer knowledge in the product and experience is accumulated over time; despite this, the evaluation of different goods may

have to be re adjusted if 'new information' becomes available. This means that an individual could engage again in information search activities (internal or external).

Prior experience of a product is often thought as only consisting in the use of the product (Bettman & Park 1980a) but it is important to note that it also includes all situations in which the consumer has been interacting with the product (from information search to purchase). Product experience is the type of knowledge that has the greatest influence on consumer attitude formation about a product. Alba and Hutchinson (1987) show that consumer knowledge influences the way in which consumers conduct their information search and the type of information they gather. Solomon *et al* (2006) characterised the differences in terms of information search according to the level of knowledge. Product experience is negatively correlated to the amount of information search (Moore & Lehmann 1980). A negative relationship between amount of product experience and amount of external information search was found (Moore & Lehmann 1980). Inconclusive findings about the influence of product experience motivate further research in a different context.

Generally, it is proposed that individuals having low knowledge search less for information (lack of interest or non awareness of sources of information) whilst knowledgeable individuals know where to look for precise and specific information due to their previous knowledge. This supports that people that are moderately familiar with a product or a range are the ones looking the most for information.

In the context of our research, and consistently with previous findings, we propose that information search is stimulated by experience with the product. The level of consumer involvement is also potentially increased by the direct experience with the product. This is supported by Bettman and Park (1980a) arguing that being knowledgeable about a topic increases the willingness of an individual to get more information and simplifies both the understanding and the processing of the information.

If the information retrieved from internal search activities is not perceived to be sufficient to make an informed decision then the individual will actively engage in external search of information; we now review this issue.

3.3.3 External search: personal, media, impersonal and independent sources

Beatty and Smith defined external search effort as *'the degree of attention, perception and effort directed towards obtaining environmental data or information related to the specific purchase under consideration'* (Beatty & Smith 1987, p. 85). Nowadays there are multiple sources of information available to individuals (TV, radio, newspapers, the Internet...).

Individuals may base their choice in terms of availability, preferences in format and or even credibility. Preferences and effectiveness of information sources have been studied (Pieniak *et al.* 2007). Attempts to establish a classification of best ways of communication according to both purpose and target audience have also been made (Pieniak *et al.* 2007, Verbeke 2005, Ariely 2000, De Almeida *et al.* 1997, Bettman & Kakkar 1977b). Many classifications of external information sources exist. Classifications of information sources can be based on situations, format or issuer of the message. Extent of trust in the information provided and reliability have also been used to classify sources (an institutional body may be perceived as more reliable and sure than word of mouth as a source of information) (De Almeida *et al.* 1997). Dood *et al.* (2005) propose to classify the sources of external information as self preferred sources, personal sources (close environment family, friends, acquaintances, sales personal) and impersonal sources (television, billboards, advertising, magazines). Accessibility and skills related to process the information influence the choice of the source (Dodd *et al.* 2005). Personal sources of information tend to be more valued either because they more trusted, perceived more reliable or because they have a stronger symbolic and emotional value that reinforces the impact of the information. However, Wandel (1997) argues that at the point of purchase, personal sources of information (salesman) have become either non-existent or not skilled enough to provide reliable information.

The main source of information available to individuals is mass media communication. The information provided through this channel is often generic, broad and aimed at the largest audience possible. Mass media communications tools have greatly developed during the past 10 to 15 years as the expansion of Information Technology (I.T.) has participated in the reduction of cost of such communication. The Internet, the television, the radio, magazines and billboards are support for this type of communication. Access to such sources is easy as the diffusion is widespread. However, the ability of these

sources to provide reliable and specific information is limited; these formats are often used when generic knowledge is sought (De Almeida *et al.* 1997). One of the weaknesses of mass media communication is however its failure to create confidence and reputation about the information provided. Additionally, in the case of food products and nutrition-related information, mass media communication is often used conjointly with strong scientific evidence in order to convince (Verbeke 2005).

Independent sources of information refer to other means of communicating information including on packaging information. Food labels could be part of the product packaging or could be visible at the point of sale (e.g. on the shelf, next to the product) (Capps 1992). In the present study, labels refer to those stamped on the packaging of products. Caswell and Padberg (1992) defend the idea that labels are an important vector of information for the consumer, with recognition that time and processing skills limit the use of such tools by the consumer in the purchase situation.

Policy makers and marketers recognise that a label permits to convey a message about a characteristic of a product to the consumer but also has a greater impact and implications throughout the supply chain in terms of marketing and production standards that have to be met. Consumers see labels as an external source of information they can use to increase their knowledge about a product. Caswell and Padberg (1992) report that consumers usually hold positive attitudes towards labels. Despite this, the literature remains inconclusive about the extent to which consumers use labels: de Almeida *et al.* (1997) reports that such tools are one of the most used and trusted by European consumers while Verbeke and Ward (2006) found that information cues given through labels is not of interest for most consumers.

The theory suggests two broad categories of information gathering techniques: passive strategies and active strategies. Passive information gathering strategies are tactics that entail relatively low levels of information need and less resource allocation in order to fulfil the need. For example, a consumer using passive information gathering strategies simply becomes more attuned to marketing communications about a product or brand being delivered via various media sources. Active information gathering strategies are those efforts consumers make to learn more about a product or a brand that involves relatively direct efforts and higher resource allocation to gather the information. Active information gathering often involves interaction between the consumer and customer

service representatives of the brand or product. The Figure 3.4 below proposes a summary of the different sources (external and internal) of information available. This will be used as an outline for the next sections.

Figure 3.4 : Classification of information seeking and acquisition (based on De Almeida et al (1997), Bettman (Bettman, James R 1979), Wilson (1999))

From a methodological perspective, it can be observed that a variety of methodologies have been used to investigate information search activities. The use of quantitative methods is illustrated in laboratory experiments (e.g., unobtrusive intervention used in (Brucks 1985), protocol and analysis (Bettman & Park 1980a) and survey (Beatty & Smith 1987). Alternatively qualitative methods have also been used field experiment (Moore & Lehmann 1980) interviews (Wagner 2003) and observations .

There might be enablers or barriers to use of certain sources of information; we now consider those and explore how individuals decide to pay attention to information. Specifically, we look for reasons explaining why certain individuals develop interest in information, and how preferences about the format are built over time. Taking into account the particular nature of on packaging information we shall propose an explanation of why individuals do not always consider labels.

Barriers to use of labels may create resistance and a lack of interest. Labels cannot satisfy all consumers' needs for information. Empirical studies have found that consumers simply lack knowledge and skills to decipher information provided in such a format. This results in poor success of labelling policies in altering consumer behaviour (Grunert, Klaus 2007). Time pressure is also one of the most reported barriers to information use in stores. The purchase situation is recognised as one factor that has implications on the type of information used. Previous research has established that consumers choose different sources of information depending on the issue at hand and on the product under consideration but also on the type of information being communicated (Kola & Latvala 2003, De Almeida et al. 1997, Kleinmuntz & Schkade 1993, Bettman, J. & Kakkar 1977a). Gender, education and age were found to be significant in the choice of nutritional information sources (Holgado *et al.* 2000).

Additionally, consumers do not have the same level of product expertise as sellers. This is why it is recommended to consider carefully whether communicating more information is necessarily worthy. The amount of information provided to the consumer is therefore a critical issue as giving too much information could lead to 'information overload'. The consequences of such phenomenon could result in indifference towards information or renunciation to purchase, as the effort needed to process information would be perceived as too much effort (Verbeke & Ward 2006, Verbeke 2005, Salaün & Flores 2001).

The use of information is heavily dependent on its trustworthiness (Thiede 2005, Salaün & Flores 2001), making trust one of the main moderators of information use. This will be dealt with in section 3.4, next section focusses on the next stage of the Decision making process: information processing.

Decisions to purchase food products are made on a daily basis. The literature often see them as requiring low cognitive resources (limited problem solving) for which information search remains limited and passive for its large part (Solomon *et al.* 2006). The information processing paradigm focuses on the cognitive processes involved. The next section details different problem strategies and links them with information processing models.

3.3.4 Information processing

Information processing follows information search in the process of decision-making. It refers to the means by which the information is modified (disaggregated in smaller pieces) so that it is decipherable and understandable by the receiver (Massaro & Cowan 1993). Consumers make sense of information by integrating it to their previous knowledge in memory (as elaboration). In doing so they can form judgements about products or categories (McGuire 1976).

The social cognitive literature accounts for dual theories of information processing. Based on a cognition-affect-conation sequence (thinking-liking-acting) models differ in their number of stages. Leathwood *et al* (2007) list different information processing models: the AIDA model proposes four stages: attention, interest, desire, action; (Lavidge & Steiner 1961) built a model on six stages, (Keller *et al.* 1997) have seven stages whilst the more developed is McGuire's with eight stages. The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion (ELM) (Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann 1983), the Heuristic Systematic Model (HSM) (Chaiken 1980) and the model of attitude-behaviour processes (Fazio 1990) are the more reported in the literature. The ELM and the HSM are the most widely used for research purpose and as Verbeke (2005) argues they are the most appropriate to use in the context of food and credence attributes. We'll briefly review these.

Petty and Cacioppo (1984) proposed the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion (ELM) in which they argue that messages processing can happen in two ways: the "central" or "peripheral" route. Their work focussed on the characteristics of persuasion and communication related problems, and showed three critical factors in the success of the message being successfully transmitted:

- motivation of the receiver to process the message
- credibility of the source
- ability to process the information (Petty & Cacioppo 1981).

The model proposes to link the information-processing mode with the variation in the degree of involvement. High- involved individuals would be more likely to use central processing while low involvement would use peripheral route to process information. While this refers to the quantitative nature of the information processed (i.e. the amount) the authors also propose that the qualitative nature of information processed may also vary

between high and low involved individuals (Petty & Wegener 1999). The ELM has been proposed as a valid theory to use when studying attitude change and persuasion. In many ways it shares common features with another dual process theory: the Heuristic Systematic Model of processing (Chaiken 1980).

Information processing routes could co-occur in different ways of interaction: additive, bias, attenuation. The interaction occurring at the time of information processing is dependent on the individual's characteristics and on the judgmental setting used at the time. Both models purport that in any case individuals will use the more efficient information processing strategy (lower resources for best decision). This implies trading off the amount of cognitive resources needed in the process with the expected quality of the judgment.

Information processing modes and types are said to be influenced by several factors: format of the message (Bettman & Kakkar 1977a) nature of information processing activity (quantitative versus qualitative), source of the message (Frewer et al. 1997, Petty & Cacioppo 1984), familiarity with the message (Hoogland, de Boer & Boersema 2007). Ability, applicability and accessibility have a great influence on the likeliness of the heuristics to be used (Davies, 2001). Individuals' differences and preferences (Cole & Balasubramanian 1993) have been found to further influence the information processing phase: specifically variables found to discriminate among individuals include: gender (Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran 1991), age (Cole & Balasubramanian 1993), knowledge (Drichoutis, Lazaridis & Nayga 2005, Bettman & Park 1980a), familiarity (Alba & Hutchinson 1987). In the literature looking at the provision of information through on package labelling to consumers, several attempts have been made to apply the ELM theory: Davies and Wright (1994) argue that labels encourage consumers to make inferences and use a peripheral mode of processing of information, leaving aside the question of the importance of considering the message content for the consumers, confirming findings of Frewer *et al* (1997). Davies and Wright (1994) also suggest that consumers should be motivated to process more in depth messages (towards central route) and to enhance their involvement.

Most of the applications of the ELM occurred in laboratory settings in which external variables and information sources were controlled. Davies (2001) removed brand ; Frewer and van Trijp (2007) through a experimental design chose to control for sources

and messages communicated; Hoogland *et al* (2007) manipulated the information provided through the label and assessed the differences by means of a survey, but recognised their inability to capture the mode of information processing. Using these different methodologies may have resulted in a mis-evaluation of information processing.

It is possible that in their interpretation and use of information in general and labels specifically, consumers bring their previous beliefs in. This is based on the previously mentioned confirmatory bias theory, that proposes that in order to maintain consistency and so not to experience dissonance, individuals interpret evidence in ways that are partial to existing beliefs or expectations. Kisielius and Sternthal (1984) found that the majority of subjects examined the pictorial component of the communication prior to reading the verbal statements. The initial product judgment was made on the visual of the packaging. Recognition of the visual saves time and is used as a heuristics. In some circumstances, it is then potentially possible that graphical information misleads individuals and alters the purchasing decision. This effect was observed for both high and low motivated participants. This questions the relationship between deep processing and accuracy of the processing (Cited in (Fitzgerald, Karen & France 2001)). Hoogland *et al* (2007) conclude that the outcomes of both ways of processing information may just be reflected in the importance given to different attributes and the strength of purchase intention

Previous applications of the ELM in the labelling literature support that labels are used as simplifying tools and fulfil a heuristic function. The combination of different formats of the message (visual and verbal) has also been shown to impact the information processing and the accuracy of the outcome decision. The extensive literature on information search has looked at the influence of variables on the extent to which one will need to engage and conduct information search (Putrevu & Lord 2001, Moorthy, Ratchford & Talukdar 1997, Newman & Lockeman 1975). Beatty and Smith (Beatty & Smith 1987) have correlated seeking behaviour with involvement. This is also supported by Foscht and Swoboda (2004) proposing that attitudes towards shopping, prior experience and involvement influence seeking behaviour.

3.3.5 Information use

Cobb and Hoyer (1985) list five methods that have been used to investigate the amount of information search: self-report, behavioural process techniques, protocol analysis, eye movement analysis, and direct observation.

Most studies have used surveys and interviews to uncover the extent of information search. These self reporting techniques have been criticised for several reasons: their reliance on respondents' memory could affect the internal validity of the study, individuals may be altering their answers to appear rational, and the method might fail to represent actual overt search behaviour (Vantomme et al. 2006, Wells & Lo Sciuto 1966). Findings also identified that decision specific variables play an important role in the amount of information search and that information search descriptors vary quite dramatically between product categories.

Grunert and Wills (2007) note that effects of information communicated through labels can only be observed if consumers are exposed to them. The likeliness to be exposed to a label is increased if the individual searches actively for such information Shoppers may be exposed to a label and may register it consciously or subconsciously. This affects how they report using labels.

Attention

Simon (1969) found that the human ability to attend information was limited. As already mentioned, information search activities are carried on until the benefits expected outweigh costs. Given the multiple sources and the amount of information available, the problem has shifted nowadays from cost of acquiring information to cost of attending information. As this author said:

'What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention, and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it' (Simon 1969).

This leads to the conclusion that the sole provision of information is not enough to assume that it will be attended. Looking at on-pack cues, this implies that their success is dependent on the ability of the signal to capture and retain individuals' attention. Gasmı and Grolleau (2002) highlight that there are at least four antecedents to capture attention in the case of information about credence attribute through a label on product packaging:

The integration of the signal with previous knowledge

- Source credibility

- Message personalisation
- Message format

Caswell and Padberg (1992) argues that time pressure and the multitude of products on offer in the market, may reduce the ability of consumers to pay attention to labels and to use them as shopping aids. These factors however, do usually have a weak importance as the main influential factors are of personal nature.

When considering 'use' of a label most of the literature refers to pre purchase use (O'Fallon 2007, D'Souza, Taghian & Lamb 2006, Drichoutis, Lazaridis & Nayga 2005, Galarraga Gallastegui 2002, Coulson 2000, Nayga Jr, 2000, Parkinson 1975) with fewer publications taking a temporal dimension into account (Nayga Jr, Lipinski & Savur 1998). This different approach links to the potential extended effect of exposure to a label in subsequent purchasing behaviour for the consumer. The simplest form of use of a label is a direct one-time effect where the purchase situation is the only situation in which the label is both perceived and used. Extended effects appear over time and cumulative effects with other information may occur, even if the product is modified (suppression of the on package labelling for example). Indirect effects of use of the label affect not only the purchase of the product bearing the label, but the general purchasing behaviour (for example all food purchases have to be Fair trade). This refers, according to Grunert and Wills (2007), to the learning processes that occur over time: the individual recognises the categories of products bearing the label of interest and adapt the purchase pattern accordingly. This reasoning is applied to the nutritional labelling context but is extended and valid for the general labelling issues.

Grunert and Wills argue that labels are '*attractive instruments*' (2007, p. 385) associated with several advantages for the consumers: reducing the search activity, supporting the choice of preferred alternatives, and providing information that is more likely to be used by consumers. Wandel (1997) and Caswell and Padberg (1992) recognise the importance of food labels as a source of information and their aid in helping decision-making (function of heuristics).

The next section details preferences across information sources, and then explore extensively on package information cues.

- **Preferences across sources**

Considerable evidence in the marketing literature suggests that product information can have an impact on consumers' decisions prior to first-hand product experience. Kornelis *et al* (2007) illustrate the differences in the use of information sources and its impact on information acquisition processes. An important finding supported that there is not necessarily a preferred source of information, but that the use of different sources is possible, depending on context. Similarly, the time frame can be an antecedent and different sources may conjointly impact the global attention paid to information. The level of 'interest in food' also segregated consumers.

Salaun and Flores (2001) discussed the issue of information quality and its direct implications in meeting consumers' needs. They propose that interest and use of information by consumers will only exist if information is easily accessible, and easy to understand (consumer do not often possess the skills to decipher the information provided). De Almeida *et al.* (1997) reviewed the use and trust of nutritional information by European consumers in EU, and found that on-pack information was mentioned in fifth position (22% of respondents) as a means to get information. TV/radio, magazines, newspapers and health professionals (experts) were less well ranked.

Access to information provided outside of the point of purchase can contribute to stimulate personal relevance and impact the attention and recognition of on-package information once in the purchase situation. If all information is congruent on-pack information may be a '*bolsterer*' (Davies & Wright 1994, p. 60).

The general issue of use and interest in information cues has been examined. The sources of the message, and presentation format contribute in triggering consumer interest and use. We now turn to the specific format of information in this research: on-pack information.

On packaging cues

Food labels are instruments used in the case of direct communication from a manufacturer to consumers using the package of the product as a vehicle for information. For instance, social labelling informs consumers about production conditions of the goods so that their purchase decision can potentially be based on known information about (un)ethical practices of the businesses (Dickson 2001).

According to the nature and attractiveness of information, on-pack product cues may trigger different level of attention and interest. Individuals are all different regarding their demand and need for information, and will pay attention to information to differing extents. Silayoi and Speece (2007, 2004) looked at the importance of packaging elements and on their influence on buying decisions, and found that respondents were using label information although saying they would like a simplified and easier format. They argue that consumers more involved in the purchase decision would be more likely to pay attention and use package information more extensively. Respondents in their focus groups reported that informative elements were increasingly important and were influencing choice, and were a means to judge product performance by creating product credibility (Silayoi & Speece 2004). In the same study, visual and graphics elements had greater influence than informational elements in a low involvement situation.

A BRMB study (2009) extended Grunert and Wills' model (2007) to integrate previous exposure to the label and focus on stages of consumer decision process that could potentially influence the use of labels. Three broad categories of influences (shopper internal, external and label specific) were tested. The model caters for individuals' preferences that might not be aligned with availability of information. Additionally, the research differentiates subjective and objective understanding of the message conveyed by the label and insists that higher preference does not necessarily predicts higher understanding.

The literature on labelling is mainly quantitative. Economists favour hedonic pricing methods: by giving a price to information the willingness-to-pay for information for different attributes is evaluated. Laboratory and choice experiments are not realistic either, as they force the exposure to the label. Additionally, the literature on labelling and consumers' preferences has mainly been based on self reported methods, aimed to uncover individual preferences for information provision and to assess the use of the information displayed on the product packaging and how this information might have altered the purchase decision.

The assumption (and not the measurement) is made that consumers will pay attention to the label. Therefore, the results do not reflect the 'real life' situation because perception and attention paid to the label are not questioned. Although the formulation of questions makes it explicit, how can we be sure that consumers can differentiate between

perception and use of label? A thorough review of the literature highlights that it is likely that consumers misreport the use of labels (over or under estimating it). Cowburn and Stockley (2007) conclude that these experimental settings and theoretical studies lack of realism, and further, that little is known about the use of labels in '*real world label perception and low involvement learning*' (Cowburn & Stockley 2007, p. 396). They propose that label use in real purchase decisions is mostly under the influence of time and habitual processes, and this implies that heuristics are likely to be heavily used. Calling for more contextual research, they suggest the use of both observational and shelf-interviewing methods, as this would allow for time dimension and context to be accounted for.

Different methods have been used to assess consumers' usage of labels. Discrete choice experiments are based on the characterisation of products and services by the sum of all their attributes. Individuals base their choice according to the value attributed to each attribute and their relative importance to each other on the final choice. Ryan *et al.* (2001) explains briefly the technique: respondents are asked to choose among scenarios made up of attributes. The choices made by respondents are then used to build a model in order to account for the utility derived from the choice and attributes that the good has got. This provides information about the crucial attributes ranks the importance of different attributes for a good.

Jager (2000) underlined that experimental laboratory research uncovers a lot about variables affecting consumer behaviour. Experimental laboratory research has serious limitations regarding the timeline of the experiments, the number of people involved in the experiment and the type and relevance of the outcomes.

Researchers use tools to reduce the constraints observed in such settings and represent as much as possible real life. However, most of the limitations of laboratory research cannot be resolved easily, which prevents us from transposing experimental results directly into real-life situations. It is not sure for example that a consumer willing to buy will behave and process the same way as a consumer forced (as in the experiment) to buy a good. Pressure from the research team, or lack of interest for the purpose of the research could be two of many sources of bias and variables that will interfere with the 'usual' behaviour.

There exist different classifications looking at the nature of factors influencing the extent to which on-pack cues are used. A three-class approach with environmental factors, person-related factors and properties of the food is adopted:

- **Environmental factors** are of extrinsic nature and those that one can have limited control upon. With regard to information sources, convenience of access has been found to influence the extent of use of preferred sources. Wandel (1997) also suggests that labels may be considered by consumers for a short time period and be used as a identification tool when buying a new product but not used anymore when one becomes familiar with the product (habit of purchase would be more important).
- **Personal factors** will embrace psychological (knowledge, beliefs, attitudes) and demographics variables. Anxiety of becoming overloaded or lose confidence due to non ability to understand were found to participate in the limitation of the information attended by individuals (Pieniak et al. 2007, Verbeke 2005, Salaün & Flores 2001). Attitudes are also said to contribute to the consumers' decision to pay attention to the information (Drichoutis, Lazaridis & Nayga 2005, Thøgersen 2000). Involvement and context of consumption mediate the process of decision choice and significantly influence the importance of paying careful attention to product attributes (Thøgersen 2000).
- Finally, the **properties of the food** can influence the use of information. For instance, if a consumer purchases a product routinely and notices this product has been given the Fair trade certification, the consumer may either: ignore the information, process but not understand the meaning of the information, understand the information which potentially may lead to further information search about the Fair trade labellisation.

Higginson *et al* (2002) looking at nutrition label use, have shown that most consumers look at on-packaging information as a screening process but the information is not usually used to make a final choice. This is supported by Grunert and Klaus' (2007) five stages model of nutritional label use. The model presupposes that interest, knowledge and format have an impact on the whole information search process. The model does not account however for feedback that will modify subsequent interactions with labels.

Thøgersen's work has considerably improved our understanding about circumstances and factors explaining consumers paying attention to labels. As he noted, knowledge of the reasons motivating consumers to know, notice and use labels '*are only sporadically answered*' (Thøgersen 2000, p. 287). Consumers are interested in the use of a label if they believe that it is a tool that will help to make a more informed purchase, highlighting that the use of a label is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end. He further argues that knowledge (internal condition) and availability (external factor) in conjunction with motivation determine paying attention to eco-labels (and possibly other labels). Socioeconomics (Nayga Jr, 1999) gender (Nayga Jr, 2000), and educational level (Nayga Jr, 2000; Nayga Jr, 1996) have been associated with use of on-package label, specifically nutritional information.

Verbeke and Ward (2006) assessed consumer interest in information cues denoting quality, traceability and origin in application with beef labels. Their conclusion was that the on-pack information should be readily interpretable and brief. Pursuing the objective of ranking attributes according to reported consumers' salience, information about quality provided through a quality seal was ranked first (Verbeke & Ward 2006).

In another study, Verbeke *et al* (2008) focussed on long term labelling effects in the case of quality signals in Belgium. An empirical assessment of the effect of quality signalled by the label, suggested that it was not perceived effective by consumers. In such case, no comparative advantage is perceived by consumers to use a label, as consumers' expectations are equal or above what the label communicates. The failure of use of a label could be explained if labels do not communicate the label characteristics clearly (Verbeke *et al*. 2008).

The lack of research in real situations was common few decades ago, but fieldwork is increasingly gaining popularity. A field experiment in which different influence strategies to persuade customers to purchase Fair trade products on offer at a commercial stand, has been conducted (d'Astous & Mathieu 2008). Voordouw *et al* (2009) also report the observation of grocery shopping and information search amongst food allergic consumers. Brown (2008), via an ethnography of people involved in the Fair trade movement, highlights the importance of shared meaning and values for buyers. Generally, field experiments allow a closer approximation of the situation and integration of the contextual influences on an individual behaviour. They test the reality of the purchasing

behaviour in the presence of the attribute (label) on a product. However, as every data collection method they also have drawbacks.

As we have seen in this section, labels will only be used if they are noticed, understood and trusted to a certain extent. Only some aspects of the message of the label might be used and integrated in the final purchase decision. If the label is only noticed subconsciously it is likely that the self reported use will be underestimated, which supports a naturalistic methodology where actual behaviour could be observed. At the same time this methodology would reduce the post behaviour rationalisation that does not reflect true influences on behaviour.

In this section we have reviewed the types of information search, listed available sources of information, and focus on barriers and enablers of label use. The literature distinguishes between two types of information search: internal and external. The specificities of each type have been presented. Information search is primarily affected by previous experience and personal knowledge before being extended to acquisition of new information through use of known and trusted sources.

Using the individual/situation/product paradigm the factors influencing the choice of an information source have been explored. The choice and the use of sources considered legitimate to provide accurate information is subject to an evaluation of their ability to provide the information sought. Specific attention was given to studies and methodologies used previously to assess the use of on-packaging cues. The limited attention that a shopper devotes to a product in every day situations, may mean consumers do not process information thoroughly and only use it as a cue to make a choice.

The role of trust in the source and the accessibility of the message are important in the choice of this message source. This has been highlighted throughout the last sub sections. We now turn to this issue.

3.4 TRUST

Trust in the specific context of communication of information to consumers has been largely studied. A consensus is found in the literature both about the importance of trust in marketing and its complexity. As a result, several definitions and operationalisations of the construct exist. Luhmann sees trust as *'a solution for specific*

problems of risk' (Luhmann 2000, p. 94). This is the definition we use in this study. However the literature has approached the concept of trust from three perspectives:

- A cognitive one: trust is seen as a person's strength or ability of a person to reach an objective (trusting someone)
- An affective one: trust is seen there as an assurance towards someone (being confident)
- A conative one: trust implies there some dependency towards someone or something (relying on)

Luhmann (2000) differentiates between the cognitive perspective and the affective one: the former would be the result of choice process and cognitive effort, whilst the latter is more general and based on more affective factors. This is supported by Morgan and Hunt (1994) who reject the intended behavioural aspect of trust. The behaviour is a result not a component of the concept of trust itself. The psychological state of trust precedes the intended behaviour.

The conative dimension of trust supposes that it is a behavioural variable, leading to uncertainty of the partner of the exchange process. This type of trust refers to the acceptance by one party of the second party's actions (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman 1995, p. 712) or as the willingness to rely and believe in the partner's actions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook 2001). With specific reference to trust and information use, Thiede (2005) states that trust plays a crucial role in the use of the information provided and that it is a determinant of the effectiveness of information. Trust is specifically an important element in the context of credence attributes for which the cost of verification of information is high. Given that consumers might be sceptical about the information they are given, it seems crucial that information should be reliable and trustworthy (Salaün & Flores 2001). It is suggested that consumers' understanding and recollection of the information provided through labels might be limited due to their passive role in the communication process (Salaün & Flores 2001). Trustworthy systems aimed at increasing the credibility of messages relating to food products with credence attributes, are becoming increasingly important but are not always simple to establish, as Grunert *et al* (2000) have recognised.

The dimensionality of the construct has also been discussed, albeit inconclusively. We find three dimensions for Frewer *et al* (1996), five elsewhere (Renn & Levine 1991). If the source of information provided is trusted it should be used to reduce the risk. In other

words, it is a mechanism used to reduce uncertainty in situations where not enough information is known or available (Luhmann 2000). If there is a lack of trust in the source, then the information has no value, and therefore no resources will be allocated to process it. Thiede (2005) proposes that trust is an important antecedent of the relationship between information and effectiveness.

Trust tends to vary with information sources and situations. Frewer *et al* (1996) argue that the distance between source and recipient of the message is one explanatory factor of use: trust may be more difficult to build and sustain as distance increases. Frewer *et al* (1996) also pointed out that knowledge is not sufficient to consider that trust exists.

Pieniak *et al* (2007) looked at the use and trust for different sources of information with respect to fish choices across Europe. They conclude that there is a minimum level of trust needed (operating as a threshold) above which information sources will be critically examined and used. Trust has been recognised as a necessary variable for individuals to attend the information and characterised as a mediator for further attention. However, sceptical but involved consumers may be looking for ways to build trust.

Worsley and Lea (2003) showed that trust and usage of information sources are positively related. They suggest that while trust may positively predict usage, usage may not be linearly related to trust.

Verbeke (2005) highlights the case of the market for functional food in which consumers report to have increased most of their knowledge through mass media communication (source the least trusted as reported earlier). Despite their knowledge, they remained sceptical about the truthfulness of information. This is contradictory to the expectation that usage and trust are linearly related. Finally de Almeida *et al* (1997) concludes that there is a impressive contrast existing between the level of trust for media and advertising and its large use among the population. They report that 65% of respondents trust information provided through labels. This contrasts with a much lower rate of people reporting using labels, which implies that even trusted information might not be used. In that sense, trust is necessary but not sufficient to encourage use. However, additional research is needed to study the importance of trust for specific information sources and formats.

An important antecedent of search is involvement with a product (Schmidt & Spreng 1996, Beatty & Smith 1987). Several studies discuss a positive relation between involvement and the extent of external search (Schmidt & Spreng 1996, Beatty & Smith 1987, Punj & Staelin 1983). This is why it is important to examine the concept of involvement in relation to information seeking and acquisition activities. However, these studies only investigate the extent of external search in general. They neglect the type of search channels used, which is an important dimension of pre-purchase information search. Many studies focus on the relationship between involvement and the use of a particular search channel. To our knowledge, there are no recent studies that comprehensively analyze the use of different information-search channels in relation to product involvement.

In parallel, Petty and Cacioppo's ELM model support that motivational factors impact the way information is processed. Variations in the degree of involvement are linked to the use of different cues and modes of processing information. The next section reviews the construct of involvement.

3.5 INVOLVEMENT

Involvement is a psychological construct that has been found to impact on numerous daily activities. Its importance in the marketing literature has made it an important variable to consider when studying consumer behaviour (Beharrell & Denison 1995) and may well be one of the main determinants of attitude formation and purchasing behaviour (Laaksonen 1994).

The present section reviews the origins, conceptualisations, measurement, antecedents and consequences of the construct.

3.5.1 Historical account: origins and epistemological implications

The term first appeared in the psychology literature in the late 1940s. A series of papers by Sherif *et al* provided evidence of a correlation between an individual level of involvement and the likeliness of specific behaviour. In this purely psychological perspective, involvement is best explained as ego involvement, where the level of involvement of an individual is central to his self-identity. (Sherif and Cantril 1947).

It is only from the mid sixties that the term gets into the marketing literature. Research focussed on its implications on consumer understanding of, and attention to advertisements (Krugman 1965). It was found that consumers would react differently when presented with different stimuli, and that consequently they had different ways of learning new information (Krugman 1965). In this perspective, the antecedents of involvement were said to be past experience, innate abilities and skills; proposing that differences in involvement existed across individuals. In other words, the level of involvement was a function of knowledge and familiarity.

Interest for the involvement construct has generated a great number of papers published and special issues in top journals (*Journal of Consumer Research*) in the 1980s. As for many psychological concepts, reaching a consensus has been the topic of the original literature, and highlighted difficulties in reaching a consensus on a definition. Many papers compared involvement with other psychological states -such as interest (Van Trijp, Hoyer & Inman 1996), importance (Bloch & Richins 1983), and commitment (Laaksonen 1994) -; the definitions of which, were developed by establishing contrasts.

The concept was originally borrowed from psychology and so were its conceptualisation, operationalisation, and relationship with other constructs. The same nomology could not be applied for both consumer research and psychology. The epistemological issue – which approach should be used define the construct- as much as importance that needed to be given to antecedents and implications of involvement were central to the debate.

As Michaelidou and Dibb (2008) point out, when attempting to propose a common definition, academics have in fact highlighted inconsistencies and created new problems in the conceptualisation process.

The confusion and complexity in reaching an agreement has been partially resolved by the creation of different streams of research, each qualifying the context in which the involvement construct would be applied: product involvement (Bloch, 1981) personal involvement (Zaichkowsky 1985), purchasing involvement (Slama & Tashchian 1985). However, the variable studied is essentially the same thing, only applied in different contexts. Laurent and Kapferer (1985) proposes a summary of the qualifications of involvement found in the literature: emotional (Vaughn 1980), rational ((Chombart de

Lauwe 1979) in (Laurent & Kapferer 1985)), personal ((Baudrillard 1968) in (Laurent & Kapferer 1985) solution ((Greenwald 1965) in(Laurent & Kapferer 1985).

This raises the question of the valid application of the construct in different contexts without altering its operationalisation. Additionally, the need to juxtapose qualifiers next to involvement illustrates that the concept is heavily dependent on context. The issue cannot only consist in measuring an individual level of involvement; it is needed to understand the type of involvement studied.

To define the properties of the concept, involvement is often juxtaposed with qualifiers of direction (what is the target?), persistence (temporal nature) and antecedents (what is (are) the stimulus (i)?) (Andrews, Durvasula and Akhter 1990). This is apparent in the different conceptualisations existing in the literature that we will now detail.

3.5.2 Conceptualisation

Houston and Rothschild (1978) followed by Laaksonen (1994) proposed a distinction between:

- response based forms of involvement: namely situational and enduring (proposing temporality)
- extensiveness of response (proposing effort).

This view has stimulated reflexion and development of the research in the 1980s. Laaksonen (1994) proposed further that cognitive elements determine differently the resulting level of involvement.

Three main perspectives are evident in the literature: a cognitively based, a subject centred and a response centred approach. Laaksonen proposes a visual representation of the classification of the concepts. (see Figure 3.15 below). This should guide our review.

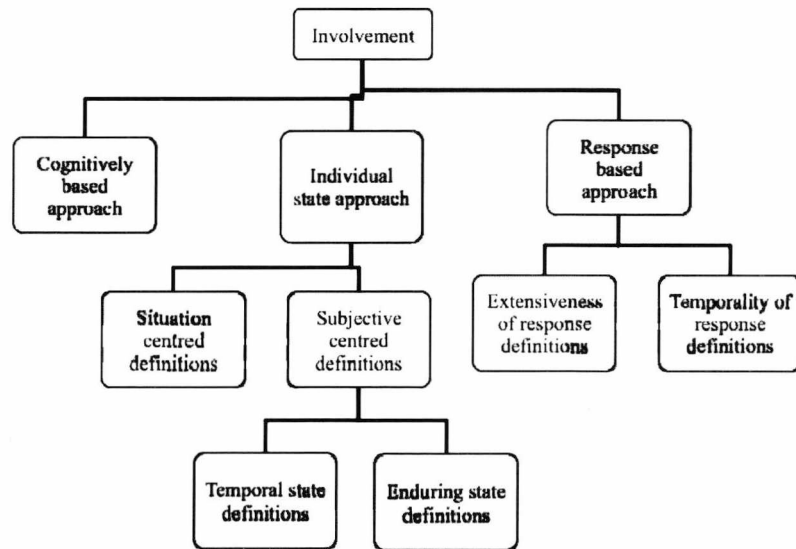


Figure 3.5 : The classification of the different approaches to involvement adapted from (Laaksonen 1994, p. 65)

Cognitively based approach

McGuire (1976) defined a cognitive process as one that stresses the need for being adaptively oriented to the environment and for achieving a sense of meaning. The performance of the product in relation with its attributes will be highly stressed by the individual.

Slama and Tashchian (1985) and Bloch (1981) share a common approach to involvement: they propose that involvement is in relation with the '*perceived personal relevance*' (Laaksonen 1994, p. 25) of a stimulus to an individual. This perspective is in favour of a profound link existing at the psychological level between a person and a product and expresses the strength of the relationship. Zaichkowsky proposed an extension and characterised involvement as '*a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and interests*' (1985, p. 342). Here, involvement is viewed as the degree to which consumers are engaged about a product or a purchase decision. The phenomenon is greatly enhanced by personal relevance, connections or consequences that the object has to the buyer (Chaudhuri 2000, Engel and Blackwell 1982, Bloch and Richins 1983). Broderick and Mueller (1999) tackle the definition from an information processing paradigm: involvement is '*the extent to which an individual is characterised by an incremental cognitive process, which connects the individual to a product*' (Broderick &

Mueller 1999, p. 104). In their perspective, the tighter the link the more complex the cognitive process will be.

Kassarjian (1981) has classified individuals on the basis of personality traits. For him, propensity to become involved in an issue is dependent on individuals' intrinsic characteristics. This perspective posits that consumers buying behaviour is the outcome of a three variables interaction between the product in a situation with the level of purchasing involvement of the consumer. This approach permits to account for the variation and differences observed across individuals (behaviour, attention to external and contextual issues) according to intrinsic characteristics and the context in which they evolve.

These links between the very personal characteristics and the level of involvement resulting from them are reported mainly as cognitively based definitions in the literature and emphasise the predominance of the individual's 'values'. Celsi and Olson (1988) refer to 'self-knowledge' in their definition and link involvement '*between one's needs, goals and values*' on one side and product knowledge on the other side. Zaichkowsky (1985) focuses on '*interests, needs or values*', Bloch (1981) uses 'values, needs and self concept' and Lastovicka and Gardner (1978) refer to 'values'. Generally, the extent of the cognitive structures existing between an object and the individual needs or values is proposed to represent involvement. Involvement is thus seen as a characteristic of an attitude. It is an enduring state, 'stable' over time.

Quester and Lin see involvement as an ongoing commitment that would take the form of a psychological process with regard to '*thoughts, feelings and behavioural response to a product category*' (2003, p. 24). Park and Mittal describe situational involvement as a '*goal-directed arousal capacity*' (1985, p. 208) that is governed by two groups of motives of which one are utilitarian motives which means they are cognitively rooted.

This perspective is an interesting approach in the context of the present research as recent studies advocate that product attributes individually (organic, fair trade, functional foods) may create involvement (Verbeke & Roosen 2009).

Individual state centred approach

This approach refers to the individual involvement. Involvement here is seen as an *'internal state variable that indicates the amount of arousal, interest or drive evoked by a particular stimulus or situation'* (Mitchell 1979, p. 194). Mitchell's model (1981) propose that attention and processing activities affect the global response to a stimulus (acquisition of the information). In this context, the emphasis was on the mental state of the individual when determining involvement. However, this approach differs from cognitively based one: neither personal relevance nor links with values of the self are needed.

Antil views involvement as *'the level of importance and/or interest evoked by a stimulus (or stimuli) within a specific situation'* (Antil 1984, p. 204). In this approach, no product can be involving per se. Involvement is created by the interaction between a product and an individual. It is argued that there is no product that is intrinsically able to trigger involvement. The characteristics of the situation and the products itself might interact, therefore the characteristics of such called low involvement products may not hold for all the individuals or situations (Brennan & Mavondo 2000).

The definitions highlight the amount of arousal (Rothschild 1984), and goal oriented state (Bloch, 1981). Involvement is viewed -in this subset of literature - as a motivational force for the individual (Mittal 1989b, Rothschild 1984). Laurent and Kapferer further sees involvement as a *'motivational or casual variable which has consequences on consumers' purchase and communication behaviour'* (1985, p. 42). This perspective has emphasised the relevance of the topic for consumer research and its potential impact on subsequent behaviour. This has given involvement a position of antecedent in the sequence attitude- behaviour that contributed to increase its importance.

The level of involvement of the individual is assessed here via its intensity whilst it is dependent on extent of the effort in the cognitive approach. To clarify, this approach views the construct as a potential mediator between a stimulus and a response (Nicosia, 1978) cited in (Laaksonen 1994)). Referring to the intensity of involvement implies that amount and quantity of attention also need to be discussed. The product of interest does not create involvement, the usage situation might (Clarke & Belk 1979). The importance of the context is again mentioned as an important factor. Beatty and Smith (1987)

characterised a relationship between purchase (decision) involvement¹⁰ and search effort : in their model, involvement was both an input and an output of the exerted effort (illustrating a feedback loop).

Purchase decision involvement refers to the fact that even though a person might be highly involved in the product class and consider it as being important, but that brand or the size of packaging might be less important, thus implying low-purchase-decision involvement. It results that some purchase situations maybe highly involving without the product purchased being involving.

Consumers differ not only by the degree of involvement but also by the type of involvement (Laurent & Kapferer 1985). This supports Laaksonen's further subdivision¹¹ looking at situation centred definitions (where nature of the stimulus is the only determinant of involvement) versus subjective centred ones (see (Houston & Rothschild 1978)).

Rathz and Moore's operational definition of product class involvement is

"a certain nature of a product class that which by its nature and relationships to a defined population causes a high or low level of thinking concerning the given product class or to occur in a consistent pattern across the given population of interest" (1989 p115)}

This definition validates the view that product involvement is a function of the product considered. This contradicts the view that product cannot trigger involvement and suggests that some products (stimuli) would inevitably trigger involvement for individuals due to their characteristics (Rathz & Moore, 1989, O'Cass, 1996)}.

Finally, subjective centred definitions are temporal state definitions differentiating between stable (highlighting the ongoing interest one has for a product) and temporal states (involvement varies consistently with the level of motivation of the individual when

¹⁰ Purchase decision involvement and purchase involvement are interchangeably used in the literature to refer to the same concept.

¹¹ See again Figure 3.15 pg 89

exposed to the stimulus). This conceptualisation considers that involvement is highly contextual and situation specific. The anticipated situation (or usage situation) may heighten the level of involvement experienced by an individual. Situational involvement reflects the temporary feelings of involvement that occurs for a particular situation usually before a purchase or close to it. During the information search phase, an individual seeks out more information about a specific product and may pay more attention and retain information that may be useful in the final choice of the product. This is better explained by Richins *et al* (1992) arguing that when the product under scrutiny is of high importance to the individual and when the purchase time is close then the consumer may feel temporal factors specific to the present environment.

Response based approach

Compared to the previous two approaches, involvement is not seen in this case as a mediator between a stimulus and a response but characterises the nature of the actual response. The nature of this information processing activity is also affected by moderating variables giving the involvement a temporal characteristic.

Houston and Richins (1978) suggest that it is products' intrinsic characteristics and situational characteristics that trigger involvement and not individual characteristics. Based on this assumption, Richins and Bloch (1986) tested the potential for a product to induce involvement, and investigated the extent to which this could arise and account for temporal effects. Thus their classification is based on three variables: involvement level, product, and time frame and is contextualised with specific segments. Response Involvement (R.I) is defined as the result of the '*complexity of cognitive and behavioural processes characterising the overall consumer decision process*' (Houston & Rothschild 1978, p. 185). It essentially refers to the same thing than the concept of purchase involvement. This evokes the dichotomous (high-low) classification of products. In some instances, the circumstances or reasons of a purchase could prevail on all other attributes and be more important than the product purchased itself. The purchase situation can potentially be a factor of additional involvement. The view is that individual and situational characteristics are predominant in the level of involvement observed (Bloch,1981).

Involvement is conceptualised here as a temporary state (interest, concern) - triggered by a stimulus- which impact would last for a relative short-term period. This

perspective clearly insists on the fact that the final involvement level is the result of internal own processes (see studies by (Krugman 1965) and Mitchell).

Kokkinaki (1997) found that involvement is an antecedent of attitudes accessibility and could then impact the attitude behaviour sequence. High levels of involvement are associated with more accessible attitudes. When the stimulus is present the easiness with which the attitude is retrieved is a good indicator of the individual's level of involvement. However, involvement and accessibility contribute independently to the attitude behaviour sequence (Kokkinaki 1997).

Extensiveness of the response based definitions

Cohen (1983) questions the causal relationship between information process and involvement: Is high involvement a result of extensive cognitive processes or is the extent to which an individual engage in cognitive activities the result of a higher level of involvement? For example a consumer going to a superstore in two different occasions buying a bottle of wine (one for his personal consumption one as to offer a bottle as a gift to a relative) will not consider the products in the same way. The purchase situation will then be a factor of increasing involvement.

To clarify:

- In the **cognitive based approach** described earlier, involvement is a variable that helps characterising the type of relationship between the individual and the object (through formation of cognitive structures).
- In the **subject centred state approach** both the stimulus and the subject of involvement can combine to create motivational force and involvement (latent construct). In both approaches, involvement is a mediator of a relationship between the subject and the object of involvement, guiding the intensity of the variable along a continuum.
- In the **response based approach**, involvement qualifies the nature of the response by either modelling the duration (dichotomous nature low/high) or the effort (extent of cognitive processing) engaged. Involvement is an output (actual response) resulting from exposure to a stimulus. Duration and extent of the response are moderators of the level of involvement. Because in this approach involvement is

viewed as an actualised response in itself, it is only possible to measure it once the response has occurred.

Temporality of response definitions

Enduring involvement represents the general and long run concern with a product that a consumer brings to a situation (Richins, Bloch & McQuarrie 1992, Rothschild 1979). The enduring part of involvement is the base level of the level of involvement a consumer has or feels to be in relation to a product before being in a purchase situation. It is an intrinsic and relatively stable overtime state towards a product, a product class or a category.

Enduring involvement as we have seen is a base-level relatively stable overtime but could change throughout the life of an individual due to different environmental factors (peers influence, changes in values system, and perceptions of new risks in consumption acts...) but this change would be gradual. How does level of involvement evolve throughout time? Is the transformation of a purchase act into a purchase habit related to decreasing level of involvement of the consumer? The situational form of involvement may help to shed light on this and explain how individuals respond to external influences.

Several authors suggest that although enduring involvement levels range from low to high level it contributes little to overall involvement responses (Dickson 2001).

Situational involvement treats involvement not anymore as an attitude but as a behaviour that reflect the extent to which individuals are engaged in a situation. For instance, the shopping mission may involve a closer attention to price, to the information provided or to examine brand differences. The level of purchase involvement is in this case evaluated and operationalised as the extent to which one engages in information acquisition and information search (Michaelidou & Dibb 2008).

The time dimension proved to be an important indicator of the variation in the degree of involvement observed for an individual. Keith established in 1979 that task involvement (=situational) and product involvement (enduring) are interacting variables. Using a four factorial design he manipulated task involvement levels and used two low involving products and two high involving products in order to assess effects on the extent of information search. He demonstrated that the motive of purchase increases involvement

and the effort spent in information search. Beatty and Smith (1987) criticised the validity of this operationalisation of involvement; as it would imply that only the nature of the product controls the level of involvement and not the individual himself.

Richins and Bloch (1986) tested the possible relationships between enduring and situational forms of involvement to reach an overall level of involvement. They proposed an additive and two interactive models and tested them in the context of clothes and automobiles (durable goods potentially able to generate more situational involvement for consumers envisaging a purchase). They obtained their best results with the additive model. Thus they confirmed there was no significant interaction found between the two forms of involvement under study.

One of their hypotheses, an interactive model, consisted in testing a ceiling effect of involvement responses. It posited that a maximum level of enduring involvement could limit the potential for environmental factors to exert an influence on the level of involvement. However, the model was rejected (Richins, Bloch & McQuarrie 1992). This means that it is theoretically possible to alter the level of involvement of the individual with external stimuli.

As we have seen so far, a multitude of approaches exist regarding involvement in consumer research, from involvement as a personality trait, to an internal state, the salience of a stimulus, and the apprehension of involvement as a stimulus property. In the context of this research, involvement is considered as personal trait and refers to the individual's overall perceived personal relevance with an issue and has motivational consequences such as attention and elaboration, as well as and overt behavior, such as search and purchase behaviors (Celsi & Olson, 1988). The degree to which consumers perceive an issue or a situation to be personally relevant to them will determine their level of involvement with the issue or situation.

The conceptualisation of involvement entails a review of its antecedents that we shall now conduct.

3.5.3 Antecedents of involvement

The different approaches have proposed that involvement is a dynamic concept that can depend on the characteristics of a product, an individual or a situation.

- Individual characteristics

When presenting the various existing definitions of involvement a large place was given to individuals' characteristics as determinants of consumer involvement. These characteristics could further be subdivided as sociodemographics, psychological and psychographics.

- Sociodemographics

The main input in the literature about the influential role of socio-demographics variables regarding the level of involvement is that of Slama and Taschian (1985) for Western countries and Sridhar (2007) in India.

Lifestage and presence of children in the household have been found to influence involvement (Sridhar 2007, Slama & Tashchian 1985). They established a relationship between 'stage of the family lifecycle' and 'level of purchasing involvement' and that involvement level should be the greatest when children are present in the household. Their results also support the variation of purchasing involvement with gender (in favour of women). Age has been linked to level of involvement by Marshall and Bell in the context of food procuring preparation and consumption (Marshall & Bell 2004). Presence of children in the household has also been linked with different level of individual involvement in the case of a food product (meat) (Verbeke & Vackier 2004). The relationship between income and purchasing involvement is of an inverted U shape in which purchasing involvement is highest for individuals of moderate income level.

Overall, no consensus has yet been reached about the pertinence of demographics as determinant of involvement. That is why is important to conduct more studies in order to evaluate the impact of demographics comparatively to other variables such as psychological factors. This justifies the use of lifestage as a less usual demographic variable used (Schlegelmilch, Bohlen & Diamantopoulos 1996).

- Psychological variables

- Importance of a need

Park and Young (1986) have proposed that the relative 'importance of a need' for an individual will determine his level of involvement. In other words, this refers to the personal relevance aspect of the stimulus to the individual.

- Level of attention

Attention paid to the stimulus has been characterised as having a determinant influence on the level of involvement of the individual. Several studies have tried to look at the impact of advertisements and resulting level of involvement and information processing activities (Chebat, Limoges & Gelinias-Chebat 1998, Andrews & Shimp 1990, Krugman 1966)

- Prior experience

Houston and Rothschild (Houston & Rothschild 1978) first verified that prior experience affected involvement (generally positively). However, according to them, prior experience can only influence the level of involvement of an individual 'to the degree to which it modifies the product related cognitive structure'. Valette-Florence (1988) described enduring involvement has having two main dimensions: previous experience with the product (knowledge about it) and set of values of an individual.

Lastoviska and Gardner (1978) refer to this by using the term 'familiarity' with the product. From a cognitive perspective, this supports that even if habitual purchase behaviour is developed no change in the attitudes held about the product would occur. Conversely, Mitchell (1983) proposes increasing experience to lower the level of involvement of the individual; with learning contributing to the construction of habits.

Repeated experiences with a product may increase the cognitive structures created and result in stronger connections with object. Another perspective considers that habitual and developed purchasing behaviour indicate that the amount of effort may be limited in the choice of a product. In this perspective, the effort expended in the choice of the product may gradually become more automatic than controlled.

From this, we conclude that familiarity with a product, acquired through experience (or consumption in the case of food) has been admitted as having an impact on the level of involvement of the consumer. However we do not know the direction of the impact. Prior experience with the product will be approximated via the frequency of purchase variable.

- Product knowledge

Celsi and Olson (1988) distinguishes two components of knowledge of a product, namely attributes and benefits and view product knowledge as a limiting/determining factor of someone's involvement. The individuals more involved in products tend to be more likely to share their opinion and to enjoy speaking about the object of the involvement process during which their level of involvement is increased.

- Price acceptability

Lichtenstein, Bloch and Black (1988) have characterised the positive relationship between involvement and price acceptability. Product knowledge was omitted as a moderator of the relationship between product involvement and price quality inferences. This suggests that individual differences in price consciousness and product involvement are related to price acceptability. Knowledge has however been characterised as a moderator of price acceptability (Rao & Sieben 1992).

- Psychographics variables

Psychographics variables are those related the individual personality and refer to feelings, attitudes, cognitive style, lifestyle.

-Centrality, strength and number of values

The importance of the relationships between values and the stimulus, proposed among others by Celsi and Olson (1988) is the central determinant and argument in the cognitive based definitions of involvement. Lastovicka and Gardner (1978) have shown that the greater the relevance to one's set of values, the higher the likeliness for a product to infer involvement.

The second set of variables having a role as antecedent of involvement relates to product.

- Product characteristics

- Perceived risk importance and perceived risk probability

Food has been traditionally viewed as a low involvement product. Verbeke and Vackier (2004) challenged the view that food was *de facto* a low involvement product. Other authors have characterised situations for which food products can trigger moderate to high levels of involvement (Kuenzel & Musters 2007, Beharrell & Denison 1995).

Real or perceived risk of choosing a product and the resulting consequences of doing so increase the level of involvement. Acebron, Mangin and Dopico (2000) and Dholakia (2001) found for the food category a higher level of involvement when a significant amount of risk was existing or when the product had a negative image (Acebron, Mangin & Dopico 2000). Perceived risk importance and perceived risk probability are also considered as being an antecedent by Bloch (1981). Conversely, Laurent and Kapferer (1985) and others propose risk as a consequence of involvement.

- Product perceived importance

Park and Young said that product perceived importance has an influence on involvement and impact on the level of message processing. (Park & Young 1986)

- Cost and complexity

Houston and Rothschild (1978) propose that the product characteristics cause (situational) involvement. It follows that a product will generate the same level of involvement for most individuals. The product centred perspective classifies then the products along a continuum of propensity to generate low to high level of involvement for consumers.

- Symbolic value.

Juhl and Poulsen (2000) tested Mittal's model (1989) proposing that symbolic value is a determinant of consumer involvement in the context of fish consumption. Product-hedonic value refers to the capacity of a physical product category to provide pleasure and effect.

Situational involvement- as mentioned earlier- is termed after the contextual elements that could have a stimulus role and determine the level of involvement of a person. This categorisation of elements include the stage of the decision process, broad characteristics such as the availability of the product, the promotion or marketing activities designed to increase awareness of the product but also the anticipated purchase and consumption situations. Each element is now examined in turn.

- Situation characteristics

- Stage of the decision process

Along the classical model of consumer behaviour (Engel & Blackwell 1982) the level of involvement may vary in terms of the amount of cognitive effort expended. The amount of resources but also the cognitive structures may evolve throughout the stages of the decision model. This may be the consequences of activities such as information search and comparison of alternatives and then the purchase situation. For subsequent purchases, post purchase behaviour may impact the level of involvement of the individual (Laaksonen 1994).

- Store choice

De Ferran and Grunert (2007) confirmed by Bezencon (2008) have found differences on consumer involvement according to the type of shops where they would purchase their Fair trade products.

- Availability of a product

Considering that involvement is seen as a motivational force that mediates the way to attain a goal, then if the goal is to purchase the desired product the availability factor is one that will determine the level of involvement of the individual (Laaksonen 1994).

- Marketing activities

Bettman and colleagues have reported a series of experiments looking at the convincing power of advertisement messages where either or both messages and involvement levels have been manipulated in order to characterize the relationship.(Bettman & Park 1980b, Bettman & Kakkar 1977a). Evidence suggests that

the advertising messages can persuade individuals but that the way in which the information is processed is still predominant to generate low to high level of involvement.

- Anticipated purchase and usage situation

Both the purchase situation and the usage situation have been found to affect the level of involvement of the individual. Whether the purchase is made alone or accompanied, whether the product chosen is bought for self or someone else has consequences in the effort exerted in thinking of, planning and making the purchase (Clarke & Belk 1979).

In order to summarise the findings of the literature the Table 3.1 below provides a summary of the factors that have been found to act as antecedents of involvement.

Factors linked with	Factors	Influence on involvement degree	Authors	
The individual	Family life stage (=family life cycle)	Positive	(Slama and Tashchian 1985) (Sridhar 2007)	
	Presence of children	Positive	(Verbeke and Vackier 2004)	
	Gender	Women + Non significant	(Slama and Tashchian 1985) Bezencon,2008 (Sridhar 2007)	
	Income	Inverted U shape	(Slama and Tashchian 1985) (Sridhar 2007)	
	Education	Positive	(Slama and Tashchian 1985)	
	Age	Positive	(Marshall and Bell 2004) Bergadaa (Sridhar 2007)	
	Occupation			
	Centrality, strength and number of values	Positive	(Celsi and Olson 1988)	
	Self confidence	Negative	(Antil 1984)	
	Importance of a need	Positive	(Park and Young 1983)	
	Prior experience	Positive Negative	Houston and Rotschild 1978 Mitchell 1983	
	Product knowledge	Positive	(Celsi and Olson 1988)	
	Decision making style		(Smith and Carsky 1996)	
	Perceived risk importance	Positive	(Bloch 1981)	
The product	Perceived risk probability	Positive	(Verbeke and Vackier 2004)	
	Cost	Positive	Houston and Rotschild 1978	
	Price			
	Product utility	Positive	(Juhl and Poulsen 2000)	
	Complexity	Positive	Houston and Rotschild 1978	
	Symbolic value	Positive	(Juhl and Poulsen 2000)	
	Stage of the decision process	Positive	(Laaksonen 1994)	
	Store choice	Positive Consequence	De Ferran and Grunert (2007)	
	The situation	Unavailability of the product	Positive	Bezencon,2008 (Laaksonen 1994)
		Marketing activities	Positive	Bettman 1979
In store stimuli			Beharell and Denison 1997	
Anticipated usage situation		Positive	(Clarke and Belk 1979)	

Table 3-1: Summary of the key literature validating the influence on variables on consumer level of involvement.

Due to the numerous definitions of involvement existing in the literature, a comparable number of operationalisations of the construct exist. Whilst it is outside of the scope of this literature to review in detail all these operationalisations, the reader can refer to the Appendix A to find a summary.

Here we briefly summarized the chronological use of different scales and the evolution of operationalisations: Empirical applications and tests have found that involvement is a multidimensional construct (e.g.(Broderick & Mueller 1999); (Juhl & Poulsen 2000, Mittal 1989a, Mittal & Lee 1989, Laurent & Kapferer 1985). The dimensions most often reported in the literature are: importance (Lastovicka & Gardner 1978), pleasure (Kapferer & Laurent 1985), interest (Van Trijp, Hoyer & Inman 1996),

sign value (Kapferer & Laurent 1985), perceived risk (Kapferer & Laurent 1985), and self expression (Higie & Feick 1989).

The issue of the dimensionality of involvement has been one of importance in the literature. In parallel with a number of accepted definitions, scales to measure the concept have been developed with various levels of dimensionality. The controversy in the measurement is a consequence of the existence of different definitions. A scale can have any number of dimensions in it. Most scales existing in pure science have one dimension only (e.g. weight, height, time). Social sciences concepts can hardly be explained along a single dimension. We define 'dimension' in this context as a number line. Single dimension advocates include (Vaughn 1980, Zaichkowsky 1985, Slama and Tashchian 1985, Ratchford 1987) while multidimensional scales have been developed and used by (Bloch, Sherrell and Ridgway 1986, Laurent and Kapferer 1985, Kapferer and Laurent 1993, Celsi and Olson 1988, (Rothschild (1979)) with Beharrell and Denison (1995) proposing that involvement with groceries would be best measured using a seven dimension scale.

These scales were not product specific and have been empirically tested with durables and non-durables. In addition to the usual limitations applying, one could question how different goods could be compared in that respect. To fill in this gap, several scales have been developed for specific categories of products, of which we will focus on food. Bell and Marshall (2003) have constructed a scale that recognises that food is a product whose purchase and usage could imply risks. For them, food involvement is defined as *'the level of importance food has in a person's life'* (Bell & Marshall 2003, p. 236). The scale aims to integrate both enduring and situational aspects of involvement. Bell and Marshall (2003) propose that the level of food involvement will vary along a continuum and will be subject to inter and intra subject variation. The final scale comprises 12 items along two dimensions: the first dimension illustrates the importance of external features and characteristics (such as a set table and a careful consideration of the disposal of foods), the second dimension encompasses direct sensory exposure and evaluation of situations. A major problem with this scale is that it has been built on a restrictive definition of five situations in which individuals have opportunities to interact with food. Therefore the validity of the scale may be weakened if extended to other situations. Overall, the majority of scales looked at the enduring form of involvement. Situational

involvement has generated less interest; fewer scales have then been developed to measure it.

This section of the chapter focussed on the main construct of the research: involvement. A preliminary distinction reported the major differences observed in the literature according to the approach used to define the construct.

Three main streams of research were described:

- a **cognitive based approach**, which identifies the relevance of an issue as the main motor of involvement,
- a **subject centred approach**, which posits that involvement is an internal individual state resulting from the amount of arousal of the individual,
- a **response based approach** that emphasises the resulting behaviour of involvement. Whilst the first two approaches consider that the level of involvement is a mediator of subsequent behaviour, the response based approach positions it as an element characterising the nature of the behaviour (moderator).

The importance of the concept in the literature has resulted in the profusion of operationalisation of the concept with a number of antecedents grouped into dimensions reported. Those were described along with measurement scales that have been classified in one-dimensional or multidimensional instruments.

3.6 IMPLICATIONS

The importance of involvement in the consumer research literature has been known for long (Beharrell & Denison 1995, Laaksonen 1994). Simultaneously, the purchasing behaviour of consumer is of interest to marketers and academics. A better understanding of processes involved in decision-making, permits to gain insights on crucial elements that help to better target consumers. They also help to improve the effectiveness of policies that aim at altering attitudes and/ or behaviour. Witnessing the evolution of markets, academics and practitioners have had two objectives:

1) understand the purchasing (and non purchasing) behaviour of individuals and motives behind it

in order to

2) alter this behaviour towards an increased, more regular purchasing frequency

McEachern and Schroder ((2002), cited in (Verbeke *et al.* 2008, p. 355)) argue that consumers are interested in knowing tangible attributes of the products irrespectively of their level of involvement. Following this, information about credence attributes would be relevant to a subset of the population only. Consumers might demand different communication of the credence attribute according to their involvement in the issue. In this section links and potential relationships between the previously introduced concepts are explored. This will enable us to elaborate and present a research proposition.

3.6.1 Decision-making choice and involvement

A lack of research in natural settings was early identified leading to repetitive calls for qualitative observational research as a means to better understand buyers' behaviour. According to Gummerson (2007) this is due to the perception- biased- that a more important occurrence of phenomenon (quantification of the phenomenon) was itself evidence of the reality.

Beharrell and Denison (1995) in their study recommend to approach involvement in its entirety and not only as a motivational or causal force; the capacity arousal of this tool has a continuous lasting effect. This links concurs with the 'continuum' conceptualisation of an on-going approach that proposes that involvement tends to influence many daily activities. As such, situational studies have certain limitations in which they only capture a part of the overall behaviour.

Some authors have argued that consumer involvement is highly dependent upon the product category and situational factors, particularly with respect to food (Marshall & Bell 2004). Additionally, the previous section has shown that the impact of involvement on purchase decisions may be direct (mediating) or indirect (moderating). Mitchell (1979) views it as a 'potential important mediator' of behaviour even recognising a further clarification. Beatty and Smith (1987) and notably Laaksonen (1994) who argues that involvement is an important mediator of the context in which the individual is grounded and his/her behaviour. The proposition is that involvement should be seen as a mediating mental reactive state that arises due to exposure to a specific stimulus and operates its effect according to the characteristics of the individual.

Due to its relationship with motivation, involvement induces behavioural positive or negative reactions. Generally, the subject centred literature differentiates between '*consumer involvement*' and '*degree of consumer involvement*' proposing that the mediating role exist regardless the strength (i.e intensity) whilst moderating roles are in fact potential role existing only if the intensity of the level is strong enough. Michaelidou and Dibb (2008) conclude their recent literature review on consumer involvement by stating that involvement appear to be a '*major marketing and consumer behaviour construct*' that '*mediates different behaviours and processes*' (Michaelidou & Dibb 2008, p. 93).

Conversely, when seen as a motivational force, involvement is then considered as a mediator in attitude-behaviour relationships. The literature reflects that this construct contributes extensively to consumer motivation at different stages in the decision-making. Information search extent will as such depends upon (the level of) individual involvement. More highly involved consumer will process relevant information in detail (Chaiken 1980) and will have stronger attitudes that will make them less easily convinced by contradictory arguments (Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann 1983). This is inferred by the fact that consumers with high involvement level are less likely to be receptive to dissonant messages as they are confident in their product choice and knowledge and will tend to be sceptical about the new information.

The following section details how this applies to Fair trade consumers.

3.6.2 Fair trade consumers and involvement

Knox *et al* (1993) demonstrated that there exist differences in consumer involvement with food products. This finding reinforces the need to investigate the potential impact of a credence attribute across a spectrum of consumers having different initial levels of involvement (i.e. enduring involvement). However, Antil argues that '*one does not become highly involved because of increased information acquisition and a more complex decision*' (Antil 1984, p. 205). This view assumes that the situation (i.e. the context) of the interaction person-product does not have any influence on the intensity of the involvement of the individual. Exposure to messages and communication messages (stimuli) may trigger involvement. This is accepted by Knox and Walker (2003) who have recognised that marketing communications need to address different involvement based segments differentially.

Silayoi and Speece (2007) studied the relationship between the packaging attributes and the final purchase decision. Findings include a discrimination of shoppers with different interest for packaging size according to their level of involvement (basic staple foods packaged sold in large bulks not only appeal to price sensitive shoppers, but also to shoppers for which the quality of food may not be the primary criterion of choice). The conclusion was that when product quality is difficult to determine, the effect of packaging size is stronger. Hughes *et al* (1998) consider that the information on the packaging is only of limited value in the case of products for which consumers feel a low involvement. Conversely, more highly involved consumers may be in an information search phase and would, therefore, be more attentive and receptive to the messages.

Attention paid to packaging in general has been studied. It is necessary for the shopper to investigate further elements of the packaging on an individual basis. The level of involvement of the consumer for the product under consideration seems to be determinant in the consideration of packaging cues (Thøgersen 2000). However, the number of attributes used to make a product choice does not necessarily increase along with involvement (Vermette & Gianelloni 1997).

De Pelsmacker and Janssens' model of Fair trade buying behaviour (2007) includes both interest in an issue and at the product level. They validate a significant relationship between quality and quantity of information. In other terms if the information provided individuals will not mind the quantity. This is consistent with the theory of the rational consumer, and supports the crucial importance of information in presence of goods with credence goods.

When looking at motives for purchase and non-purchase of Fair trade products by Belgium consumers, Dessy (2010) suggests that the promotion of Fair trade products should focus on point of sale methods and integrate communication of the benefits achieved. This supports Strong (1996, p. 5) explaining that the *'well informed consumer is not only demanding fairly traded products but is challenging manufacturers and retailers to guarantee the ethical claims they are making about their products'*.

Additionally, Escalas and Luce (2004) found a positive relationship between involvement and purchase intention. Actual purchase, indicated by heavy or low product usage has not been demonstrated but is more meaningful and relevant in the perspective of

contributing to develop communication strategies based on consumer involvement and in the aim of facilitating positioning for new market entrants.

These studies and models considered *interest* as an antecedent of involvement. We propose to explore this in the present study. However, as emphasised by Laurent and Kapferer, involvement is only one of the many variables that participate in the formation of behaviour (Laurent & Kapferer 1985). It is extremely difficult to capture a full picture of consumer behaviour; this is why it may be necessary to make arbitrary choices and focus upon a limited set of variables.

Involvement may be caused by different sources. This could be simply explained: consumer involvement in product A bearing the FAIRTRADE Mark could be linked to either the consumer being involved in product A or either in the Fair trade issue; it is therefore important to differentiate the impact of each dimension on the behavioural variables. Bezençon (2008) proposed a model with such relationships and with the impact of involvement on information search; his '*Fair trade adherence*'¹² construct was proven to be a strong predictor of behaviour. Although Fair trade coffee information search was explained by the involvement in the Fair trade decision but not by the involvement in the product, the construct was operationalised and measured by '*the interest in reading articles about Fair trade issue*' and '*attention paid to Fair trade coffee*' (2008, p. 83).

Bezençon (2008) proposes that Fair trade consumers pay more attention to, and are more interested by, the credence nature of the products and its associated characteristics than by its intrinsic properties. Using Mittal and Lee's involvement scale, Fair trade decision involvement (assimilated as a brand decision involvement) had explained 69% of the variance of his model. Even though considered as important, taste (and more generally sensory characteristics) can hardly be considered as the decisive argument to choose a Fair trade product. Findings suggest that the level of consumer involvement can be used as a way to increase the propensity to search for Fair trade information.

Kassarjian's provoking argument that many consumers are for most of their purchases, uncaring, uninterested is based on the fact that these purchases are of habitual

¹² Defined as 'the extent to which consumers buy Fair trade products because of the underlying Fair trade principles' (p81)- support for Fair trade.

nature (Kassarjian 1981). This is mainly the case for staple products or products bought in a fairly regular frequency (Bauer, Sauer & Becker 2006). As everyday basic purchases are repetitive, consumers choose strategies to reduce the amount of cognitive activities. It is a systematic, often iterative process during which the individual considers a set of attributes of products and eventually selects the one most important for purchase. When credence attributes are signalled to the consumer (by the means of on packaging information and specifically a label) then it is interesting to observe how the information is used and integrated in the decision-making process. Bougoure and O'Cass (2006) looked at the relationships between product, purchase involvement and information search and propose that the purchase decision involvement is a mediator in the relationship between product involvement and information search.

Dickson proposes that only small groups of consumers with such level of '*sophistication*' (Dickson 2001, p. 116) use a label in their purchase decision. Due to this expected poor return on investment this consequently may affect businesses' willingness to get such certifications for social labels. By improving knowledge on the factors that increase and stimulate concern for such issues the present study aims to provide insights into how the labelling policies may best attract consumers' interest and attention.

One should remember that in store communication, via the product packaging is of utmost importance. An European survey (Eurobarometer, 1997) (EC, 1997: 6). supports the idea that supermarkets might be the first place where potential consumers encounter products. These consumers might have limited knowledge about Fair trade products but with a low level of involvement might not be ready to look for more information or to exert extra efforts to get products in dedicated point of sale. (Tallontire, Rentsendorj & Blowfield 2001)

The information provided on labels may reassure consumers that the product qualifies with the attributes considered as important regarding the product. As Silayoi and Speece (2007, 2004) argue, these consumers use explicit information to assess quality attributes and credence ones; hence, they may be highly attracted by ecolabels as these tools give simple information in a concise form.

Involvement is an important variable to consider when studying decision-making. It has been assumed to play -along with other variables- a determinant role in pre-purchase activities (notably information search). The individual/situation/product paradigm is used

here to explain factors influencing the changes in the level of involvement observed and the resulting behaviour. In the context of information attendance the role of involvement has been looked at. Cues considered on packaging could partially be under the influence of the level of involvement of the consumer (Thøgersen 2000).

However, there is also recognition that moderating variables infer the processes and that this varies across individuals: the nature of the food product (with credence attribute) can modify established information search strategies, as could also socio-demographics usage variables. Therefore the context plays a great role on the extent to which the level of involvement participates in the final choice of the product.

3.7 CONCLUSION- RESEARCH PROPOSITION

The review of the literature enabled to understand that

- Rational models of decision-making are over-dated and are of limited value as their predictability power is low. In general, using consumer decision-making models to interpret some behaviour will heavily rely on assumptions and simplify the reality. In their objective of representing the reality, these models eventually integrate too many variables to be empirically tested as it would be difficult to control all variables.
- Consumers have a repertoire of decision-making strategies they use depending on the product, situation context and previous experience.
- Consumers are frequently engaged in non-conscious behaviour and often decide to choose or not to choose depending on the existing situation, an issue not captured by traditional decision-making models.

From this, it is argued that there might be a more important impact of in-store search activities than one would have thought during actual purchasing decision than preparedness before entering the store. Most consumers do not enter complex extensive, active, rational decision-making processes when purchasing goods. It is also suggested that not only the decision-making should be context specific but also product specific to provide valuable consumer insights and add to existing knowledge. Finally Sheth (1981) suggests that a more subjectivist approach should be adopted in order to acknowledge the behaviour with underlying cognitive structures involved. For this to happen, a more

important role should be given to qualitative research to allow the observation and exploration of the reality as it unfolds.

These concluding remarks help the definition of the research proposition of this PhD. All the variables reviewed in this chapter seem to play a certain role in the consumer decision process. To this extent the relationships as depicted in Figure 3.6 below are proposed.

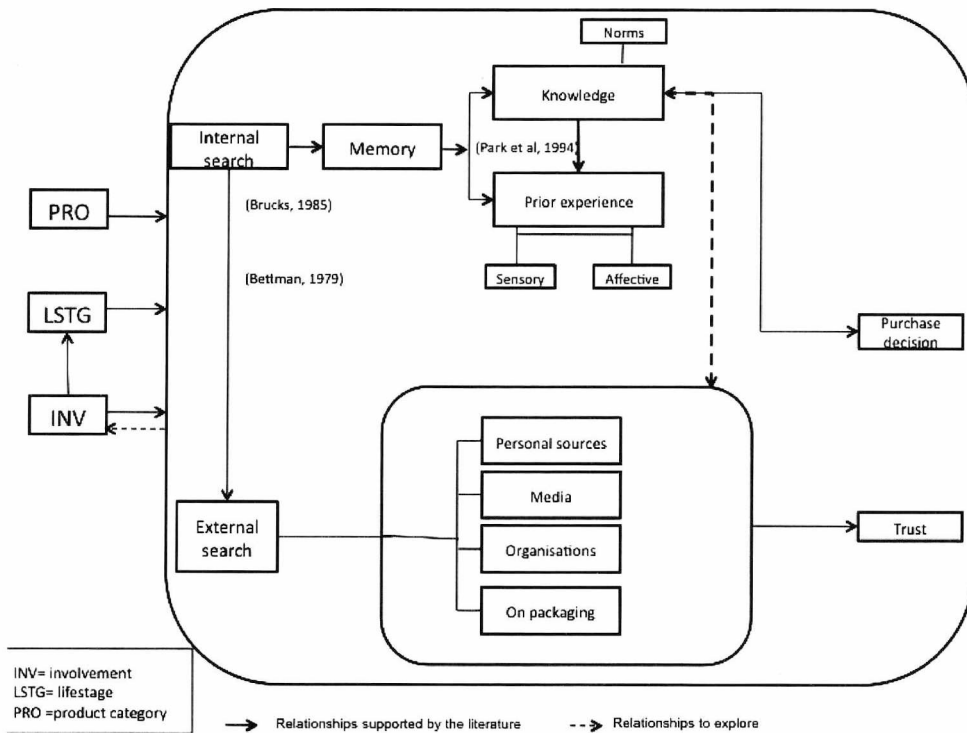


Figure 3.6: Potential relationships across variables for Fair trade information search

The theoretical background reviewed here proposes to set the boundaries of the study. Of the five stages model of the classic consumer behaviour model our interest is limited to information search (and acquisition) and use. The influence of different variables will be assessed in the specific case of information search and acquisition for Fairtrade food products by supermarkets shoppers with a specific focus on involvement.

The literature regarding both the importance of these steps (information search and information use) and of the variables (trust, involvement, information sources and information format) have been synthesised in this chapter.

The setting for this exploratory study would be incomplete if situational and contextual variables potentially affecting consumer decision processes were not considered. Previous studies have shown that the propensity to buy Fair trade varies with gender and household composition (Mintel 2009a)

In addition to demographics, past buying behaviour should be considered as it might have an effect on the ethical decision-making. This is why two levels of (self reported) purchasing frequency are examined. In light of this review of literature a qualitative data collection instrument will be developed to explore these concepts. This is detailed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Philosophical Approaches and Methods

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which Fairtrade customers acquire knowledge about fair trade products, and to examine the relationship between information search and involvement in decision processes. The study is exploratory in nature and seeks primarily to understand the role of the FAIRTRADE Mark and how the consumer's level of involvement might moderate this.

Although significant 'attitude/behaviour' gaps have been widely reported in previous studies, few authors have investigated this issue further. The majority of papers adopt a positivist bias, taking the phenomenon at face value. A lack of topical theory looking at this was noted. It was therefore deemed appropriate to explore this phenomenon. The study uses secondary quantitative data in first place to provide basis for the research and then moves onto using a range of qualitative methods of inquiry- a multi method approach. Individual research methods have strengths and weaknesses, both changing across methods. A multi method approach allows gaining from their individual strengths but also compensating for their particular faults and limitations.

The second part presents an extensive explanation of the research strategy and design. The chapter concludes with a consideration of ethical issues.

4.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Social science refers to the study of Human Behaviour (Punch 2005). In applied social sciences, of which marketing is an example, the focus of studies is specific; that is why real-life data -collected through empirical research- is of utmost importance in social sciences research projects. These projects are conducted using two main research strategies: quantitative and qualitative methodologies:

- Quantitative research tends to be more structured and to have predetermined conceptual frameworks, research designs and research questions.
- Qualitative research uses non numerical and unstructured data and usually accepts broader and evolving research questions throughout the research project (Punch 2005).

Qualitative studies seek a deeper insight into the processes underlying individual choices. They allow the exploration of motivations, needs and values at the origin of behaviour. Qualitative methods of inquiry have traditionally been underestimated in academia, due to the persistent perception that they lack validity and reliability. However, this is changing, given the wide set of data collection methods and analytical tools available, carefully planned qualitative research can produce results of comparable quality to quantitative methods. Furthermore, the combination of methods is increasingly being recognised as a means of improving both the reliability and the validity of empirical research findings. (Brewer,1989)

This dissertation combines quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of the dunhumby database (supermarket panel) gives access to actual sales figures for Fairtrade foods for the largest supermarket chain in the United Kingdom (Tesco). This secondary data provides segmentation information about buyers though does not allow the investigation of reasons for choice and motives of purchase. As such, this justifies the need for further empirical investigation. This is the reason why the qualitative phase is deemed crucial to question the factors influencing the decision-making process.

By using a mixed method approach, it is proposed to switch the focus, moving away from the outcome of the process (whether a purchase has been made) to the process itself (observation of purchasing decision). It is hoped this will produce specific insights into the information search process (what is happening?) and about the meaning of behaviour (what are the reasons for such behaviour?).

Philosophically, researchers make claims about what is knowledge (ontology), how we know it (epistemology), what values go into it (axiology), how we write about it (rhetoric), and the process for studying it (methodology). The philosophical considerations and positioning of the research in epistemological and ontological terms are exposed in the following sections.

4.3 ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Ontology deals with the nature of the entities and reality, and how these entities can be grouped hierarchically. There are four major ontological approaches in social sciences:

- Realism posits that facts are just happening and waiting to be discovered.
- Empiricism is based on the assumption that we only have to observe the world outside and build connections between facts.
- Positivism moves the focus to observations, not to the facts, and emphasises the importance of the interpretations/ claims made about those facts
- Post modernism almost eludes the facts themselves (as they are temporal in nature) and highlights only observational claims.

Positivism fails in explaining the complexities of consumer behaviour. Its underlying principles do not permit the anticipation of human meanings and feelings, thus making it an ineffective predictive tool. Geertz (1973) argues that postmodern ethnography enables the researcher to reach a '*thick description*' as he enters the field and immerses himself. Following this, the present study falls under the qualification of a postmodern ethnography (Stredwick 2001).

The epistemological foundation of the research is next considered.

4.4 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

Epistemology is concerned with the nature, sources and limitations of knowledge. The normative tradition in epistemology claims that it is the quality of the reasons for our beliefs that converts true beliefs into knowledge. Conversely, the naturalistic tradition describes knowledge as a natural phenomenon occurring in a wide range of subjects.

This research uses a naturalistic observational research design. Surveys or random controlled trials cannot capture data as rich as naturalistic observation data. This is because observations force the researcher into aspects of the real-world and embeds context within (Barker, Flynn & Pepper 2002).

Naturalism proposes that 'reality' exists in the social world. From this perspective, human behaviour is based upon meanings that people attribute and bring to situations. Additionally, behaviour is continually constructed on the basis of the on-going interpretations of the situation. A wide range of methods have been developed in relation to naturalistic orientations such as ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, hermeneutics, ethnoscience, discourse analysis, conceptual description.

Qualitative research can be classified according to three underlying assumptions (paradigms) about what constitutes 'valid' research: positivist, interpretive and critical assumptions. A paradigm can be defined as a way to define how science should be done. It consists in a set of assumptions about the social world, topics for research and appropriate techniques to be used. The paradigm used in this research is '*Interpretivism*'. Interpretivists emphasise the importance of meaning and situational context (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983). The aim is to gain deeper insights into the social phenomenon observed for which the familiarity is low therefore requiring a careful and deep analysis.

Interpretive methods are an effective tool for breaking down the meaning and influence of different factors in consumption choices. Interpretive methods are capable of uncovering paradoxes in thoughts and behaviour. They also help in revealing the nature and structure of consumer rationales (e.g. (Ger & Russell 1999) in (Belk, Devinney & Eckhardt 2005)). This makes them suitable for examining consumption phenomena (among others) when reported and actual behaviour tend to differ.

The methodology and research description (in terms of methodological considerations) also require that the nature of the study be considered. This is presented in the next section.

4.5 NATURE OF THE STUDY

Punch (2005) makes the distinction between descriptive exploratory and explanatory types of research. The purpose of descriptive studies is one of exploration of phenomena or problems not widely known. Data collected through interviews or observations are exploratory in nature. According to Yin (2003), whenever a research tries to answer a 'what' question it becomes exploratory. The existing literature about *actual* shoppers' information search strategies of Fairtrade food buyers is scarce; this study is therefore, necessarily exploratory.

The research is inductive in nature. Within this approach, categories, variables, and generalizations are discovered as they emerge from the data. This methodological approach contrasts with deductive research in which the categories and variables are structured in advance from a theoretical system.

The next section reports the elements considered during the elaboration of the research design of this study.

4.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is defined as '*the entire process of research from conceptualising a problem to writing research questions and on to data collection, analysis, interpretation and report writing*' by Creswell (2007, p. 5). Yin (2003) further adds a time dimension, proposing a sequential logic linking the different steps.

4.6.1 Design strategy

Three types of research design strategy coexist in qualitative line of inquiry: case study, ethnography and grounded theory (Punch 2005). Etymologically 'ethno' means people and 'graph' refers to something that has been written. Ethnography, as a methodological orientation in marketing, emphasises direct contact and observation of individuals in the natural context of the product acquisition or usage. Mariampolski (1999) claims that ethnography, by forcing the researcher in a natural environment where people live, eat, play, work, provides a greater chance of reaching a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon at hand. In the research undertaken in this paper, the specific phenomenon studied is the use of information sources, and specifically in-store information, in the decision making process of Fairtrade shoppers.

To date, observation as a method of collecting data in consumer behaviour research continues to be undervalued. Researchers prefer surveys, experiments and in depth interviews. Increasingly, calls in the literature encourage the use of observational research in the context of food choice (Healy *et al.* 2007). The lack of research projects aiming to understand the gap between actual and claimed behaviour is also recognised, specifically, for topics in which social desirability is likely to manifest itself (Baumgartner & Steenkamp 2001). Goods with ethical attributes are a good example.

The combination of several data collection methods enables to capture details and nuances that are ignored or devalued in quantitative research. As a result, ethnographies produce a far more comprehensive picture of the topic or phenomena studied. Ethnography is effectively used and applied in very dynamic markets or in markets subject to many influences (anthropology). Its use in marketing is justified, as fresh insights are regularly needed to understand how consumers adjust to new market conditions.

Mariampolski (2006) summarises the two ways in which ethnography is used:

- to account for and record precise behaviours as a way of overcoming selective recollection and attention
- to check for inconsistencies between verbal and non-verbal communication to highlight discrepancies.

There exist different ethnographies classified per type of settings in which they are conducted (private vs. public) per task (delimited task-driven vs. open ended) and per way of analysis the data (e.g. feminist ethnology). Given the objectives stated earlier, this thesis is defined as an open-ended study in a public setting (the purchase decision is observed as a whole).

4.6.2 Sources of data

According to Woodliffe (2004) multi method approaches are necessary to go below the surface and reveal the substantial amount of hidden thinking activities that are involved- consciously or unconsciously- in decision making processes.

A range of qualitative data collection methods was used to obtain a holistic picture of the information search strategies used by shoppers. The positive contribution of quantitative methods is acknowledged. However in the present research, quantitative methods are applied prior to the undertaking of qualitative research. This approach reverses the traditional association in marketing where qualitative usually precedes quantitative phase of research (Calder 1997).

Additionally, both primary and secondary data is used in this research:

- The secondary data is extracted from a panel data (dunnhumby database) recording weekly sales of individual products for the largest retailer in the UK. Access to this

information helps in defining the sample used in precise terms (Fairtrade food buyers). To achieve this, geo-demographic segmentation is used.

- The primary data is collected through different qualitative methods (focus groups, participant observation, semi-structured interviews and grocery shopping receipts).
- An important decision to make is then about the weights given to both types of data. Given that the goals of the present study are to explore and discover consumption meaning, qualitative data will be predominant (Rauscher, 2009)

This first part of the chapter has positioned the study in terms of epistemology and ontology principles and reviewed the theoretical underpinnings. The second part presents each method and their use in the research.

Previous applications are reviewed and give an appraisal of advantages and drawbacks so as to justify their choice.

4.6.3 Research protocol

The data collection process has relied on different methods. This mixed method approach allows for the enhancement of findings obtained at different stages of data collection and the reduction in subjectivity of ethnographic data. Greene et al (1989) point several purposes that justify using a mixed methods design: it allows to develop the research as results from one method shape subsequent steps in the process, stimulates new research questions or challenges results obtained through one method, improves the external validity of the research and also increases our confidence that the research results reflect reality rather than methodological error. Each source of data is used regarding its own potential to produce valid and useful data to allow for a richer picture of the phenomenon to emerge (Denzin 1989). These research methods use different epistemological foundations. It therefore seems incongruous to compare methods based on their ability to elicit respondents' attitudes and perceptions. Instead, one should view them as complementary methods, in which observations can help investigate further the claimed behaviours and attitudes accessed in focus groups for example. As such, recurrent themes can be identified and their interpretation can be proposed. It is important to note that divergent findings are as important as convergent ones. The former acts as a signal to further research the issue at hand, before moving on to shortcuts and conclusions based on single set of data (Brewer, 1989). This way, explanations may be accepted or rejected by the researcher (Lowrey, Otnes & McGrath 2005).

The protocol proposed for this study is based on the complementary use of each method of data collection. In this study, each method provides a piece of the puzzle needed to reconstruct the phenomenon studied. The sequential use of qualitative research methods enables to further dig findings from precedent stages. Specifically, the first stage of the study consisted in looking at the secondary data provided by dunnhumby Ltd in order to record the actual sales of Fairtrade foods over the period considered. It enabled access to the profile of the buyers of such foods. This stage also permitted to investigate their purchasing behaviour. The dunnhumby (sic) data is an extremely powerful source of information for factual and numerical analysis. However, this tool is not devised to reveal the motivations underlying behaviour. The data obtained is thus used to define characteristics of the sample; it permitted to identify the profile of buyers of interest, which directed the recruitment of participants for the focus groups in parallel with factors identified in the literature. Then a variety of individuals were invited to take part in a focus group discussion. These focus groups aimed at exploring participants' general knowledge of Fairtrade and their attitude towards the concept and the products. Focus groups also entailed an observation stage where discussants were confronted to a sample of products. The analysis of these discussions revealed interesting profiles of discussants and further enquiry was deemed necessary. Interviews and focus groups can only reflect the discussants' experience, whereas observations display 'reality' as it happens. It was also expected that this protocol would help in uncovering established elements of participants' information search strategies. As such, these participants were selected to take part in accompanied shopping trips and follow up study, consisting in the collection of their grocery receipts too. In order to control for potential bias in the selection, a parallel observation of other shoppers was conducted, with the aim of having a control group. The data needed for this study was collected over a period of 12 months between March 2009 and March 2010. The sequence and objectives of each stage are presented in Figure 4.1 below.

Method	Description and objectives	Section
Supermarket panel	Identification of shopper profile and purchasing behaviour	1)
Focus group	Description of general purchasing behaviour, exploration of Fairtrade knowledge and observations when confronted to actual products.	2)
Participant observation	Grocery shopping with participants, observation of food choices and product preferences	3)
Semi-structured interview	Questioning and prompting during participant shopping experience	4)
Archival data	Grocery receipts shopping collection- guarantee of typical shops	5)

Figure 4.1 : Description and objectives of data collection methods

In the following section, the protocol of the study is fully reviewed. The literature review and the questions to explore guided the choice of a qualitative line of inquiry. The use of these methods has been justified.

Next the research protocol is detailed. Each stage mentioned above is presented from a theoretical perspective. Then the complete protocol is exposed.

1) Use of a dunnhumby dataset (supermarket panel)

The first stage of the research consisted in identifying/profiling supermarket shoppers of Fairtrade products. The data used in this research is sourced from dunnhumby Ltd, and comprises purchasing information from a panel of 14 million UK supermarket shoppers. The dataset comprises weekly purchasing information from all Tesco supermarkets across the UK, collected via the Clubcard loyalty scheme, which covers approximately 80% of total sales. The sample size used in the database is 10% of the total population of Clubcard holders, which is equal to approximately 1.4 million shoppers at the time the data was collected for this research, although the cardholder population is growing continuously. The strength of this panel data is that it allows researchers to look at individual products (as opposed to highly aggregated food categories) and identify the profile of shoppers on the basis of what they actually purchase rather than through what they claim to buy.

Recent figures indicate Tesco's market share to be at 30.7% of total grocery retailing in the UK¹³. Thus, the data is as representative of UK supermarket shoppers as it can be from a single dataset. Previous uses of the dataset include Felgate (2010) to assess the effectiveness of beef promotions across groups of shoppers. Tesco is the largest grocery retailer in the UK. It uses a segmented retail strategy and serves a wide range of customers, ranging from the least to the most affluent. When customers sign up for a Clubcard (loyalty card) they have to provide certain personal details about their household, including how many people make up the household, their date of birth, and the ages of all other people living in the household. Tesco subsequently uses this information for segmentation purposes.

In this dissertation, the geo-demographic segmentation used is CAMEO-as it combines both lifestage and socio-economic elements of the household. CAMEO uses different sources of data (census, demographic, employment status, and housing type) to classify people in clusters. This segmentation method is commonly used for commercial purposes. Broadly speaking, it assumes that people with similar characteristics are more likely to live close by. As such, the average probability to purchase for the panel is calculated overall, and taken as the base value of an index. Given that the number of shoppers from different CAMEO segments¹⁴ is known in relation to the overall panel of shoppers, it is possible to determine the probable propensity of each segment to purchase the identified products¹⁵. The use of the data in this dissertation adds to the literature and provides empirical evidence that confirms that life stage and demographic variables are important screening criteria for food purchasing behaviour.

As a means of accessing the experiences of individuals in their search for information, the next stage of the research involved focus group discussions investigating the drivers of behaviour.

¹³ Kantar World Panel, 21st of July 2010.

¹⁴ Further details are explained in chapter 5 alongside the presentation of findings.

¹⁵ The dunnhumby data makes it possible to analyse product demand at a disaggregated level, as each individual product sold or manually-created groups of products can be examined, rather than just aggregated data at a category level.

2) Focus groups

The purpose of exploratory focus groups (FG hereafter) is to initiate a discussion amongst people to better understand behaviour and access their attitudes about a topic. Food choice often entails highly comparative and complex decisions involving individual judgment. FG are particularly suited to understanding food choices as they encourage participants to question and justify themselves (Morgan & Krueger 1993). As such the use of FG in the present study is deemed appropriate.

In certain circumstances, people are unable to articulate their motivations, feelings, attitudes, or opinions on particular topics. In these situations, focus groups might facilitate reflection (Morgan & Krueger 1993) and offer a forum to compare and contrast comments. The FG setting allows for interaction, and stimulates 'retrospective introspection' (Bloor *et al.* 2001) which is a collective '*attempt ... to tease out previously taken for granted assumptions*' (Bloor *et al.* 2001, p. 6). One of the potential outcomes of interactions among participants is to stimulate access to knowledge and collective memory: thus possibly yielding richer data than what could be obtained through individual interviews (Kitzinger 1994).

Phenomenological focus groups seek 'every day explanation' derived from personal contact (Calder 1997). Their use in market research consists in systematically describing first-degree constructs of consumption. The relevant inter-subjectivity of a target segment is also sought. The ultimate goal is to uncover consumers' interpretation of reality, expressed in their own terms. In phenomenological groups, the moderator has a greater personal involvement with the members as he lives and shares 'the experiencing' of the experience of consumers (Calder 1997). As such, the objective is to focus on the single experience lived by the discussant, highlighting its unique nature.

Using FG in research projects aims to uncover the beliefs held by a population about a particular topic following a discussion guide that aims to summarise the purpose, aims and objectives of the sessions. Specifically, the guide permits to structure the discussion and to identify the major topics and their articulation with subtopics. Krueger and Casey (2000) argue that FG should be used when the researcher is interested in investigating a spectrum of ideas or feelings experienced; or when the purpose is to unwrap factors potentially influencing opinions or behaviour. As an exploratory research method, FG may provide a more human perspective that contrasts with the purely

quantitative studies. Consequently, they highlight important variables that might otherwise be overlooked (Campbell & Fiske 1959).

Kreziak and Joly (2001) note that the focus groups method improves the understanding of the perception of attitudes. Discussants by using their own terms escape from the easy way of getting locked in the researcher framework associated with obscure vocabulary. Further the use of a discussion guide allows distinguishing what is salient for discussants from what only is uncovered after the moderator uses probing, encouraging discussants for further elaboration and analysis.

FG have been applied to a great extent in marketing research. Over the last twenty years, they have been one of the main tool used to access respondents' lives. However, Kitzinger (1994) rejects the more naturalistic settings of the FG compared to other methods: he argues that FG are artificially set up groups, with an in-built context. This impacts on the quality of insights, which remain less valuable than real life observations of participants. Although FG allow for in-depth exploration of a phenomenon, they still rely on claimed behaviour and do not offer access to actual behaviour. As such, recently, growing scepticism about FG findings has emerged: it is argued that habitual and unconscious processes are still hardly uncovered.

The quality of findings obtained through FG is highly correlated with the moderator's ability to facilitate the discussion; his role is crucial. In order to reflect a discussant's own hierarchy of information and to reveal the salience of the elements reported, giving control to discussants without leading the discussion is vital. The concepts discussants use to understand the external world (Kitzinger 1994) should be reported in a way that reflects their logical shape of information processing (Bloor *et al.* 2001). This is contrasted this with other, more structured, interviewing techniques that tend to force the discussant into a certain sequence of thought lead by the research.

Practically, we followed Krueger and Casey's method (2000) to use in designing and planning research involving focus groups. It covers five stages involving problem definition, identification of a sampling frame, elaboration of the discussion guide and conducting the session. Guidelines from Edmunds (2000) were also used in designing the screening questionnaire. These questionnaires are usually made of few questions designed to verify if the respondent is qualified to take part in the discussions and that they have knowledge that will contribute to the success of groups.

Specifically, for this study, the population of interest is ‘fair trade foods’ supermarket shoppers. Wright and Heaton (2006) point to geographic disparities with a positive bias towards the south of the country. They also note that less affluent consumers and males are less likely to be attentive to green and ethical issues. Additionally, market research reports (Intel and Keynote) have described the vast majority of Fairtrade shoppers as being ABC1 consumers (see Table 4.1. below)

Key target group	AB females
Target group penetration %	68
Overall penetration %	46
% point more likely than overall population	+22
Main target channel(s)	70% are internet users (64%)
(Figures in brackets is proportion of all adults)	33% are broadsheet readers (17%)
	38% are Sainsbury's shoppers (30%)
	16% are Waitrose shoppers (9%)
	Source (Intel 2009a, p. 51)

Table 4-1 : Important factors when deciding what Fairtrade foods to buy

Moreover, 90% of females throughout the UK population take responsibility for household shopping and 80% make the final purchase decision ((LeatherheadFoodResearchAssociation 2002) cited in (McEachern *et al.* 2007)). Previous studies have found that the lifestage can have significant influence on involvement (Sridhar 2007) whilst purchasing frequency has been reported as a behavioural outcome of involvement (Beharrell & Denison 1995). This provides justification for the use of a purposive sampling frame. Purposive sampling means that researchers pick cases (elements) from the population with a purpose in mind.

The development of the focus group ensured that the objectives of the focus groups could be attained. Specifically, the objectives of the focus groups in this study were

- to explore the issue(s) and relationships between involvement, information search and the Fairtrade label.

One of the main objectives of the research was to investigate if (and to which extent) in store and on-packaging information influence discussants' awareness and understanding of the fair trade concept and purchasing of Fairtrade products.

- to investigate the consistency of stated attitudes accessed through reported behaviour and involvement.

In this study the 5 stages approach to build the discussion guide was adopted, as recommended by Krueger and Casey (2000). The discussion guide is an outline of the themes that the sessions should cover, and is based on the research objectives and questions (Edmunds, 2000). The discussion guide was piloted in two occasions with discussants recruited within the University. The flow of the discussion and timing were checked upon. Subsequently, the guide was marginally revised: the order of questions was corrected and some had to be reworded.

- The discussion guide¹⁶, divided into three sections, helped and supported the discussion in exploring:
 - 1) General attitudes towards food shopping
 - 2) Attitudes towards information search in general. The purpose is to review the range of attributes evaluated in the information search process across different categories. Then the relative importance, use and preferences of different information sources are questioned.
 - 3) Attitudes and knowledge of the fair trade concept. Discusses the importance of the information communicated through labels and on packaging information. Reviews information search strategies used for the choice of Fair trade foods.
-
- The topics covered were open ended ('Tell me what happens when you enter the store?'). Prompting was used when discussants expressed opinions deserving further exploration ('You mentioned point of sale signs, could you explain further?').

¹⁶ Available in Appendix E

The rationale for using a combination of different types of questions and activities is explained:

- knowledge can then be elicited in different ways. Different methods might stimulate different categorisations of knowledge.
- a variation in the type of activities might reduce fatigue and boredom. This recognises that it might be difficult for people to speak through their experience during a long time.

Table 4.2 summarises the composition of the different groups, all of which comprised females who undertook most of their food shopping at Tesco.

Group	Number of participants	Lifestage	Purchasing frequency of Fair trade products
1	7	Young adults (YA)	Regular
2	7	Young adults (YA)	Occasional
3	6	Older Families (OF)	Regular
4	7	Older Families (OF)	Occasional
5	7	Older Adults (OA)	Regular
6	7	Older Adults (OA)	Occasional
7	6	Pensioners (P)	Regular
8	7	Pensioners (P)	Occasional
9	7	Young families (YF)	Regular
10	6	Young families (YF)	Occasional

Table 4-2: Composition of the ten focus groups

The focus groups discussions aims to explore discussants' knowledge of and attitudes towards the Fairtrade concept and information search strategies. Although, discussions are helpful in eliciting memories and general attitudes about an issue they fail to generate interesting information about detailed process for specific actions. In many occasions, actual behaviour might be very different from reported behaviour; this justifies the need for conducting further research anchored in real life. With such purpose in mind, the use of post behaviour interviews or confrontations seems more appropriate. This is in line with the re-emergence of ethnographical methods, increasingly used in market research. The next section details the rationale for using 'accompanied shops' and their implementation.

3) Direct observations: shopping with consumers (accompanied shops)

Whilst FG offer descriptive second-hand knowledge, observational methods offer first hand data experiences embedded in their specific context. The best way of finding out shoppers' preferences is 'not to ask them but to observe them'. The accompanied shops give an understanding of how people choose in real life situations in retail environments. They allowed probing at the point of decision-making, and observation of behaviour in the retail environments.

This last of the project uses a combination of accompanied shopping trips, post shopping interviews complemented by grocery receipts collection to dig more deeply into the day-to-day shopping habits, practices, motivations and information search activities of carefully selected discussants of the focus groups and of naïve shoppers.

Shopping observations originated with the pioneering study of Wells and Lo Sciuto (1966). This follows the recognition that experiments and surveys produce imperfect data (as forcing consumer exposure to stimulus, including or excluding variables) but that they are the next best alternative to resource-hungry qualitative fieldworks. In attempts to deal with this, research methods borrowed from anthropology and sociology have increasingly been used in consumer behaviour research with observational methods having gained popularity.

The purpose of using accompanied shopping trips in the present research is to explore the ways in which informants use (or do not use) in-store information and specific information on the products (i.e. label) when making decisions; a part of this exploration aims to identify barriers to the understanding of information in the decision making process.

As reported in the literature, there is an increased use of Process Tracing methods trying to capture the dynamic dimension of grocery shopping (Aschemann & Hamm 2008, Silberer & Büttner 2004). Despite the common suspicion that there exists a distortion of behaviour as a result of observation, it is believed that this method allows a '*better representation of... behaviour than other methods*' (Silberer & Büttner 2004, p. 264f). Different process tracing methods exist:

- **Eye tracking method** records eye movements while informants are working on a task. Its application is highly demanding in logistics, therefore, not commonly used. (Van Gog *et al.* 2009)
- **Information Display Matrix (IDM)** compiles in a table product attributes for different product alternatives. The participant actively uncovers and selects the information relevant to the decision. The type of information, the number of cells uncovered, the sequence in which it has occurred and the time taken are all stored to allow the analysis of the cognitive processes involved in the choice. This method is inflexible and unrealistic in that attributes and alternatives are set by the researcher's perceived relevance.
- **Direct observation** methods are the process of tracing methods that are the least likely to distort participant behaviour. One major disadvantage is that it yields, relative to other methods, little information for the purpose of certain research (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, Aschemann-Witzel, 2011)}.

Observation is a research method borrowed from the ethnographical set of tools that allow researchers to investigate phenomenon and to *'look for the why's when's and where's and also for the potential for flexibility and changes in consumer's choices'* (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte 1999, p. 109).

Goulding (2005) argues that ethnography is appropriate and suited to deal with ethical marketing and green consumption. Boote and Mathews (1999) summarise the various ways in which the different types of observation have been classed, based on:

- The tool used to conduct the observation (human vs machine)
- The rigidity of the observation, extent of the pre planning of the observation (structured versus unstructured)
- The awareness or non awareness of subjects (overt vs covert observation)
- The role adopted by the human researcher (participant vs non participant)

Observational studies are generally conducted with a concern of obtaining specific insights into the lives of consumers and are less interested in holistic accounts of consumer lives (Schmidt, 2006). In-store behaviour is mostly decided in situ and often performed in a semi-automatic mode. Observational research might potentially reveal differences in thinking strategies across individuals: behaviour can be observed and questioned; and as

factual information it may also be a more reliable measurement. As such, it is possible to survey knowledge acquisition and information use. This consequently can generate rich data about the behavioural, cognitive and affective processes co-existing during information search processes ((Ransdell 1995) cited in (Branch 2000)).

The value of observational research has been highlighted in the literature. The use of accompanied shopping provides a unique opportunity to observe the purchase decision-making process as it unfolds, thereby enabling an unparalleled means of exploring consumer behaviour (Ward & Sturrock 1998). The unfiltered information on shoppers' behaviours and thought processes obtained through this method is essential to discover knowledge, uncover the attitude behaviour gap and explore motivations of purchase (Hiller 2008). The method allows for the recording of rational and irrational reasons and/or needs that form the basis of individuals' choices.

Foxall (1998) argues that observation of shoppers is relevant in the context of store level research as the context of each store is very different from experimental settings: After all, animals do not act the same way whether in zoos or in wild, so why would humans? Laboratory settings suppress contextual effects and produce artificial data. Their use as a reliable method to mirror shopping experiences is criticised for instance by Marshall and Bell (2004), Miller (1998) or Sinha and Uniyal (2005). A consensus was reached long ago evidencing that information use was partly dependent on context (Davies, & Wright 1994, Holbrook & Hirschman 1982). This is to recognise that the attitude-intention- behaviour paradigm is only valid for occasions where there is a high situational correspondence and not applicable to the present one. A better approach, when dealing with consumers' use of information, is to follow the person/product/context paradigm.

Given the purpose of providing a '*thick description*' of the behaviour of individuals and to provide a deeper understanding of such a mundane task as grocery shopping, depth is favoured over breadth. Samples are purposive, of limited size and the method is most of the time part of a multi method approach design often involving post shopping interviews (Nørgaard & Brunsø 2009). Usual sample size for ethnographic studies varies between 10 to 50 informants, some anthropologists suggesting that 20 households are a minimum. The use of 14 to 18 informants is however accepted as it permits to conduct the study in a reasonable length of time (Beckley & Ramsey 2009). The nature of the study creates a closer interaction with participants: this may help reducing participant suspicion and

controlled behaviour. This is a major gain in contrast to what can be obtained through snapshot meetings or interviews.

To summarise, the value of observational research has been documented. However, the use of observation to yield data has also been criticised for its lack of objectivity, control over conditions and the problems posed to validity. It is argued that the researcher's subjectivity influences the direction and may influence the research questions, with a particular impact on the collection process, analysis and interpretation of the data. It is claimed that observation is always filtered through the observer's interpretive frames. As an alternative method, videography was used in a grocery store to analyse cognitive processes involved in individual purchase decisions (Büttner & Silberer 2006, Marienhagen 2005). The use of videographic research might reduce the amount of interruption and interaction with the participants, but does not allow for the identification of 'typical' from 'atypical' purchasing behaviour. This method is too difficult to implement and not deemed appropriate for the present research, and as such has been discarded. Even the most accurate observations are still shaped by formative theoretical frameworks. One should be careful not to impose categories derived from existing and pre-established research in conducting direct observation and carry out the work in an open-minded manner. Another potential threat is the lack of control that one has on the setting of the observations: this reduces the extent to which the study might be replicated and limit external applications of the findings. Jaeger (2000) argues that the data collected through observational methods can only have limited validity. The method is time- and human resource- intensive. Additionally, it is virtually impossible to account for all the variables susceptible to be involved in a situation; the data collected will therefore, necessarily be somehow biased and/or partial.

Finally, another limitation is that it is difficult to conclude and deduct causal inference(s) between variables (determinants and outcomes of behaviour) because their relationship may be more complex than what is observable and because significance may not be attained due to limited sample size (Jaeger 2000).

In order to access as much of the behaviour as possible, participants were invited to verbalise their thoughts. Branch (2000) argues that Concurrent Verbal Protocols (CVP) allow direct access to the cognitive processes used in the individual's thought process and uncover latent psychological variables involved when solving a problem. The effect of

verbalising on the task is commented in different ways in the literature. By verbalising acts concurrently with their performance, the likeliness of the 'memory loss' effect from occurring is reduced (unlike in reported behaviour methods), whilst it allows for immediate prompt by the researcher, if needed. However, Biehal and Chakravati (1989) argue that verbalisation interferes with the processing of the task (reactivity); this might mean that consumers will be less efficient in reaching their shopping goals or they might need more time to locate products. In any case, the data generated and their reliability depends on the type of questions that are addressed by the research. For researchers for whom the contextual and situational variables are important because of their influence in the phenomenon, protocols resulting thereof are a source of rich data. The second form of VP- Retrospective Verbal Protocols (RVP)- are less invasive than CVP but still raise issues threatening their validity: informants might forget their behaviour between the shopping episode and the verbalisation (omission), or construct reports (commission) which consists in the interpretation and reporting of events that did not occur (Harte & Koele 1997, Russo, Johnson & Stephens 1989) or misreport the sequence in which events have occurred (Ericsson & Simon 1984). Henry *et al* (2003) account for the influence the researcher may have on the behaviour performed and the risk that informants may be editing their thoughts before verbalisation in attempt to rationalise them (veridicality). Additionally, informants might feel self-aware which might affect their behaviour in an attempt to conform to the anticipated expectations of others (social norms). More systematic information processing may occur as a result of higher involvement in performing the task. Conversely, informants may find it difficult to tell, remember, or explain their reasons and motives: some of the behaviour may be unconscious or feelings of unease may emerge when having to disclose the information. Finally, there exists the potential risk of informants altering their behaviour as a consequence of being observed, the so-called 'observer effect'. These potential limitations are noted and will be accounted for in the analysis of results. Specifically, RVP are used in this study to minimise the interruptions and lessen the distractions to informants. This should permit an immediate recollection of sequence of acts performed, helping to uncover information sources used in decision-making.

Observations studies have been applied to various contexts, mostly looking at groceries purchasing situations (Nørgaard & Brunsø 2009, Spanjaard, Freeman & Young 2009, Spanjaard, Freeman & Young 2006, Silberer & Büttner 2004, Wilson & Wood 2004). They are often used in conjunction with other methods. Methods complementing

participant observation have included field notes, interviews with informants, and sometimes either the collection of relevant documents or videotaping. A review of previous studies using accompanied shopping in the context of grocery shopping is available in Appendix B. In the present study, observations are complemented with the collection of grocery receipts.

This last method of data collection ensures another form of validation (Spanjaard, Freeman & Young 2009). French *et al* (2009) have shown that it is feasible to collect annotated receipts for a four-week period from households as long as there is regular prompting by researchers. Even a two-week receipt data collection period might provide adequate reliability to characterise the household's food purchases. Discussants have collected receipts for a minimum of 6 weeks to a maximum of 14 weeks, and in some cases, several receipts for each week were obtained.

The exploration of the literature allows for the summary of studies using these ethnographic tools. Participant observation, whether or not using the Think Aloud method, coupled with other methods have gained popularity in consumer studies in recent years. CVP have been frequently used in consumer research and usability studies in laboratories (Bettman & Park 1980a) but also have been applied at the point of purchase: Ian Clarke *et al* (2004), in a recent project have looked at consumer shopping practices using methods such as interviews, focus groups, kitchen visits in order to depict the differences in two UK neighbourhoods. Hall *et al* (2008) explored the ethics of consumption by using an ethnographic approach involving interviews, participant observation, and activities in which ethics dilemma could occur in different locations. Rayner, Boaz and Higginson (2001) relied on the same methods to assess the use of health related labels for food products purchases. Finally, Klockner and Ohmes (2009) have also conjointly used observation and post shopping interviews to understand the importance of norms in purchase decisions for organic milk. This is in line with a procedure designed in Otnes *et al* (1995) for shopping with consumers that combine shopping trips and interviews and allows capturing a fuller picture of the situation. Semi structured interviews are selected to both obtain a pertinent level of comparability and to allow prompting from specific observations. Interviews are opportunities given to both the participant and the researcher to further explore decision choice process(es) across product categories. The use of semi-structured interviews is useful in that it permits the validation of the internal consistency of the data elicited straight after the decision task and the identification of themes and

patterns repeated throughout the dialogue. The interviews potentially yield rich data for subsequent analysis, revealing the “inside track” of visual cognitions.

These studies illustrate that it is possible to use such methods when complex situations are observed and when interaction with informants allow for greater understanding of behaviour. This justifies this choice.

Several procedures are used to control for potential distortions of behaviour just described: (focus groups discussants might remember the purpose of the discussions). To cater for such risk, additional recruitment of informants (following the same recruitment procedure) is conducted. This had been done previously and is referred to as ‘*cold calling recruitment*’ (Silberer & Wang 2009, p. 14). Thus, in addition to the shoppers recruited from the focus groups other shoppers were stopped as they entered the supermarket. These informants are observed shopping too, and their purchasing decisions are discussed during a post-shopping interview, when the focus on Fairtrade is only revealed. It is at that moment too that their involvement level is assessed, in the same manner as for FG discussants. Their characteristics were checked in order to ensure that they had similar socio-economic characteristics as the focus groups’ discussants¹⁷. It was necessary for all observations to be conducted during a main (‘typical’) shop, as the probability of purchasing (or even considering) ethical products decreases when people perceive a need to save time, as is generally the case with ‘top-up’ shopping missions (Tanner & Wallfing Kast, 2003).

This section of the chapter extensively reviewed the research design used in this research. Theories and guidelines of each method were first presented Next the protocol of the empirical research is summarised detailing the implementation of each method.

¹⁷ A copy of the screening questionnaire is included in Appendice G. Additionally, using the dunnhumby data findings, the 6 Fairtrade categories for whose consumer penetration was the greatest where included in the questionnaire and informants were asked about potential intentions to purchase in these categories.

4.7 PROTOCOL

The protocol is summarised in Table 4.3 below.

Stage	Stage II		Stage III	
Method	Focus groups	Accompanied shoppings and grocery till receipts collection	Accompanied shoppings	Post shopping interviews
Data collection	March 2009	November 2009-Janvier 2010	February 2010	After each accompanied shop
Number of discussants	10 focus groups 65 discussants	6 discussants from focus groups	22 shoppers, recruited following 'cold calling recruitment'	28 interviewees (22+6)

Table 4-3 Overview of the project

As mentioned earlier, the first stage of the collection of primary data consisted in conducting focus groups discussions.

More specifically the aims are twofold:

- To assess the extent to which packaging information acts to trigger, reinforce and/or modify purchase decisions with respect to fair trade foods and how this process might vary between product categories.
- To investigate the potential influence of lifestage, self-reported purchasing frequency on attitudes towards fair trade foods, and by level of involvement (in food purchasing in general, specifically Fairtrade products and in the overall fair trade concept) of the shopper.

Recruitment of discussants was left to a professional. Shoppers were approached as they were leaving the store. They were screened out using a questionnaire assessing eligibility: necessary conditions included being female, belonging to ABC₁ socio economic group, having bought at least once Fairtrade food during the 3 preceding months, owning a

Clubcard¹⁸ and doing most or all grocery shopping in Tesco. Finally, a series of questions also characterised attitudes towards grocery shopping¹⁹. This ensured a balanced representation of shopper 'lovers' and 'haters' for each group. Participation in sessions was by incentive.

Discussants with different lifestages, either occasional, or regular purchasers of fair trade foods are included in the sample. First, discussants were grouped by lifestage - shown in the literature to influence both grocery shopping behaviour and the involvement associated with the task-. Secondly, it was expected that experience, knowledge, attitudes and involvement could vary according to frequency of purchase. Grouping discussants on the basis of similar considerations of purchasing frequencies aimed at avoiding dominant vs. silent discussants. This resulted in 10 focus groups for a total of 65 discussants.

The discussants were not informed in advance of the precise subject matter of the research, although they did know it would be generally about food purchasing behaviour. The sessions were organised at the recruiter's facilities in South Croydon, UK. Upon arrival, the discussants were welcomed, provided with refreshments and asked to sign a consent form and to complete a preliminary questionnaire that would help in determining their level of involvement. In the questionnaire product involvement questions were asked first, and then purchase habits and finally socio-demographic information was sought. This method is considered semi-quantitative because respondents are not selected from a random sample, and questions are usually closed-ended (Weinreich 1996).

Sessions lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, were facilitated by the author of the present study (referred to as CG thereafter) and followed a discussion guide. Audio and videotaped recording were used. Subsequently, the sessions were transcribed word for word for analysis' purposes. Detailed accounts of the individual groups were also written immediately after the groups, with the aim of retaining as much information as possible.

The moderator introduced the purpose of the session, detailed privacy and ethical issues and asked for permission to record the session. The informal nature of the session

¹⁸Tesco loyalty card.

¹⁹This was used to build homogeneous groups.

was pointed at, and so was the importance for the discussants to express their own views and not conform to hypothetical expected answers. These few minutes at the beginning of the session were used to gauge discussants' characteristics. Sessions started with brief self-introductions where discussants provided basic characteristics of their grocery shopping habits. This simple task helped in engaging and relaxing discussants.

Different activities were proposed to discussants; first a flip chart exercise was used to assess spontaneous, unprompted knowledge and to help discussants' elaboration as discussants were building upon each other's reasoning. Later on, a card sorting exercise was preferred over simple questioning to test each discussant's awareness of the range of Fairtrade foods. Given the focus of the research, samples of Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade labelled foods (branded and own label alternatives) were subsequently presented to discussants. The purpose of this was

- to witness the way people act when choosing products
- to uncover the importance they attach to the different informative elements of the packaging
- to evaluate prompted knowledge

This exercise also revealed familiarity with the products. For categories for which they were not aware, discussants had the opportunity to explore the packaging. The observation exercise lasted between 15 and 25 minutes across groups. Projective questions were asked towards the end of the discussions so as to explore shoppers' needs and wants regarding information provision.

Discussants who had displayed interesting discourse and reported behaviour were invited to take part in the second stage of the study, accompanied shoppings. The group 'Involved in food' consisted of 25 shoppers of which 7 were not interested in a follow up study and as such did not provide contact details. Out of the 18 potential respondents left

- 2 declined further involvement in the study
- 7 Could not be reached after several phone calls
- 9 Accepted to take part in the study but only **6 focus groups discussants** were actually observed shopping.

They were contacted by phone during the second half of November 2009. They were reminded about the focus groups and about the circumstances in which they had contributed to the study already²⁰ and were asked if they still were willing to further take part in the project. They were presented then with the aims, objectives and practical issues inherent to the accompanied shopping task. Informants were also asked to collect their grocery till receipts. Informants were then given an opportunity to ask questions and contact details were exchanged.

From December to mid March, each week, informants were reminded to keep their grocery till receipts. The inspection of these receipts ensured that products bought when observed reflect typical informants' repertoires (Mariampolski 2006), typical shopping trips or to evidence differences. The receipts provide valuable information about household food purchases. The duration of the receipt collection exercise allows for seasonal variations to be smoothed out, especially as the study ran over the Christmas period.

Grocery receipts were sent back to the researcher a week before the date scheduled for the accompanied shop. This allows for careful inspection and prediction of the categories the shopper was more likely to patronise as well as the elaboration of shopping patterns. In the same way, categories in which the shopper previously bought Fairtrade products could be identified and a specific attention could be paid to these on the day of the accompanied shop. The grocery receipt collection exercise was also carried on and after the accompanied shopping trip to ensure that the shopping trip observed was not abnormal. The inspection of this data showed that most respondents regularly buy Fairtrade products but that both repertoire and volume are limited²¹.

In practice, two waves of accompanied shopping were carried out during

- 1 week from 1/02 to 7/02/2010
- The Fairtrade fortnight (2 weeks from 22/02 to 7/03/2010)

More specifically, 22 shopping trips were conducted with individuals from this 'control' group.

²⁰ It was over eight months since the focus groups

²¹ A table summarising the data obtained via the grocery receipts data is available in Appendix C

- 8 participants were recruited during the first week.
- 14 participants were recruited during the Fair trade fortnight.

During the first week, in the 'control group' very few purchases of Fairtrade products were observed, therefore the information search process could not be investigated for Fairtrade products. The research protocol was modified and adapted and it was proposed to conduct additional observations during the Fairtrade fortnight. It was expected that more purchases would occur (and potentially more 1st time purchases) as a result of increased media publicity.

Shoppers were accompanied as they shopped in supermarkets, using an observation protocol (explaining what observations to record) to explore the decision-making processes used when buying, or considering buying, food items.

Practically, the typical shopping trip integrated different stages

- An initial informal short interview, to establish background details of household composition, attitudes to grocery shopping and general shopping patterns.
- The shopping trip itself: the informant started shopping and focussed on filling the trolley. After choosing products in the categories of interest the informant was asked to explain her purchasing decisions including details of information used. Insights into the decision mode were thus obtained immediately and then the shopping trip resumed as normal. The process was repeated until the shopping mission was complete and the shopper was ready to pay.
- A post-shopping interview, inviting the informant to comment further on the choice of certain items. The purpose of these interviews was to clarify certain observed behaviour and probe for the reasons for purchase/non-purchase and the influence of information on the choices made.
- The non-focus group participants were then asked to complete the involvement questionnaire.
- Finally, all informants were given a £5 gift voucher as a gesture of gratitude.

The researcher was equipped with a small digital recorder and the recording of the shopping trips started when the informant entered the store. Two instructions only were given: 'Shop as usual' and 'act naturally' in line with the recommendations of Ericsson and Simon (1984). In order to obtain explanations, observations coupled with the

subsequent interviews were used to probe the purchasing decisions made and use of information at the store (category or product level). Interviews took place immediately after the observation and lasted between 5 and 15 minutes.

All the observations notes and interviews were transcribed in full. The transcripts were then codified in line with the approach adopted with the focus group analysis but taking account of the themes emerging from the field (Miles & Huberman 1994). The coding and analysis were undertaken using NVivo 8.0. This method proved to be an effective way of breaking up the data into smaller components (to avoid simple description) with the stage of synthesis (to creatively re-aggregate the data).

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

To ensure internal validity and reliability, data obtained from the same participants were compared across different sources. Similarly, and to ensure external validity and reliability, different methods and accompanied shopping trips with additional respondents were applied. Data obtained during the focus groups and the accompanied shops were first analysed separately and then together using thematic analysis. This method was preferred over content analysis. This is in line with the objective of the study that does not seek quantification but the identification and description of the phenomenon. The nature of the study implies that neither the hypotheses are being tested nor *a priori* categorisation of the behaviour undertaken; therefore content analysis does not seem appropriate (Arnould & Wallendorf 1994).

Thematic analysis is based on the identification of themes in qualitative research, often identified by means of a coding scheme. This approach entails a systematic process during which themes are defined as units derived from patterns such as '*conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings, or folk sayings and proverbs*' ((Taylor & Bogdan 1989, p. 131), cited in (Aronson 1994)).

The analysis of the data was carried out using NVivo 8.0 in the coding process and further to develop a structure of associations and links between categories (see chapter 7 p

237). A number of 'nodes'²² were constructed during the analysis of the data. These coding categories were based both on themes established during the literature review and those which emerged during the data collection process. This was combined with thematic coding in order to compare groups of discussants. These included thirty-three 'free nodes'²³, twenty-six 'tree'²⁴ nodes and six sets relating to informant knowledge about Fairtrade. For the most part, the nodes deal with ways in which information is acquired and subsequently used.

Sets²⁵ were created in order to categorise informants and their views on specific issues. As the analysis progressed, further nodes were created/deleted. By the end of the analysis, the 'tree' nodes had considerably developed into child nodes.

To distinguish sources of data the following terms are used to distinguish participants:

- Buyers: segments of consumers as identified in the dunnhumby database;
- Discussants: participants who took part in a focus group.
- Informants: participants who were observed and subsequently interviewed

Following a sequence of steps involving reading, comparing and cross analysing the different data sources, the findings are finalised and rearranged to produce a model illustrating relationships between variables. This model summarises the relationships observed across the different concepts investigated.

²² A node is a collection of references about a specific theme, place, person or other area of interest. Through coding, reading through sources, such as interviews or focus groups, the references are gathered and categorised into the relevant nodes.

²³ A free node is a 'stand-alone' node that has no clear logical connection with other nodes—it does not easily fit into a hierarchical structure.

²⁴ Tree nodes are organized in a hierarchical structure—moving from a general category at the top (the parent node) to more specific categories (child nodes).

²⁵ Sets allow grouping of sources and nodes. Items in a set are references or 'shortcuts' to the original files.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The University of Kent requires that all research involving human participants undergo an ethical review that would be overseen by the ethical committee. As such, an ethical approval form was filled in. This allowed to provide evidence that a range of ethical issues had been anticipated: risk, confidentiality, sponsorship, issues relating to culture, religion, gender, monetary issues and rights for the participants to obtain feedback and consult the results of the research.²⁶ Further, the ethics procedure also makes compulsory to obtain written permission from the organisation concerned to carry out the research on their premises. Complying with this, the store manager was contacted to obtain the authorisation to conduct and record the in-store observations. However, this authorisation was obtained subject to certain conditions.²⁷

As the study was conducted with an ordinary group of consumers, special attention was paid in making sure that participants were approached on equal terms. As an example, the choice of the interview location was left to the discretion of the interviewees. This was done to allow both the researcher and the participant to be on equal footing with regards to ethical considerations, and hence reduce the risk of interviewer bias ((Mishler 1986, Kvale 1983), cited in Svedeberg,2002))

All necessary precautions have been taken to protect the rights and well being of the research subjects. Respondents were asked to sign a consent form compiling a description of the project before engaging in any stage of the data collection. Following this first stage of the data collection, the issue of confidentiality of the data was taken very seriously; consent forms were being kept in a locked drawer of a desk so as to ensure that only the researcher could access them. Further, participants of the study were informed that the findings of the study would be used for academic purposes and were also given the opportunity to consult the results of the research.

²⁶ The ethical approval form is available upon request (from <http://www.kent.ac.uk/kbs/research-ethics/Blank%20Ethical%20Approval%20Form.pdf>)

²⁷ A copy of the store authorisation is available in Appendix D

From an ethical standpoint, risks and concerns are greater in qualitative research than in quantitative research. This is mainly because of the close involvement of the researcher with the research process and with the participants. Qualitative researchers often become immersed in the life of respondents. Ethical concerns arise also because qualitative research offers considerable interpretive latitude to the researcher and the data are, on a whole, rife with personal opinions and feelings. (Bowen, 2005)

4.10 SUMMARY

This dissertation uses a mixed method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative stages that complement each other to answer the research questions. Prior to this research, little work had been conducted on the actual behaviour of Fairtrade food buyers. The observational elements of the research therefore provide new insights into how varied information sources are used in purchasing decisions.

The naturalistic tradition describes knowledge as a natural phenomenon occurring in a wide range of subjects. The research falls under the Interpretivism paradigm. It is both qualitative and exploratory.

The research design elaborated uses primary and secondary data. Data collection methods include focus groups, participant observation, accompanied shopping trips, semi structured interviews and archival data. Informants were recruited via a non-probabilistic, purposive sample. The analysis of the data is computer assisted (using N Vivo 8.0) using an inductive thematic analysis frame of interpretation.

4.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the research methods used, justified choices made that contrast with previous literature, and set out the objectives of the research. The research design is a crucial step in any study. Planning should be carefully thought through and planned to account for potential sources of bias and problems. The protocol of the study was presented, along with a review of the pros and cons of the methods used.

As with most qualitative approaches, this research is not claiming to establish a 'representative' sample. The use of a mixed method approach only allows for the gathering of a large range of data which reaches a point of data saturation through follow-up

questioning, which lead to drawing conclusions without pretending possible generalisation of findings. The findings of each stage of the empirical research are presented separately in the next three chapters.

Chapter 5

Exploration of the dunnhumby database

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the analysis of the dunnhumby (sic) supermarket panel data. The exploration of the database enabled access to the latest key measures for Fairtrade foods and non-labelled foods in chapter 2. Here, the purpose of the data analysis is to identify the variation in purchasing behaviour across customers segments and to support the sampling criteria for the following stages of the research.

The chapter begins with a description of the presentation of the database and associated CAMEO geo-demographic segmentation. This is followed by the presentation of the analysis.

5.2 DATABASE

The dunnhumby data consists of weekly purchasing supermarket information from all Tesco stores across the UK, collected via the Clubcard loyalty scheme. Tesco launched its Clubcard loyalty scheme in 1995. Consumers receive points in exchange for their total spending. Customers who spend a minimum of £150 quarterly, will receive vouchers. Additionally, big spenders get discount coupons on particular products associated with their individual purchasing behaviour.

The power of the loyalty card program resides in its ability to access consumers' personal information about their households. Consumers join by filling out an application form, which includes optional questions about the size of their household, the ages of their children and dietary preferences. Additionally-and only on the basis of consumer choice- it is possible to join different interest groups (e.g. baby club, toddler club kids, healthy living club, wine club). These groups are a channel of direct communication between the customer and the retailer. The data obtained this way is used to access more information

about shoppers' consumption habits and lifestyle (i.e. dieting preferences and personal interests). This information is then used to provide tailored information, advice and a range of special offers, the aim of which is to personalize the contact with each shopper.

Tesco's UK stores have two distribution channels: on-line and in store with six formats (Express, Metro, Superstore, Extra, One stop, and Petrol station) differentiated by their size and range of products sold. The dataset comprises weekly purchasing information from all Tesco supermarkets across the UK, collected via the Clubcard loyalty scheme. The sample size used in the database is 10% of the total population of Clubcard holders, which is currently approximately 1.7 million shoppers.

5.2.1 The dunnhumby Database

The database records weekly transactions of all products sold through any distribution channel. The loyalty scheme collects three quarters of the spending in Tesco stores through the capture of about 80% of the transactions occurring each week. The retailer currently stocks about 265,000 SKUs (Stock Keeping Units) of which approximately 30,000 are food items.

The value of this database is that it offers the potential to get access to a microanalysis of the trends occurring at the product level. The majority of existing panels available for academic research only permit access to a product category (macro level) as the data is only available at an aggregated manner. By using this data over the past 15 years, Tesco has reformulated its strategy and increased its market share dramatically.

This database is primarily used for commercial purposes. Its use in this study is made possible by the strategic partnership between dunnhumby and Kent Business School. The aim here is to identify the profile of Fairtrade shoppers and the extent to which Fairtrade shoppers purchase across different Fairtrade categories. This analysis will inform the qualitative research that follows in chapter six and seven.

5.2.2 Customer Segmentation

dunnhumby (sic) uses five different approaches to segmentation (lifestage, lifestyle, TV region, geo-demographic –CAMEO- and store loyalty). For the specific purpose of this research, the data analysis uses only the CAMEO and lifestage segmentations. The lifestage segmentation is based upon the information that the consumer provides when joining the loyalty program. This information is then used as a way to allocate shoppers to one of the six segments. These lifestage segments are Older Adults, Older Families, Pensioners, Young Adults, Young Families and Mixed Households as shown in the Table 5.1 below.

Lifestage	Description	Proportion of shoppers
Young adults	Adults aged 20-39 years married or not with no children	14.5%
Older Adults	Adults aged 40-59 years married or not with no children living at home	14%
Young Families	Adults with <i>all</i> children under 10	16.8%
Older Families	Adults with <i>one or more</i> child over 10	15,7%
Pensioners	Adults over 60 with no children	10,7%
Mixed	Multi-generational households with children, parents and grandparents of various ages, or pensioners who still live with children or other relatives.	28,4%

Source: © dunnhumby, November 2008

Table 5-1: Proportion of Tesco Clubcard Shoppers from each lifestage segment

However, the lifestage component is integrated in another form of segmentation available in the database, the CAMEO segmentation that classifies postcodes as fitting certain types of neighbourhoods. Geo-demographic systems such as CAMEO, ACORN, Mosaic or Super Profiles, are commonly used within both commercial and public sector organisations as a basis for target marketing and resource allocation (Birkin 1995). These geo-demographic systems are based on census data and integrate affluence, child age,

family composition, housing type and social group²⁸ ethnicity and unemployment CAMEO was developed by Eurodirect and is based on probability, involving making inferences from known data. Strictly speaking, the data profiles neighbourhoods, not people. However, the main assumption of these systems is that 'you are where you live', and therefore, the data is used to describe an area or a type of population living within (Sharp, and Darnton, 2006)

It should be remembered though that the nature, dynamic and make-up of individual neighbourhoods or cluster areas changes over time and that individual people may move from segment to segment depending upon particular circumstances. Therefore, even if at the time of joining the loyalty card a Tesco shopper provides his address and its details about household composition, at no further point Tesco asks for an update on this information. Tesco consistently ensures that in the 10% sample of shoppers used for their analyses, new card holders are included so as to increase the reliability of the CAMEO segmentation. We acknowledge that even within a very narrowly defined neighbourhood there are likely to be very different types of people with different preferences and interests. If looking at specific household, there might be a mismatch, but on the aggregate, the predictability of the data is very good. (Sharp, and Darnton, 2006)

Geodemographic systems do provide considerably greater communication possibilities for practitioners and marketers. Yet, those systems ignore key factors and determinants, which influence food-purchasing behaviour, such as personal tastes and preferences. As such, it might be very difficult to assess their validity if they are not applied to a specific problem, outlining that their power to predict behaviour depends on the specific dataset to which they are linked- specifically here, the dunnhumby database. (Sharp, and Darnton, 2006)

²⁸ The Eurodirect website states that items of data used include Adult & Child Age, Marital Status, Family Composition, Length of Residency, Housing Type & Size, Tenure, Council Tax Band, Property Valuation, Employment Status, Occupation & Sector, Directorships, Credit Risk, Qualifications, Population Density, Spatial Distribution, Ethnic Origin, Car Ownership, Travel To Work, Social Group, Shareholdings.

In this chapter, the justification to use this database is to explore the propensity of certain segments of buyers to purchase different categories of Fairtrade foods. The propensity to purchase is based on the proportions of each segment who buy a particular product or within a category relative to their share of the proportion of shoppers. This is expressed on an index, where 100 represents the baseline for all Tesco shoppers.

The final CAMEO classification defines 57 neighbourhood types that are subgroups of 10 main groups. These 10 key marketing groups have been each tested and proved to be highly discriminative. Given the large percentage of households who shop at Tesco (40%) it is not surprising that the distribution of CAMEO segments for Tesco Clubcard holders is a close reflection of the distribution for the UK population as a whole (see Table 5.2 below).

	CAMEO UK Group Code & Description	% Tesco shoppers	% UK households
1	Affluent Singles & Couples in Exclusive Urban Neighbourhoods	3,47%	3%
2	Wealthy Neighbourhoods Nearing & Enjoying Retirement	3,76%	5%
3	Affluent Home Owning Couples & Families in Large Houses	10,69%	14%
4	Suburban Homeowners in Smaller Private Family Homes	13,91%	17%
5	Comfortable Mixed Tenure Neighbourhoods	8,71%	9%
6	Less Affluent Families Neighbourhoods	14,13%	16%
7	Less Affluent Singles and Students in Urban Areas	5,93%	5%
8	Poorer White and Blue Collar workers	16,83%	15%
9	Poorer Families & Single Parent Households	10,83%	9%
10	Poorer Council Tenants including many single parents	11,89%	8%

Adapted from eurodirect.co.uk and dunnhumby Ltd (2010)

Table 5-2: Distribution of shoppers by CAMEO segment

Table 5.2 shows that the less affluent CAMEO segments are over represented and the more affluent segments tend to be under represented in the dunnhumby database in comparison with the UK average. However the differences are relatively small and all the CAMEO segments are captured by the database.

The database was used in Chapter 2 to present the UK's Fairtrade market and to comment on the Key Performing Indicators based on actual sales data. That analysis suggested that the growth observed in the Fairtrade range was more the result of a wider

distribution (+9%) than of an increase in consumer penetration (stable at 34%). Here, we pursue the analysis of this data and look at purchasing behaviour in more detail.

Whilst this exploration of the actual sales data permits the identification of trends and the evolution of the market, it is important to recognise that there are many variables that can potentially influence the performance of the products sold in supermarkets. Specifically, the level of sales will be, amongst other things, influenced by the number of stores stocking the products, the level of promotional activity and changes in the packaging, price, advertising and merchandising of the product. No specific account of these factors is taken here, as the primary objective is to establish *who* buys Fairtrade products and *how many* Fairtrade products they buy.

Tesco and dunnhumby Ltd ensure that the classification of cardholders is kept up to date. Given that shopping practices are constantly evolving, the profile of shoppers is continuously changing. Therefore this needs to be tracked. Moreover, it would be reasonable to think that cardholders' personal details can become inaccurate overtime-address or household composition change. In order to cater for this, dunnhumby Ltd created a 'continuous panel', ensuring that new cardholders are integrated in the sample and that cardholders who have not been visiting stores in a certain length of time are removed. This is linked with geodemographic or lifestyle data. This way, tremendous breadth is obtained as data is of obtained over the observation of millions of consumers but adding panel provide greater depth of information over a period of time (Evans, 1998).

5.3 ANALYSIS

The analysis of the dunnhumby data is particularly useful in building the foundations of this study, providing invaluable insights into the *actual* behaviour of shoppers as opposed to *reported* behaviour.

The following analysis is in three parts: first, we explore the shopper profiles for Fairtrade foods. Second, we look at the extent to which Fairtrade shoppers buy across the different Fairtrade categories. Finally, we explore the broader composition of Fairtrade buyers' trolleys, with a view to determining the extent to which Fairtrade foods are purchased along with other credence products – an indication of their level of involvement.

For the purpose of this analysis, products have been grouped in the following categories

- Bananas
- Coffee (Instant and Roast & Ground)
- Chocolate (bars and hot chocolate powder)
- Sugar
- Tea
- Other fruit
- Other categories (all grouped together)

This categorisation is justified according to the customer penetration figures reported in chapter 2 (Table 2.4). Specifically, products with the highest levels of household penetration (e.g. bananas, coffee, tea, chocolate, sugar, other fruit) are grouped by themselves whilst products with low levels of customer penetration are grouped together (other categories).

Table 5.3 presents the key measures for all Fairtrade products for the six CAMEO segments that over-index, four of which are from higher socio-economic groups and two from lower socio-economic groups. What is interesting here is that ‘poorer households’ account for the largest share of (volume) sales – 25% - but penetration, frequency and spend per customer is highest amongst ‘affluent home owners’, with all segments (apart from ‘poorer households’ cutting back on the number of Fairtrade products purchased over the 13 week period compared with the same period twelve months before.

	% of Total numbers of customers	Index Total numbers of customers	% of sale volume	Index sales per store	Consumer penetration	Frequency of purchase	Spend per customer	Number of products bought
Affluent Home-Owners	16,5	102	18,2	97	28,0%	2,1	4,1	-7
Young and Affluent Singles	2,9	106	2,8	108	22,5%	1,9	3,5	-11
Smaller Private Family Homes	18,4	102	19,1	103	25,6%	2,1	3,7	-1
Comfortable Mixed and Wealthy Neighbourhoods	14,8	103	15,4	102	25,5%	2,0	3,8	-7
Poorer Households	27,2	104	25,0	103	19,3%	1,9	3,1	0
Less Affluent Families, Singles and Students	20,2	104	19,5	103	22,1%	2,0	3,4	-6
Total	100,0	103	100,0	101	22,4%	2,0	3,5	-6

**Table 5-3: Evolution of the Key Measures per CAMEO segment (13 weeks to 30-Nov-08)
dunnhumby 2008**

In the second step of the analysis of this data, we look at the volume of shoppers buying across Fairtrade categories. The assumption here is that the more committed someone is to the principles of fair trade the more likely they are to shop across all (or at least more than one) fair trade categories. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 5.4, which shows the extent to which people who buy Fairtrade bananas also buy from other Fairtrade categories.

The results show that, overall, almost two thirds of shoppers who purchased Fairtrade bananas bought no other fair trade products over the 13 week period and in every CAMEO segment less than half of shoppers purchased more than one Fairtrade product. Repertoire shoppers (those purchasing more than one Fairtrade product) were highest amongst the 'affluent households' (43% bought at least one other product) and the lowest amongst the 'Poorer households' (only 29% bought at least one other product).

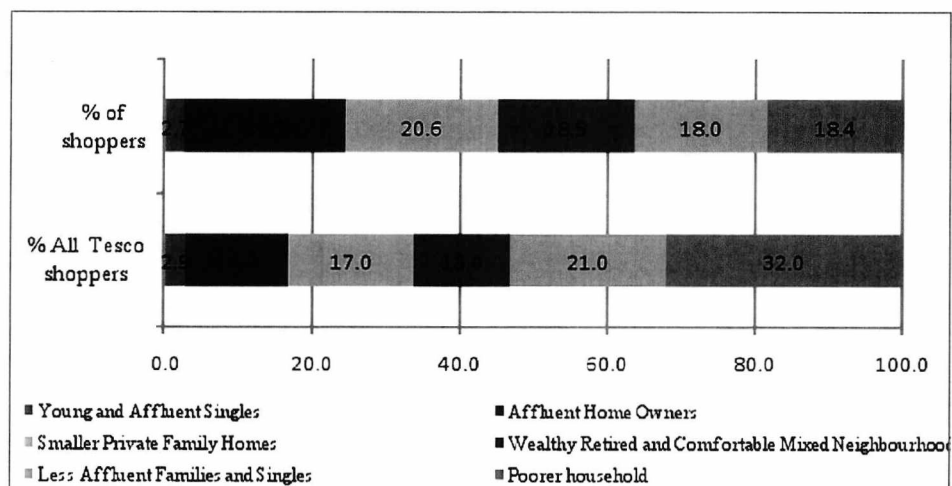
	% of all FT banana buyers	% of AHO FT banana buyers	% of Neighb ourhoo ds FT banana buyers	% of SPFH FT banana buyers	% of LA FS FT banana buyers	% of Poorer househ olds FT banana buyers	% of YAS FT banana buyers
FT Bananas total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
FT Bananas only	64,6	57,4	60,7	60,6	64,9	71,2	63,4
Customers buying FT Bananas+ any 1 of the other FT categories	35,4	42,0	39,4	39,4	33,9	28,7	30,6
Customers buying FT Bananas+ any 2 of the other FT categories	14,3	20,4	19,1	17,7	13,9	10,4	8,1
Customers buying FT Bananas+ any 3 of the other FT categories	8,5	11,4	9,5	9,6	7,0	5,0	4,9
Customers buying FT Bananas+ any 5 of the other FT categories	3,2	7,5	4,2	6,3	2,6	1,8	3,7
Bananas, Coffee, Chocolate, Sugar, Tea other fruit and other categories	6,5	9,2	8,2	7,5	5,9	4,2	3,4
LAS FS= Less Affluent Families and Singles			AHO=Affluent Home Owners		SPFH=Smaller Private Family Homes		
Neighbourhoods= Wealthy Retired and Comfortable Mixed Neighbourhoods			YAS= Young and Affluent Singles			Poorer households	

Source: © dunnhumby 2008

Table 5-4 : Percentage of shoppers buying across categories (13 weeks ending 30-Nov 2008)

The extent of repertoire shopping was also distinctly limited, with the majority of repertoire shoppers buying from just one other category (coffee, chocolate, tea) and only 6,5% of Fairtrade banana buyers purchased products from across the entire range. Again this was highest (9%) amongst 'Affluent Homeowners' and lowest (3.4%) amongst 'Young and Affluent Singles'.

Overall, whilst this table shows a positive relationship between affluence and propensity to purchase Fairtrade products, it also shows that affluence alone does not drive purchasing behaviour, as 'poorer households' and 'less affluent' households are more likely to shop across fair trade categories than 'affluent singles'. Moreover, it illustrates very clearly that the proportion of supermarket shoppers who might be classified as dedicated fair trade shoppers is substantially less than the proportion claiming awareness of fair trade products and the purchase thereof in previous studies. For example Mintel (Chapter 2, Figure 2.2) reports that about 20% of customers (claim to) buy in four or more Fairtrade categories. This highlights the discrepancies between reported and actual behaviour.



Graph 5.1: Customer contribution to sales of the shoppers buying across the entire range (13 weeks ending 30-Nov-2008) © dunnhumby 2008

Graph 5.1 shows the distribution of repertoire shoppers across the different CAMEO segments relative to their composition amongst all Tesco shoppers. This data illustrates that three segments stand out as over-indexing with respect to Fairtrade products:

- Wealthy Retired and Comfortable Neighbourhoods
- Affluent home owners
- Smaller Private family homes

The third stage of the exploration of the actual purchasing behaviour consists in looking further into the content of customers' baskets.

5.3.1 Basket analysis

Basket analysis involves looking at the probability of products being purchased at the same time (i.e. in the same basket) rather than over time (a consumer may buy different products at different times, for different reasons and for different meal occasions). This analysis provides a different perspective on the kind of people buying certain products of food categories and/or the kind of motives likely to be driving that behaviour. For example, if a basket containing Fairtrade bananas is full of other Fairtrade products, it is reasonable to assume that the shopper is motivated by Fairtrade as a distinct product attribute. Moreover, if a basket containing Fairtrade bananas is full of other credence products, it is reasonable to assume that these shoppers have higher levels of involvement than those whose baskets contain primarily branded products or discount lines. However, if the probability of a Fairtrade banana basket containing other fair trade products is low, it would suggest that Fairtrade bananas are not purchased primarily because they are Fairtrade and if the propensity to purchase other credence products is low we might assume that involvement has little to do with the purchase of Fairtrade products.

Table 5.5 shows the top 50 products whose purchase is most dependent on the purchase of any fair trade product. The products are ranked by 'significance', which is the probability of their purchase occurring at the same time as that of a Fairtrade product. Thus, 29% of the baskets containing Clipper organic 160 tea bags also contain at least one Fairtrade product. Significantly, 45 of the top 50 products listed are organic, suggesting that organic consumers have an affinity with Fairtrade.

	Product Name	Subgroup	Significance
1	Clipper Organic 160 Teabags 500G	STANDARD TEA BAGS	29,00%
2	Cafedirect Decaff Organic Blend 100G	DE/CAFF INSTANT COFFEE	28,80%
3	Ecover Dishwasher Tblts25 Pack/500G	ECO DISHWASH PRODUCTS	28,60%
4	Clipper Org Grn Tea & Aloe Vera T/Bags 20S 40G	FRUIT & HERB TEA BAGS	27,90%
5	Clipper Organic De/Caff Freeze Dried Cffe 100G	FREEZE DRIED COFFEE	26,30%
6	Ecover Non Bio Powder 12 Wash/1.2Kg	ECO LAUNDRY	25,90%
7	Ecover Bio Powder 12 Wash/1.2Kg	ECO LAUNDRY	25,90%
8	Chocaid Milk Chocolate Bar 100G	PREMIUM CHOCOLATE BLOCKS	25,70%
9	Clipper Organic 80 Teabags 250G	STANDARD TEA BAGS	25,70%
10	Own label Organic Plain Flour 1Kg	ORGANIC BAKING PRODUCTS	25,30%
11	Clipper Organic Peppermint 20 T/Bag 30G	FRUIT & HERB TEA BAGS	25,10%
12	Clipper Organic Rooibos 80S Teabags 180G	STANDARD TEA BAGS	24,90%
13	Ecover Lavender & Aloe Vera Hand Soap 250MI	LIQUID SOAPS	24,50%
14	Own label Organic Self Raising Flour 1Kg	ORGANIC BAKING PRODUCTS	24,50%
15	Own label Organic Caster Sugar 500G	CASTER SUGAR	24,50%
16	Own label Organic Strong White Flour 1Kg	SPECIALITY FLOUR	24,40%
17	Own label Organic Farmhouse Extra Mat 240G	ORGANIC CHEDDAR	24,00%
18	Doves Farm Org Malthouse Flour 1Kg	SPECIALITY FLOUR	23,90%
19	Crazy Jack Organic Dried Apricots 250G	KIDS SNACKING	23,80%
20	Cadburys Fruit & Nut 230G	CHOCOLATE BLOCKS	23,70%
21	Own label Organic Baked Beans 420G	BAKED BEANS	23,70%
22	Organic Walnuts 100G	NATURAL & IN-SHELL NUTS	23,50%
23	Organic Roasted Pistachios 100G	NATURAL & IN-SHELL NUTS	23,50%
24	Pukka Harmonise 20 Teabags 30G	FRUIT & HERB TEA BAGS	23,50%
25	Own label Organic Honey & Spelt Biscuits 125G	EVERYDAY PLAIN BISCUITS	23,40%
26	Seeds Of Change Organic Meditrm Veg Sauce 350G	ITAL PASTA SAUCE & PESTO	23,40%
27	Own label Organic Rte Prunes 250G	KIDS SNACKING	23,40%
28	Ecover Rinse Aid 500MI	ECO CLEANERS	23,40%
29	Crazy Jack Org Wht Basmati Rice 500G	ORGANIC COOKING PRODUCTS	23,30%
30	Own label Naturally D/Wshsr Tbs 4In125 Pk	ECO DISHWASH PRODUCTS	23,30%
31	Organic Jasmine Green Tea 20	FRUIT & HERB TEA BAGS	23,30%
32	Own label Organic Demerara Sugar 500G	DEMERARA & COFFEE SUGAR	23,20%
33	Ecover Non-Bio Washing Powder 2.6Kg	ECO LAUNDRY	23,20%
34	GrahamS Organicdouble Cream 284MI	ORGANIC CREAM	23,20%
35	Own label Organic Brown Long Grainrice 500G	SPEC WHOLEGRAIN OTH RICE	23,20%
36	Tesco Naturally Non Bio Powder 14 Wash/1Kg	ECO LAUNDRY	23,10%
37	Chocaid Dark Chocolate Bar 100G	PREMIUM CHOCOLATE BLOCKS	23,10%
38	Cadburys Whole Nut 230G	CHOCOLATE BLOCKS	23,00%
39	Own label Organic Scottish Mature Cheddar 240G	ORGANIC CHEDDAR	22,90%
40	Own label Organic Unfiltered X/V Olive Oil 500MI	OLIVE/SPECIALITY OILS	22,80%
41	Ecover Laundry Tablets 32 Pack/960G	ECO LAUNDRY	22,80%
42	Crazy Jack Long Grain Organic Brown Rice 500G	ORGANIC COOKING PRODUCTS	22,70%
43	Ecover Toilet Cleaner 750MI	ECO CLEANERS	22,60%
44	Ecover Wul Camomile 1Ltr	ECO CLEANERS	22,50%
45	Ecover Non Bio Laundry Liquid 1.5Ltr	ECO LAUNDRY	22,50%
46	Crazy Jack Organic Almonds 100G	COOKING NUTS	22,40%
47	Clipper Organic Decaffeinated 40 Teabags 125G	DE/CAFF STANDARD TEA BAG	22,30%
48	Graham Org Set Butter Slightly Salted 250G	ORGANIC BUTTER & SPREAD	22,30%
49	Sacla Organic Basil Pesto 190G	ITAL PASTA SAUCE & PESTO	22,20%
50	Own label Organic Slightly Salted Butter 250G	ORGANIC BUTTER & SPREAD	22,20%

Table 5-5: Basket analysis, top 50 products bought with any Fairtrade food, ranked by significance, for all Tesco shoppers (13 weeks to 30 November 2008)

However, table 5.6 ranks the products by penetration (% of Fairtrade baskets containing the product). Clipper 160 tea bags are not in the top 50 but are within the 100 products most bought along with a Fairtrade product. Yet only 0.02% of Fairtrade shoppers

buy this product. Thus, it may be argued that only 0.02% of Fairtrade shoppers demonstrate behaviour that is consistent with high levels of involvement.

	Product Name	Subgroup	Product Penetration
1	Cadburys Fruit & Nut 230G	CHOCOLATE BLOCKS	3,24%
2	Cadburys Whole Nut 230G	CHOCOLATE BLOCKS	2,63%
3	Ecover Wul Camomile 1Ltr	ECO CLEANERS	0,42%
4	Heinz Organic Baked Beans 415G	BAKED BEANS	0,38%
5	Ecover Non Bio Laundry Liquid 1.5Ltr	ECO LAUNDRY	0,33%
6	Cafedirect Decaff Organic Blend 100G	DE/CAFF INSTANT COFFEE	0,28%
7	Own label Organic Slightly Salted Butter 250G	ORGANIC BUTTER & SPREAD	0,28%
8	Own label Organic Apple Juice 1 Litre	L/LIFE PURE OTHER JUICE	0,26%
9	Own label Organic Plain Flour 1Kg	ORGANIC BAKING PRODUCTS	0,26%
10	Tesco Organic Farmhouse Maturecheddar 240G	ORGANIC CHEDDAR	0,23%
11	Own label Organic Baked Beans 420G	BAKED BEANS	0,22%
12	Own label Organic Self Raising Flour 1Kg	ORGANIC BAKING PRODUCTS	0,21%
13	Crazy Jack Organic Dried Raisins 375G	RAISINS	0,19%
14	Ecover Fabric Softener 1 Ltr	ECO LAUNDRY	0,19%
15	Own label Organic Petits Pois 500G	FROZEN PEAS	0,19%
16	Ecover Toilet Cleaner 750ML	ECO CLEANERS	0,18%
17	Clipper Organic De/Caff Freeze Dried Cffe 100G	FREEZE DRIED COFFEE	0,17%
18	Ecover Non Bio Powder 12 Wash/1.2Kg	ECO LAUNDRY	0,16%
19	Clipper Organic 80 Teabags 250G	STANDARD TEA BAGS	0,14%
20	Organic Walnuts 100G	NATURAL & IN-SHELL NUTS	0,14%
21	Organic Almonds 200G	NATURAL & IN-SHELL NUTS	0,13%
22	Own label Naturally D/Wsher Tbs 4In125 Pk	ECO DISHWASH PRODUCTS	0,13%
23	Own label Organic Fusilli 500G	ORGANI PASTA	0,12%
24	Ecover Dishwasher Tblts25 Pack/500G	ECO DISHWASH PRODUCTS	0,12%
25	Clipper Organic Chamomile 20S T/Bag 30G	FRUIT & HERB TEA BAGS	0,11%
26	Own label Organic Granulated Sugar500G	GRANULATED SUGAR	0,10%
27	Own label Organic 80 Teabags 250G	STANDARD TEA BAGS	0,10%
28	Clipper Organic Peppermint 20 T/Bag 30G	FRUIT & HERB TEA BAGS	0,09%
29	Organic Hazlenuts 200G	NATURAL & IN-SHELL NUTS	0,09%
30	Own label Organic Strong White Flour 1Kg	SPECIALITY FLOUR	0,09%
31	Own label Organic Caster Sugar 500G	CASTER SUGAR	0,09%
32	Crazy Jack Organic Dried Apricots 250G	KIDS SNACKING	0,08%
33	Sacla Organic Basil Pesto 190G	ITAL PASTA SAUCE & PESTO	0,08%
34	Green & Black Organic Cooking Chocolate 150G	COOKING CHOCOLATE	0,07%
35	Own label Organic Farmhouse Extra Mat 240G	ORGANIC CHEDDAR	0,07%
36	Ecover All Purpose Clnr500ML	ECO CLEANERS	0,07%
37	Organic Roasted Pistachios 100G	NATURAL & IN-SHELL NUTS	0,07%
38	Own label Finest Org 70% Peruvianchoc 100G	PREMIUM CHOCOLATE BLOCK	0,07%
39	Ecover Multi Surface Spray Clnr 500ML	ECO CLEANERS	0,07%
40	Own label Organic Unfiltered X/V Olive Oil 500M	OLIVE/SPECIALITY OILS	0,06%
41	Own label Organic Tomato & Basil Sauce 440G	ITAL PASTA SAUCE & PESTO	0,06%
42	Seeds Of Change Organic Meditrn Veg Sauce 350G	ITAL PASTA SAUCE & PESTO	0,05%
43	Seeds Of Change Org Semi W/Wheattortiglioni 500G	ORGANI PASTA	0,05%
44	Ecover Lavender & Aloe Vera Hand Soap 250ML	LIQUID SOAPS	0,05%
45	Ecover Laundry Tablets 32 Pack/960G	ECO LAUNDRY	0,05%
46	Own label Organic Rte Prunes 250G	KIDS SNACKING	0,05%
47	Clipper Organic Decaffeinated 40 Teabags 125G	DE/CAFF STANDARD TEA BAG	0,05%
48	Doves Farm Org Malthouse Flour 1Kg	SPECIALITY FLOUR	0,04%
49	Ecover Bio Powder 12 Wash/1.2Kg	ECO LAUNDRY	0,04%
50	Own label Organic Olive Spread 500G	ORGANIC BUTTER & SPREAD	0,04%

Table 5-6 : Basket analysis, top 50 products bought with any Fairtrade food, ranked by significance, for all Tesco shoppers (13 weeks to 30 November 2008)

Similarly the comparison between products most associated with Fairtrade products and penetration of these products is presented for the four CAMEO segments identified as more likely to buy Fairtrade products.

Shoppers belonging to Smaller Private Family Homes and Comfortable Mixed Neighbours demonstrate a behaviour that is more in line with higher levels of involvement than Affluent Home owners and Wealthy Retired Neighbourhoods.

In detail, it is observed that the chocolate bar Cadbury Fruit and Nut 230G is the product most dependent on Fairtrade products for shoppers classified Smaller Private Family Homes and is found in about 30% of the baskets containing at least one Fairtrade product. Yet, only 0,335% of Fairtrade shoppers of this segment are buying it. Similarly, Ecover Non Bio Powder 12 Wash/1.2Kg is the product most dependent on Fairtrade products for shoppers classified Comfortable Mixed Neighbours Cameo segment. 31,6% of the baskets containing this product also contain at least one Fairtrade product. Looking at the penetration figure however, only 0,22% of Fairtrade shoppers buy this product.

For the two other segments, Affluent Home Owners and Wealthy Retired Neighbourhoods, the figures are much lower, even though products most associated tend to be food. Less than 0,12% of Wealthy Retired Neighbourhoods Fairtrade shoppers buy Cafedirect organic blend 100G. However, a Fairtrade product is found in 31,3% of baskets containing this product.

This supports that Fairtrade tea and coffee are the usual products commonly bought by shoppers across segments. Nevertheless, the penetration figure of these products is still very low, illustrating that the repertoire of the Fairtrade shoppers across these segments is varied.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the analysis of the dunnhumby database with respect to Fairtrade products – Fairtrade shopper profiles, the degree of repertoire shopping across the fair trade category and the evidence of involvement in Fairtrade purchasing behaviour (basket composition).

The analysis revealed that shopper profiles are largely consistent with those reported in previous research, although the appearance of ‘poorer households’ as more -

extensive repertoires shoppers than 'affluent singles' suggest that affluence alone cannot explain the choice of Fairtrade products. It also showed that the extent of purchasing across the Fairtrade category is not as great as reported in studies reliant upon claimed behaviour, which suggest that fair trade shoppers may not be quite as ethical as they claim to be.

The non-expected great importance of the 'poorer households' segment would of deserved further attention in the empirical stage of the study. However, practical considerations prevented us to do so. Indeed, the data collection started in March 2009, few months after the beginning of the 'credit crunch'. It was expected that poorer household would be those that would be the most affected and that would carefully watch their expenses. Therefore, the likeliness to find poorer households individuals still having buying regularly Fairtrade products- a screening criteria- was really low. It was thus decided not to include these shoppers in the final sample so as to be certain to reach shoppers that would satisfy the screening criteria.

Finally, the basket analysis revealed that a small proportion of Fairtrade shoppers exhibit behaviour that is consistent with that of a highly involved and ethical shopper but that the majority of shopping baskets contain relatively few credence products, which further challenges the claim that fair trade consumers are ethical consumers, involved in the issues of ethical purchasing and driven by their awareness of or interest in the fair trade foundation or fair trade label.

It is to the question of motivation for purchase that we now turn in the remaining chapters, exploring in some detail why people purchase/do not purchase fair trade products and the role that information about fair trade (including the Fairtrade label) plays in influencing their food choices within the context of supermarket shopping.

Chapter 6

Stage II: Focus Groups findings

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the key findings from the ten focus groups conducted in March 2009.

At the end of chapter 3, the review of the literature suggested that diverse elements and concepts are relevant to this study and proposed potential relationships²⁹. These relationships need to be empirically explored in the specific context of Fairtrade foods.

These elements are

- 1) Internal search, made of knowledge and prior experience
- 2) External search made of different types of sources
- 3) Norms
- 4) Involvement
- 5) Trust
- 6) External factors.

The chapter is structured around these elements and will look at each in turn.

The objectives of the focus groups are

- to explore the issue(s) and relationships between involvement, information search and the Fairtrade label.

²⁹ See chapter 3, Figure 3.12 p 109

Central to the research is our interest in determining the extent to which in store and on-packaging information influence discussants' awareness and understanding of the fair trade concept and purchasing of Fairtrade products.

- to investigate the consistency of stated attitudes accessed through reported behaviour and involvement.

6.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND PREPARATION

The protocol used for the data collection was summarised in chapter 4. The justification to use focus groups to explore shoppers' understanding of Fair trade and the labelling scheme as well as the guidelines followed to conduct the study were presented in Chapter 4, p119.

The level of discussants' involvement was determined in two ways: first, through their responses to a set of questions based on Mittal and Lee's scale (1989a), which permitted to classify the respondents in three groups as described below. However, during the analysis some inconsistencies were revealed on the basis of the responses discussants gave to questions during the focus groups -with respect to their attitudes towards food and their attitudes towards the fair trade concept and Fairtrade products. This led to propose a second classification of discussants³⁰ that resulted in three categories:

Less Involved (26): Those whose average score from the recruitment questionnaire was less than 4 (on a scale from 1 to 7), who found food shopping a chore, who expressed little interest in credence attributes (e.g. provenance, ethics, animal welfare, environmental sustainability) and generally purchased Fairtrade food products occasionally. The (higher) prices of Fairtrade products constituted a greater barrier to purchase for discussants in this group than was the case for the other two.

Involved – Food (25): Those whose average score from the recruitment questionnaire was more than 4, who enjoyed food shopping and who expressed considerable interest in credence attributes (but only limited interest in fair trade products). For these participants, purchase of Fairtrade products was driven generally by the sensory

³⁰ The process used to classify discussants is detailed in Appendix F.

attributes (e.g. taste) of the product(s) rather than the ethical dimensions. As a result their purchases of Fairtrade products tend to be irregular and more spontaneous than planned.

Involved – in food and fair trade (14)³¹: Those whose average score from the recruitment questionnaire was more than 4, who enjoyed food shopping, who expressed interest in credence attributes and particularly in the fair trade concept. These people demonstrated considerable knowledge about the concept and were regular purchasers of a wide range of products.

The final distribution of discussants is shown in the Table 6.1 below (discussants are given pseudonyms).

Less Involved		Involved in Food		Involved in Food and Fairtrade	
YA	Francesca	YA	Amber	YA	Kavleigh
YA	Alexandra	YA	Jessica	YA	Sarah
YA	Rachel	YA	Victoria	OF	Lisa
OF	Holly	YA	Natasha	OF	Katherine
OF	Paige	YA	Niamh	OF	Melissa
OF	Louise	YA	Phoebe	OF	Anna
OF	Olivia	YA	Tegan	OA	Ellie
OF	Shannon	YA	Naomi	OA	Georgina
OA	Mia	OF	Zoe	OA	Madeleine
OA	Alisha	OF	Tia	P	Charlotte
OA	Samantha	OF	Emma	P	Isabel
OA	Amy	OF	Jodie	YF	Eve
P	Leah	OA	Georgia	YF	Elizabeth
P	Sophia	OA	Abigail	YF	Nicole
P	Millie	OA	Abby		
P	Rosie	OA	Yasmin		
P	Hannah	OA	Lucy		
P	Harriet	OA	Katie		
P	Lara	OA	Megan		
P	Aimee	P	Alice		
YF	Lily	P	Jade		
YF	Laura	P	Eleanor		
YF	Courtney	YF	Nicole		
YF	Erin	YF	Chloe		
YF	Rebecca	YF	Daisy		
YF	Carol	YF	Morgan		

Table 6-1 : Composition of the groups

³¹ In the remaining of the study these discussants are referred to as ‘Involved in fair trade’

Discussants can be classified along a continuum (shown in Figure 6.1) of food involvement where the 'Less Involved' shoppers (1) would be at a far end, 'Involved in food' shoppers (2) would have expressed higher involvement in food and finally the 'Involved in Fair trade' (3) shoppers additionally would be higher up on the continuum.

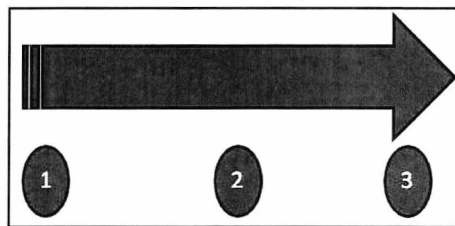


Figure 6.1: Continuum along which the discussants are represented.

In the presentation of the findings, certain comments of some individuals for whom the two classifications did not match, will be presented for the purpose of highlighting the encountered inconsistencies between attitudes and behaviour.

6.3 FOCUS OF THE ANALYSIS

The focus groups generated a wealth of information (just under two hundred pages of transcripts), the presentation and discussion of which represents a major challenge. Thus, in order to facilitate the identification of the key issues to emerge from the analysis of the transcripts, a summary is presented here. Only Fairtrade buyers have been recruited, and as such it is not surprising that all respondents display a certain interest for Fair Trade although this might be over emphasised due by a social desirability bias.

During the analysis process it became evident that the discussants classified as 'Involved- in food' were displaying the most interesting and diverse range of behaviours. They also seemed to express more internal conflicting views and attitudes than the two other groups of discussants. These heterogeneous views from discussants who appear to be interested in the concept to a different extent, but also who appear to have adopted diverse established information search strategies that fuelled specific interest. In the 'Less Involved' group and in the 'Involved in fair trade' group, attitudes and opinions tended to be in line with what would be expected from them (some of them ignoring information and some for whom information would not have enough importance to alter purchase

decision), where discussants would display a more homogenous behaviour within respective groups.

It is not expected that much could be done to alter the 'Less involved' shoppers through information provision, as price is too important a barrier. However, a greater number of factors are likely to influence the attention paid to, and the use of information by 'Involved in food' discussants. The wide range of reasons exposed, and the realisation that these shoppers are the ones most likely to be receptive to information justify the choice to focus the analysis on them.

In discussing the findings, careful attention is paid to the way in which information was framed. In essence, the form in which you present the information, the perspective taken may have an impact on the way information is processed and received by the discussants. The discussion echoed the way in which Fairtrade is framed by the Fairtrade foundation ; as such, it was expected not to create new lenses and perspective from which respondents would construct their answers.

At the beginning of each section, the views of the 'Less Involved' and of the 'Involved in fair trade' groups are presented. Then a more extensive review of the 'Involved in food' discussants' views is proposed. Presenting the findings in this way will permits comparison of the views on the different elements studied across the three discussants' groups and assesses the potential discriminatory role of involvement specifically.

6.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings are presented following using the model presented in the conclusion of the chapter 3, Figure 3.16.

6.4.1 Internal information search

Valette-Florence (Valette-Florence 1988) describes knowledge and prior experience as the two components of enduring involvement which contrasts with Bettman and Park's view (1980b) who see these two elements as components of internal information. Either way, this justifies the relevance in screening evidence of the use of these elements as reported in the focus groups sessions.

This subsection details findings relating to

- 1) Knowledge
- 2) Prior experience

Information stored in the memory comes from either previous experience- purchase and/or consumption- or facts discussants gathered about fair trade concept and products. When first engaging in information search activities, one starts subconsciously by browsing the memory.

1) Knowledge

Knowledge is defined as '*information known and learnt by the individual about the product*' (i.e. product related knowledge). This information is *directly* gathered through external sources (e.g. TV programs, newspapers) but does not include firsthand experience.

Knowledge is usually investigated using dichotomies: conscious vs. unconscious or objective vs. subjectivity. Wagner (2003) details several dimensions of knowledge: comprehensiveness, complexity, specificity and abstractness. This classification permits a thorough exploration of all the constituents of knowledge. So as to limit potential bias in answering the questions and the construction of answers, the evaluation of unprompted knowledge was conducted using a flipchart.

Discussants were first asked to explain in their own terms their understanding of the fair trade labelling scheme (in order to assess comprehensiveness), which resulted in a large range of descriptions. Overall, discussants appear to have a partial understanding of the message communicated.

To summarise,

Less Involved discussants: Knowledge about the concept was limited and inaccurate: discussants were confused and perceived both the standards and the implications to be complex (i.e. differences with similar schemes are not always understood). The exploration of the attitudes revealed that the interest in the scheme *per se* was low, whilst affective and moral dimensions had much greater influence. One of these discussants qualified the knowledge about Fair Trade '*irrelevant and of poor interest*' given a purchase occurred (moral dimension). This illustrates that

- these discussants did not know much about fair trade (low factual knowledge³² content)
- were not necessarily sure that the products bought were Fairtrade (low knowledge specificity)
- considered the Fairtrade attribute as an augmented but not a core attribute of their purchase. Factual knowledge and feeling of moral obligations (personal norms) were powerful motivators of environmental behaviour.

Involved in Fair trade: These discussants' level of knowledge was high, comprehensive and accurate. The specificity of knowledge was strong, where discussants associated strongly product categories with fair trade. Extended previous firsthand experience of products fed into knowledge and helped the formation of judgment about product and range. Comparatively, these discussants appeared to be the most familiar with the range of products available; however, increased purchasing behaviour could have occurred had the number of alternatives available in each category been higher. This is supported by the fact that new introductions of Fairtrade foods tended to be more noticed by this group.

For 'Involved in food' discussants: Looking first at the differences across lifestages, Young Adults and Older Families discussants seemed to have a more extensive knowledge. As illustrated below, different elements of the scheme were reported, questioned or explained.

NATASHA (YA): It's knowing where it's coming from... The country or the person that you know has actually grown it, helped people to pick it, to pack it and to ship it.

TEGAN (YA): Does it benefit the community or is it just for the workers?

JODIE (OF): It's starting to support themselves... they become a bit more self sufficient

ALICE (P): Fair trade movement is actually improving their lives and communities more than giving them money.

³² Factual knowledge refers to knowledge about the definitions, causes and consequences of environmental problems. Action-related knowledge is used to refer to information about possible actions. Action related knowledge is more likely to influence behaviour than factual knowledge.

VICTORIA (YA): There is like a set minimum premium that goes back to that farmer, so therefore they are sure that amount of money they will always get back to make sure that they are making profits. And that also they get the money in advance, then that allows them to put (sic) money in their houses and stuff like that. I just know that much.

NIAMH (YA): It does not give any information in how Fair trade helps- it just says Fair trade is supposed to be this and this but it doesn't give any information in how it does it or where the money goes- understanding more why it is Fair trade and why it is different and what the benefits are of us buying it- who will benefit and what benefits from it.

Overall, the social element of the Fair Trade movement was well known, but the economic and environmental dimensions were rarely mentioned. A consensus was reached and discussants admitted to having a limited knowledge. This highlights that understanding of the fair trade concept was basic. Very few discussants knew more beyond this; they gave reasons for this lack of knowledge and extensively reported that the issue seems to be complex. In the hierarchy of excuses expressed for not knowing more, discussants proposed that these details were unimportant (as long as behaviour was performed) and that there was a lack of opportunities to learn more (lack of information).

The following is an example of an 'Involved in fair trade' discussant (according to the measurement by the Mittal) who seemed to have difficulties reconciling issues regarding their food purchasing behaviour (complexity of the issue).

SAMANTHA (OA): I mean we are more likely to be buying English now, we are encouraged to buy English. You don't want pears that have travelled a long way.

Overall, discussants further expressed a certain curiosity and reported an interest in finding out the actual means through which benefits are redistributed to beneficiaries (i.e. when, how much and to whom). Similarly, they emphasised the importance of understanding the consequences of their purchase, particularly for those informants who might have engaged (or could have engaged) in behaviour on a long-term basis. This refers to the concept of perceived effectiveness (i.e. assess the impact of their actions). We see later that this links strongly with the abstractness dimension of knowledge. Some discussants linked knowledge (cognitive dimension) with behavioural consequences and/or with implications (higher involvement and increase likelihood to purchase).

The following comments illustrate the previous points

JADE (P) I think it is the knowledge of the Fair trade story. That's what got us caught in the first place.

ELEANOR (P) But we'd like the knowledge of the ongoing side

CHLOE (YF) I want to know that it is really making a difference to someone

The second dimension of knowledge, complexity, assesses how well discussants were able to clearly establish links and connections between the elements of the scheme³³. Fair trade standards target the triple bottom line of social, economic and environmental benefits. This group of discussants often disregarded environmental characteristics. Further, discussants struggled to differentiate Fair trade from other, almost similar existing schemes (e.g. Rainforest, Alliance, Equitrade). The information provided by the regulating authorities was deemed too scarce, thereby limiting the effectiveness of information in helping the understanding of the purposes of the schemes.

This confusion was exemplified in the existing case of the double labelling of Fairtrade and Organic for certain foods. Discussants made inferences on the basis of this co certification.

VICTORIA (YA): I imagine some people got confused between organic or Fair trade.

DAISY (YF): And then it (nb: organic) can clash with other food- now I become a Fair trade buyer.

NATASHA (YA): Some people are frightened by the organic because they think 'oh that's expensive' but actually it is not in every aspect, is it?

In this respect, discussants from Older Families tended to assume too often that Fair trade products are *de facto* Organic.

Overall, in terms of lifestage characteristics, Younger shoppers had the greater knowledge about Fair Trade. Yet, they point to the non-realistic, impracticable goal of attaining a perfect knowledge on all schemes. Reasons mentioned included lack of opportunities but more importantly a lack of motivation. The expectation that it would be

³³ The reader can refer to Chapter 2 (p 29) where the principles of the Fair Trade movement are presented.

necessary to handle too much information compared to the benefits expected justified the necessity to focus on the minimal.

TIA (OF) Is it a more environmentally, better way of producing?

PHOEBE (YA) Is Fair trade a trademark or brand?

As a result, discussants tended to make approximations. Further, the vocabulary used showed a lack of confidence in knowledge (e.g. I suppose, I assume, maybe, on the basis...).

PHOEBE (YA) I suppose Fair trade and rainforest alliance are pretty much the same thing. I just assume that Fair trade does the same thing but the money is invested in community development and not just... not just the fairer price to the workers. It is more than just money

TEGAN (YA) Cos there are so many different things as well... Fair trade and the rainforest alliance... It is kind of competition or rivalry thing

The next comment illustrates the complexity of the shopping mission for the 'not always rational' shopper, who does not want to or who does not have resources to allocate to thoroughly process all the information she is exposed to in the purchasing situation.

AMBER (YA): The interesting thing is that you are looking at your basket... 'that's supporting that people, and then that's supporting that people'... it just gets too complicated. You'd spend hours and hours in supermarkets.

The idea that reconciling the divergent recommendations and attributes given out to discussants was too complex was further supported by the fact that discussants had difficulties in determining what they ought to do.

TEGAN (YA): On one hand we are told 'oh, well we should go organic' and then there is this kind of moral saying that we should buy Fair trade now.

This supports that purchasing decisions can sometimes mobilise large cognitive resources. The integration of different pieces of information and the processing thereof can sometimes prove to be arduous for shoppers. On another dimension, this also weakens the assumption commonly held that food is a low involvement product as some individuals (of whom that one is an example) seem to enter a complex purchasing decision process. The extent to which this is actually happening in real situations will be further explored in stage III of the study, the results of which are presented in chapter 7.

The third dimension of knowledge –specificity- based on autobiographically dated events, is often evidenced by knowledge of names of products (Wagner 2003). Discussants’ awareness and knowledge of specific fair trade products was high; particularly amongst those categories that have been on the market for the longest³⁴. For many discussants, these products were those from which they started buying Fair trade foods and were either the sole or major focus of their Fair trade experience.

In contrast, the reported low awareness could also be explained by a lack of exposure and accessibility to products. This is supported by frequent references to the poor in-store visibility of the products.

YASMIN (OA): It needs to stand out a bit more, the Fairtrade label. It needs to be on the packaging.

Yasmin, initially classified as ‘Involved in Fair trade’ on the basis of the scale, revealed on several occasions attitudes that would suggest that she was not as involved as the claimed to be.

In order to test knowledge at the individual level, a sorting card exercise was used. Discussants were asked to say if Fair trade alternatives could be found in the categories presented. Many discussants through verbal and non-verbal communication expressed surprise when they discovered the extent of the Fair trade range. Previous personal experience or previous exposure to information allowed participants to provide answers they had some certainty about. Nonetheless, most discussants guessed that Fair trade alternatives could be available in the majority of categories presented. In contrast, during the observation exercise, doubt and confusion emerged when habitually purchased products were recognised³⁵ but their fair trade nature could not be confirmed one way or the other. This supports that non-conscious purchases are common and might mean that Fairtrade foods are purchased for other reasons than their fair trade status.

³⁴ See Chapter 2 pg 33 Fairtrade products in UK retail sector

³⁵ During the observation exercise where samples Fairtrade and non Fairtrade labelled products were presented to participants.

Older lifestages (both Adults and Families) and some Young mothers knew about a larger range of categories. Explanations provided illustrate that discussants did not think about the potential availability of the products, they just happened to encounter them. This illustrates the limited, impulsive interest for fair trade.

NATASHA (YA): I think it's because coffee and bananas... if you speak to most people, it's probably more on the forefront of their minds whereas there are some other things that people only pay notice when it's on the packaging that it's fair trade.

DAISY (YF): I am really aware of the bananas; I haven't seen a lot of labels on anything else.

Finally, the last dimension of knowledge explored, abstractness, refers to the technicality of the language used. Some notions were popular for discussants (i.e. Fair trade linked to fair price). Discussants, as reported earlier, lacked the ability to see the direct impact of their purchase- as a consequence of imperfect information and of the credence nature of the fair trade attribute. This in turn influenced the extent to which they were able to build a concrete representation of their actions, again referring back to perceived effectiveness.

PHOEBE (YA): You've got to know how they are helping and exactly what change has happened.

This seems to be the major barrier to convince shoppers to change their lifestyle and to integrate Fairtrade in their shopping repertoire. Behaviour could be altered if these discussants saw and understood concrete actions made with the money gathered. The display of producer stories on the product's pack used to allow this, but their use is being reduced in most supermarket chains. The importance of these informative elements will be reviewed in section 6.4.2.

The purpose of this section was to assess discussants' knowledge about Fair Trade. Knowledge can be assessed on four different dimensions: content and complexity form one part, and dictate the extent to which discussants admitted caring about fair trade. Specificity and abstractness of knowledge, on another side, permit the subjective assessment of knowledge. A partial and low level of knowledge has been identified and discussants reported unsatisfication and further need for information. Discussants often seemed unsure about the definition of Fairtrade, but this is not one of their objectives. When buying Fairtrade products their aim is generally to take into consideration social issues by acting upon them. The understanding of each individual is shaped by encounters

and interactions with peers that increase their knowledge. Because the Fairtrade movement aims to cater for so many issues (global inequities, poverty, child labour, environmental issues), a large spectrum of consumers may recognise in these products a way to act about these issues.(Brown, 2006). As such, the framing of information- framing strategies- Fairtrade fails in reducing the complexities of Fair trade in a single purpose that will be easily understandable by consumers.

The second element constituting internal memory is product related prior experience. This is discussed in the following section.

2) Prior experience

Prior experience (or more exactly product-related experience) refers to the number of experiences that an individual has accumulated over time with the product. Alba and Hutchinson (1987) call this familiarity. If prior experience exists, then it is considered as practical (experienced) knowledge. Experience with a product is usually evaluated along different dimensions (sensory, affective, emotional, and cognitive) the integration thereof eventually leads to the construction of a global attitude towards the product. This potentially affects subsequent consideration of products and purchasing decisions. The variety and accumulation of both consumption occasions (i.e. situational factors) and of product trials (across or within category) participate in the overall prior experience, meaning that the information is accumulated overtime.

The way in which prior experience influenced the extent of discussants' information search was explored.

Knowing that a product exists can result from:

- an on going information search,
- an accidental exposure to the product
- a goal oriented search, which involves careful evaluation of alternatives and can happen regardless of purchase intention.

In others terms, prior experience results from evaluation, purchase and consumption of the products. By adding a temporal dimension to these factors, we can approach them in terms of familiarity (number of times of occurrences of a specific

behaviour) and ability to perform the behaviour (how discussants solve the purchase choice using their prior experience).

It is important to remember that the sample was made of existing buyers of Fairtrade foods, who were revealed to be consumers too. The comparison of different experiences of products across discussants might be difficult given the large spectrum of fair trade foods available. Shoppers might, for example, be classified differently regarding the product or range of products bought, the frequency of purchase of this/these product(s), the place(s) of purchase, the nature of the decision (planned or impulse). In this section we thus try to report common features of previous experiences that discussants reported. We first briefly summarise the views from 'Less Involved' and 'Involved in food and fair trade' discussants.

Less Involved discussants: The experience of these discussants was limited in comparison to the other groups. Purchases were occasional and for some enforced (e.g. Sainsbury's only sells Fair trade bananas). Prior conscious experience was evaluated mainly on the basis of sensory dimension. Emotions and feelings referred more to self-behaviour than to altruistic motives (i.e. guilt reliever behaviour). This contrasts with the discussants 'Involved- in fair trade' for whom the social element of the purchase was more important.

Involved in fair trade: Prior experience was extensive and assessed mostly along sensory and affective dimensions. Most of their purchases were conscious, with only few discussants recognising unintentional purchases. The willingness to try new products (or products that were not in their usual repertoire) existed but so did a perceived lack of opportunities or awareness of available products. These discussants were happy when retailers moved certain of their ranges to 'Fair trade -only' to increase both awareness and sales. Nonetheless, they were then conscious that this constrained their choices and forced all consumers to buy fair trade (e.g. bananas or sugar in Sainsbury's).

The definition of familiarity contains specific reference to the number of occurrences during which the participants have interacted with the product. In this respect, discussants used a precise vocabulary to characterise their purchase frequency. Fruit, coffee and tea were 'weekly' purchases for certain discussants; 'occasional' purchases of other products categories were also mentioned whilst the terms 'treat' or 'special occasion'

were often used to characterise irregular purchases (positive attitudes). Young Adults made specific references to familiarity related with the concept (i.e. awareness):

JESSICA (YA): If you don't know that that's the Fair trade logo, then you don't know... so you probably go on having products in your cupboard with the logo, but then you are not aware.

NIAMH (YA): If you don't know it exists or that it's there or where to go in the supermarket to find it...

Discussants reported that during the first conscious purchase decision cognitive resources were solicited, information was read processed and memorised, implying no further need to pay attention to the information.

ALICE (P): You read it once and then...

The second component of prior experience, ability to perform behaviour, was also cited by some discussions as it was influenced by external factors. Overall, Fairtrade food purchases were spontaneous with only a few regarded as conscious. Most purchasing decisions were made at the point of sale (i.e. unplanned), whilst planned purchases often resulted from habitual behaviour. Furthermore, most of the previous experience reported by discussants occurred thanks to products being selected when being discounted.

TEGAN (YA): I can buy some bits every now and then, but if it's on offer then definitively! I don't think I could afford to buy everything Fair trade.

JODIE (OF): And if it's on offer you might tend to buy this week.

This supports the view that information at the point of sale (in the form of price) can determine a purchase, albeit unrelated to neither the Fairtrade nature of the product nor the other informative elements. This issue will be further pursued in section 6.4.2.

Even though discussants were involved to a certain extent, some type of information search (on-going or goal oriented) was needed to identify the products. Obviously, discussants were unable to explain purchasing decision for non-conscious purchases. The difference in factors influencing spontaneous choice and planned purchases are of interest to this study and will be explored during the in-store observations (stage III).

The evaluation of prior experience was mainly conducted along the sensory dimension but was also assessed on affective/cognitive dimension.

All lifestyles other than Older Adults- who did not comment on this at all- seemed equally interested in commenting on the taste of the product (hedonic factor) and its primordial importance in considering repurchase of a product.

Previous experiences across product categories enabled the assessment of the varying importance of the fair trade attribute across categories for the same shopper. They also helped the evaluation of products that is then integrated in the memory and retrieved when considering future purchasing decisions.

The sensory dimension entails the evaluation of a product on biological, physiological and instinctive levels. Many discussants commented on taste, palatability, appearance and physical attributes, highlighting the importance of functional dimension of the product. The affective dimension was further evidenced through the emotional positive responses being triggered and evoked by the name of fair trade only. The emotional reaction is also linked to the moral dimension of purchases. At the individual level, each type of product evaluation and purchase motive co-exist and interactions can potentially occur. Before going into detail about these elements, the views of the two other involvement groups are summarised below.

‘Involved in fair trade’: Overall, the sensory dimension (i.e. quality, taste) was important for the ‘Involved in fair trade’ although its relative importance compared to other dimensions was lower than for the ‘Less involved’ discussants. Fairtrade foods were perceived to be of higher quality compared to non Fairtrade products. These discussants also conducted evaluation of prior experience on the basis of their other senses too, of which:

- sight (size and appearance) was mentioned as a decisive factor of (re) purchase, particularly for Pensioners and Families.
- smell was a dimension along which the prior experience was assessed.

In sum, satisfaction with sensory attributes was crucial for repeat purchase to occur, as the following quotes illustrate.

AMBER (YA): Fair trade bananas are nicer.

VICTORIA (YA): I was quite impressed by the Fair trade red wine... Really nice. It's quality.

NATASHA (YA): [Fair trade coffee] is so much better than that one.

YASMIN (OA): I still say a lot of this is still down to taste – you would try it and see whether you liked it. Is it going to taste the same as the other, normal Cadbury's? That's all it is about.

KATIE (OA): I drink a lot of coffee and go for what I like more and then I found out it was Fair trade.

JADE (P): And I bought some cereals bars the other day... absolutely wonderful... and there is a Fair trade one and I am not sure what is called (pause) can't remember the name of it... But it's (stops) they are superb... chocolate chips and raisins.

JADE (P): It attracts me. I like that so I am going to buy it.

NICOLE (YF) Maybe some people expect the Fair trade doesn't taste as good and they just think (unclear)...I have never had anything wrong.

The influence of the taste in purchase decision was strongly emphasised in relation to different product categories but distinctions were made across product categories.

ABIGAIL (OA) If it is something like tea or coffee... that's a matter of taste, whether you buy again or not. But the nuts I buy, they are not different to the other nuts but they are Fair trade.

Or not

PHOEBE (YA) Bananas are just bananas; you can't go wrong with Fair trade bananas- well bananas full stop- but with processed products for instance, I don't think that there is a comparison.

YASMIN (OA) I don't think chocolate is much concern.

SAMANTHA (OA): Is it going to taste the same as the normal Cadbury's that's what it is about (...).They are the only choice of bananas in Tesco so you pick them up whatever. I stick to coffee to teas and coffees chocolate, the obvious.

Food is obviously a product for which sensory elements are crucial. What the range of opinions expressed highlights is that, in line with expectations, the sensory dimension was mentioned by all discussants but its emphasis differed across shoppers according to their level of involvement.

Sensory evaluation is made immediately after consumption. Given that negative experiences are more persistent than positive ones- even for involved shoppers – a negative experience on the basis of taste might drive the consumer away from the category. In terms of information search the negative sensory evaluation might be more salient than positive affective evaluation. Furthermore, dissatisfaction with one product might mean that

negative attitudes may be passed on to other product categories and reduce the likeliness to trial (transfer of knowledge).

EMMA (OF) Quality of Fair trade... you don't really know what the quality is going to be, do you? You don't really know what you are buying until you buy it and try it out. It could be lovely; it could not be, so it's a gamble really.

PHOEBE (YA) (More expensive for) that poorer quality

This outlines the importance of previous experience in the formation of attitudes and opinions about Fair Trade. However, Emma argues that even this information might not be able to help future purchases as she cannot be sure of the quality of the product.

The appearance of the product was also identified as a contributing factor, highlighting the importance of packaging (quality, size and image created) when discussants were assessing products:

NIAMH (YA): This packaging (...) it has this automatic assumption that it's gonna taste or whatever... slightly better

MORGAN (YF): It is always... it's so dull. So, you don't think 'oh that looks lovely, I could buy that'.

MORGAN (YF): I don't think you get as much in there as Tesco's normal one; the quantity would be different.

Although these are not intrinsic attributes of the products they enter the information search process, are memorised and contribute to the formation of previous experience. Given the frequency and strength of views expressed, it would appear that packaging (size, quality, image) could be a medium to strong deterrent to purchase.

A cognitive evaluation of the product generally follows the sensory evaluation. This is expressed by the importance attached to the social nature of the purchase. This is when norms and emotions – detailed in section 6.4.3 - enter the set of criteria used to evaluate a product prior to purchase. Fairtrade products provide a somewhat tenuous connection to the world of rural labour. Discussants' easiest association with fair trade was with the non-processed foods rather than with processed products. With respect to this, the extent to which someone's emotions are touched can impact the decision to purchase (impulse) and the (non) use of available information. Where a shopper's experience of the

category is reduced, an increased sensitivity to this type of message might prompt the purchase.

Even if the affective and emotional dimensions can reduce the set of potential alternatives, the decisive factors in the purchase decision will be past product experiences and sensory evaluation. This was generally the case for all lifestages.

VICTORIA (YA) Cos you like it... if you did not like it, you would not buy it.

EMMA (OF): You don't really know what you are buying until you buy it and try it out. It could be lovely; it could not be, so it's a gamble really.

The influence of the affective dimension in the assessment of the experience was also explored, resulting in a diverse range of responses.

VICTORIA (YA): Simply it is better to know that someone put the work in, their personal touch; it's not on the scheme.

PHOEBE (YA): You're doing something about another person. You're aimed at farmers.

JADE (P): It just attracts me. I like that so I am going to buy it and it's a bonus because it is fair trade.

MEGAN (OA): It's for helping - that's why you are buying it.

Young shoppers were the more likely to express emotions and feelings as a decisive purchasing driver compared to other lifestages. This might have further implications for the provision of information. The influence of the product category on the extent to which the affective dimension is relevant in the evaluation of products was not highlighted in any of the groups.

Finally, the interaction between knowledge and product experience (familiarity and evaluation) when making purchasing decisions is exemplified in this example of one shopper explaining the decision-making process for buying tea, which helps to position the salience of the fair trade attribute in the overall purchase decision.

JADE (P): Well if you're going through with your tea selection, for whatever is not strong or something you're more familiar with... if you see the fact that it is Fair trade, that could really help you, be the deciding point. I'm not particularly a coffee buyer and I would just go through and select. Fair trade has sometimes influenced my decision.

This example shows that the hedonic attributes and previous experience are the primary drivers of product choice, the fair trade attribute only being considered subsequently.

The exploration of the constituents of internal information search revealed that knowledge and prior experience (if existing) are used concurrently in informed decisions. Experience and evaluation of products are integrated into knowledge and used in subsequent decisions. The importance of hedonic aspects of the product is greater than the actual consideration for the fair trade attribute and the understanding of the purpose of the Fair trade label. As such, the fair trade attribute seems to be peripheral in the purchasing decision.

The second part of this chapter now examines external search detailing the use of different sources of information. The purpose of the information search (ongoing search or goal oriented) is not considered here as the focus of this section is on the propensity of different sources to provide information likely to trigger a purchase.

6.4.2 External information search

This subsection covers the reported external information search conducted by discussants.

External search involves seeking information from the immediate or wider environment including on pack information, leaflets, advertisements, newspapers, economic operators (e.g. manufacturers, farmers and retailers), friends and/or others.

External search information is engaged as a result of the individual's perceived need. Chapter 3 (section 3.3.3) distinguished four different categories of information sources.

- Personal: Family members, relatives or other individuals who, through word of mouth, convey information.
- Media: This groups sources of information- such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, billboards and the Internet- that can reach a potential large audience.

- Organisations and Independent operators: Sources of information giving information to the public and communication engaged by other economic actors (those include NGO, school, church).
- Labels (on pack information): Refers to on-shelf information but also to information on the product packaging itself that can be accessed by the individual at the point of purchase or after purchase at home.

This study is specifically interested in looking at the use made of point of sale information (labels, on-pack information and to a certain extent other materials at the point of sale) and in their potential to prompt purchase. However, it is understood that information accessed before entering the point of sale can affect purchasing decisions too. Thus, the use of all sources of information was explored during the focus groups.

The use of personal, media and organisational sources is summarised first, followed by a more detailed discussion of the specific role of packaging information.

1) Personal sources

Overall, discussants highlighted the convenience of personal sources of information. In summary,

Less involved in food: When information search was active (rare), personal sources were preferred (less demanding). Information regarding the products was looked at and processed but rarely modified (positively) their purchasing behaviour.

Involved in fair trade: These discussants reported more active information search than the other groups (discussants looked for specific answers to their questions). The need for more information about the Fairtrade label and the lack of promotion of fair trade products was highlighted. Expert opinions and the views of established/respected authorities had some influence on the formation of their attitudes and eventual purchasing behaviour.

The use of external information sources for Involved in Food discussants is now discussed in more detail.

Exposure to information relating to fair trade was generally passive. This was even more the case with personal sources of information, where discussants who did not necessarily seek specific information might still have been told about the issue. Relatives,

friends, who report a positive opinion towards a product have the potential to reinforce/encourage the trial of Fairtrade products. A few points deserve specific attention:

- the influence of children was reported very often in discussions with Families.
- young discussants relied on ‘word of mouth’ consumption experiences and seemed likely to be more influenced by a peer than other age groups.
- young discussants (Families and Adults) had the strongest opinion about the use of personal sources. These individuals, for whom time might be a major constraint and who may lack resources to search information, found this form of communication convenient, reliable and trustworthier.

Many of the discussants commented on the convenience of word-of-mouth communication with word-of-mouth from friends, relatives- the majority of which are children- or acquaintances mentioned frequently in the top information sources used. It was consistently reported that Fairtrade is rarely a conversation topic *per se*, but would be mentioned when discussing product attributes and characteristics.

EMMA (OF): [People can get the information] through education... I used to with my girls...

Or EMMA (OF): Friends telling me about a new product... you listen to your friend while drinking a glass of wine... and she's telling you about what she's tried...

ELIZABETH (YF): Word of mouth as well... if somebody... if I'd popped around to a friend's house, had a cup of tea and coffee and I've had something nice to eat down there, and 'well that was nice, what was it?' 'All Fairtrade,' 'Oh, was it?'

Some discussants confessed to not conducting any active information search regarding fair trade and to being informed only passively. This discussant reveals a low spontaneous interest in Fair Trade but she buys Fairtrade products nonetheless.

PHOEBE (YA): I need it to be spoon-fed to me, because I won't necessarily go looking for it myself. If they are not telling me about it why am I going to?

Overall, all lifestages were receptive to messages from personal sources. The nature of practical (experienced) knowledge passed on provided reassurance about product quality and reinforced social norms. For example, messages sent out by schools to children were reported back to (some) parents, reinforcing the education and awareness on both a short and long term basis.

A somehow different source of information is that given out and relayed to the general public by experts. Although the Fairtrade Foundation does not use this communication channel- celebrity endorsement- to a great extent, discussants report that these sources best succeed in stimulating interest and motivating information search. Reliability and trust in these sources seemed to be high. It was also perceived that these professionals are better able to explain the details and make the issue more approachable for the non-knowledgeable shoppers:

TEGAN (YA) I think the whole Jamie Oliver's thing with the kids that... having watched that...

PHOEBE (YA) It would need Jamie Oliver to do a Fair trade story for me to understand.

The influence of Jamie Oliver in shaping attitudes towards food was widely acknowledged. His judgment and experience was trusted, and as such his influence could encourage behaviour change. In parallel, discussants mentioned that this would be a potential way to increase awareness for fair trade issues and the Fairtrade Foundation, whilst recognising that the cost of such communication might be prohibitive. In practice, celebrity endorsement is not much used as a means to promote awareness and is limited to the Fairtrade Foundation newsletter front-page (Wright & McCrea 2007). Discussants could not give any examples of celebrities supporting Fair trade (e.g. Bono, the U2 singer), suggesting that this form of communication was not capable of reaching the targets of interest.

2) Media

Among the different sources used by the **Less Involved**, mass media was used as a convenient and quick means to gather information – when and if needed- but in most cases, discussants' encounter with information was not intentional. Overall, very few discussants were willing to spare any time to look for information; this may explain why advertisements were commonly perceived as a good communication tool albeit very generic in their explanation about fair trade.

Similarly, the **Involved in fair trade** shoppers searched when there was a specific need to answer a question but accidental exposure to information through media communication was the rule. The influence of experts and authorities was recognised by some respondents but overall the information gathered appeared to be in a largely passive form.

For the **'Involved in food'** discussants, the importance of this mass communication channel is highlighted, although their exposure was mainly accidental (enforced) in circumstances where no information was specifically sought.

In these situations, most of the time, only minimal attention was paid to messages and cognitive involvement seemed limited. For instance, discussants recalled seeing television advertisements for Fairtrade products but were not always able to remember the product(s) promoted, nor the brand. However, discussants were receptive towards TV programs designed to explain ethical issues and the mechanism of the labelling scheme. This supports the effectiveness of media in raising awareness amongst the general population of fair trade issues.

TEGAN (YA) Before I did not really think about that. It's amazing what a TV program can do
ZOE (OF) Programs on the television, that's how I know about it: through the media.

This also highlights the need for an accessible, simple format of information to trigger interest and curiosity that does not require the mobilisation of great cognitive resources. Nonetheless the spontaneous enthusiasm about this communication channel is underlined by the fact that it relies on people's interest in the topic or accidental exposure to the program, therefore missing out the non-informed consumer segments.

NIAMH (YA) How many people would actually change the channel to watch a whole program about it?
NATASHA (YA) Maybe these documentaries and they'd show you where that sugar comes from or show you the process.

Likewise, such large scale, expensive, awareness activities are contested by certain discussants first on the basis of their effectiveness in *actually* changing behaviour and secondly on the grounds that they think the money raised should be redistributed to beneficiaries instead of being invested in marketing communications.

TEGAN (YA): Maybe it's a good thing that they're not spending all their money on media.

TV advertisement, the radio and the Internet to a certain extent, help in raising awareness and conveying generic messages. However, these information sources might not be effective in conveying specific messages for which other sources allowing more control might be preferable. Discussants questioned the effectiveness of media in increasing

knowledge, as they did not allocate enough attention to it. Generally, the use of complementary sources of information sending out messages at different situations (inside and outside point of sale) was recommended. Differences in preferences across sources of information were reiterated: advertising was not perceived as a reliable source of information, thus not used as a resource to answer specific questions but just happen to be encountered, passively. The preference for magazines, newspapers and TV programs as sources to get specific information was established across all the discussants. The trust and reliability of information sources was mentioned repeatedly (this issue will be dealt with in section 6.4.5).

The use of different media seems to be influenced by the time available and varies across lifestages. Pensioners were the only lifestage group willing to spend time and to use the Internet for such purposes.

NICOLE (YF): They put it in their magazines but then you've got to rely on people actually picking it up and reading it.

For many discussants it was the newspapers and the magazines edited by the different retailers that seemed to be the preferred source of information and considered as the most effective means of conveying messages to shoppers. This is because information can be read and processed at the reader's own pace which is not the case with radio or TV communication channels. Furthermore, the issuer of the message can use this communication channel to further explain further details and provide examples.

On the whole, the Internet was not perceived as an effective way to inform people, because it relies on individuals' interest and motivation search for specific information. Only pensioners revealed their preference for this source of information and reported slightly different behaviour.

ALICE (P): If I were to find out more about that I would go on the Internet.

Given the low penetration rate of Fairtrade products this information source seems to be only of use to knowledgeable individuals. In addition to this, both the reliability and the potential commercial bias of information found through this source were mentioned which limits the trust therein and use thereof.

3) Organisations and Independent sources

Less Involved: This group of shoppers appeared to be mostly influenced by more trusted, direct sources of information, such as the church, schools and personal sources of information. These have been historically associated with the fair trade movement and reinforce the credibility of the Fair Trade movement. In line with this, when presented with a description of the Fairtrade Foundation, discussants were not aware of it, and so had difficulties in forming an opinion on it, but perceived it as a profit-making organisation with diverse interests.

Involved in fair trade: Schools were generally perceived as being the most effective institution providing information as they are doing so with an educative vision. Other institutions promoting fair trade, and in particular the Fairtrade Foundation were not known. Nonetheless, some discussants in this group perceived the label as the representation of the work of the Fairtrade Foundation, which they felt people could trust. This highlights that trust in the scheme (trust-confidence) (barely mentioned by these discussants) is superseded by trust in the retailer (trust-reliance).

The '**Involved in food**' discussants revealed that the time pressure in the context of grocery shopping was a deterrent to using the information sent out by retailers, although this segment was more receptive to information in relation to food products at the point of sale than either of the others. This is the place where they are most likely to pay attention to messages due to an increased level of situational involvement (created by the purchase situation). Simultaneously, strong habitual purchasing behaviour is a barrier that limits the attention paid to information. In addition, the importance of in-store signs was emphasised by discussants belonging to the Older Adults and Families lifestages, who were more likely to notice signs (or their disappearance) than the Young adults.

Discussants reported using promotional signs, shelf price tags, and displays to a certain extent but on-packaging information was the most important source (this will be dealt with in the following section from). The point was made that attention to in-store information or information from impersonal (or independent) sources requires a degree of motivation on the part of the individual. Thus, when shoppers know exactly what they want, they tend to ignore the signs and to use previous knowledge to find the products they want. This suggests that signs are only effective when they manage to capture attention, and for certain shoppers:

NATASHA (YA): There isn't a sign saying 'Fair trade down this aisle.'

SHANNON (OF) Having a section where there are only Fairtrade products... if people are really into it, they will shop there; they will know where to go. (...) I think products should also be around the shop; as long as you need your things, you're not gonna go anywhere else to get others.

Shannon was classified as 'Involved in food', but her comments show how quick she was to abandon searching for products, implying that her involvement might not be as strong as suggested.

On the basis of attitudes and self-reported behaviour in the focus groups, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the influence of in-store signs on purchasing behaviour. Discussants were equally interested and disinterested in these signs and consistently referred to contextual and situational factors as important in increasing the level of attention paid to these sources of information. Independent sources seemed to be the most effective in retaining discussants' attention, but could be better used at the point of sale.

The responsibility of the retailer to engage in promotional activities, to re-arrange the layout of the shop and to increase both exposure and number of the products stocked was highlighted on several occasions. This illustrates that shoppers seek ways to limit their search process. Several discussants referred to the potential impact of a designated Fairtrade aisle, as a way to limit the extent of information search required across categories to find the specific products of interest.

A second type of independent source is the organisation certifying and accrediting manufacturers and products. The Fairtrade Foundation generally keeps messages used on promotional material simple. The low awareness of the existence of the Fairtrade Foundation was a surprise. Fairtrade fortnight was conducted two weeks before the focus groups sessions (March 2009) but only one discussant mentioned this event without prompt. The majority of discussants, even after prompting and being given examples of specific activities, had not heard of it. The purpose of the Fairtrade Foundation is to increase awareness among the population, and discussants on many occasions supported the use of such campaigns to increase awareness. This is another example of irrational behaviour and/or inconsistent reasoning, as discussants suggested ways of being better informed but at the same time confessed to making little use of them when they became

available. This suggests that promotional campaigns can only attract individuals who already have a base knowledge and certain level of interest for the issues concerned.

To conclude this section, the primary importance of School, a source already highlighted in the paragraph dealing with personal information sources³⁶ in increasing awareness and interest for fair trade products was emphasised by many of the discussants in the 'family' lifestage groups, with information learnt in school being conveyed to household members via children, whose influence on shopping patterns is huge. A few respondents mentioned the Church as a pioneering institution promoting fair trade that retains the status of reliable source of information. However, the role of the church was not discussed at great length as most of the Fairtrade purchases these days are made in supermarkets. If shoppers are familiar and experienced enough with the products, all that is needed is labels or in store information acting as prompts.

4) Labels

Less Involved: Generally, the appearance of the packaging was perceived as being intentionally unattractive and boring. Evidence of the low familiarity with and awareness of the products' packaging was presented during the session. The information from the packaging was used only to identify and select products. Information search on products was only conducted with specific goals in mind, not for ongoing information gathering.

Involved in fair trade: These discussants used both in store and on pack information to simplify the identification of products. Generally, positive attitudes were held towards packaging. Interestingly, the role of each element of the packaging (front, back, picture, colourful story of primary producer, tagline) was distinguished. On one occasion, the packaging was also associated with sustainability and environmental concerns.

Involved in food

This part of the chapter is mainly based on the observation exercise when discussants were presented a sample of products (both Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade labelled) but also on their self reported behaviour. Overall, discussions revealed that

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several elements were used in the purchasing decision. Prompts at the point of purchase participated in increasing the situational involvement and in reinforcing previous choices. Unequivocally, discussants reported that the price would be an important piece of information they would need to know before further considering certain products. In our situation the price was not communicated.

During the observation, comments about elements looked for, or looked at, and reasons for doing so (or not) were encouraged. We detail now the way in which different elements of the packaging were understood and commented upon. Spontaneously, discussants referred to the various sections of the packaging- this helped to assess the relative importance (the salience) of each element. When discussants mentioned price as a crucial variable used in reaching a purchasing decision, comments were not dismissed but discussants were reminded of the objective and focus of the exercise. Overall, the most commented elements include the FAIRTRADE Mark, the general appearance of the packaging (front and back) colour and pictures, the relative importance of which varied across the different lifestage groups. These elements are now reviewed in more detail:

- The FAIRTRADE Mark was widely recognised by the discussants

This gives support to the familiarity and knowledge components of information search. Once the visual appearance of the label and its meaning are known, the identification is merely automatic as shoppers learn to recognise the logo (shape and colours) and do so unconsciously.

JADE (P) I have learnt to recognise that [logo]. I sort of remember now.

Jade was classified as an Involved in food and Fairtrade discussant but this comment in conjunction with her previous claimed behaviour raises doubts about her true interest for and involvement with fair trade. Multiple references to the inconsistent place of the label were made; added to this was the different colouring of the logo (black & white and coloured) that added to the complexity of the task. Several discussants were surprised when they encountered the black and white version. Whilst the majority of discussants did not see this as a major issue, some of the pensioners were confused and it clearly took all their attention to compare both logos (See Figure 6.2 below).



Figure 6.2: The different colouring available for the FAIRTRADE Mark

JADE (P): it is not in the Fair trade colours, is it?

Once the FAIRTRADE Mark was recognised, attempts to explore its meaning and relevance in the purchase decision proved fruitless, as it appeared to have little impact at all.

Discussants generally regarded appearance as an indirect indicator of quality and used it to make inferences about the product. Overall, more negative than positive attitudes were expressed about the packaging. Certain discussants assumed that fair trade packaging was specifically designed in a certain way to remain discrete and not to stand out on shelves. Young mothers express a general negative perception of Fairtrade product packaging, with the exception of

KATIE (OA): Jackson's... yeah, I'd think it would probably be like a very expensive [brand].

There is still the perception that a high-end brand could not carry the Fairtrade label because the image associated with the brand and the company images would not fit with the purpose of fair trade. A strong association existed between packaging and product expectations that reinforced this view.

CHLOE (YF): I always thought that they make it look boring to make it feel righteous.

Pensioners and Young Mothers were most likely to notice the unique colour of the Tesco Fairtrade range, which helped prompt the choice and identification of products, a method they would like to see generalised. It was argued that using a consistent colour for the packaging of the range of Fairtrade products could be used as a heuristic helping shoppers to identify the products more readily.

– Visuals

Discussants reported using the pictures and other elements displayed on the packaging in many ways. The variety of samples used is presented in the Figure 6.3 below.

Before moving on, it is important to note that not all the products presented had pictures of farmers on them.



Figure 6.3: Examples of product packaging presented to the participants.

The importance of the colouring and the way the different elements combined to create strong images was widely noted:

ALICE (P): I really like that packaging because I think that black and orange stands out. You have got a little person on there, you got the Fair trade sign, and you got a bit about it on the back of the pack as well.

ALICE (P): I personally do like the picture of the farmer... I like the way they have photographs of them actually.

The use of visuals stimulated the discussants' imagination, one of whom said they could imagine the worker's 'blood and sweat' being used in producing goods. This reinforces the view that goods made under the Fairtrade scheme are perceived as being the result of 'harder work' compared with others. For example, one might think

differently about the value of the work carried in the cacao plantations compared to the efforts of the workers in the Nescafe factory. In this sense, it reinforces the personalisation of the workers and reminds shoppers about the artisanal nature of these products whether it is actually true or not.

NATASHA (YA): It's knowing that someone's worked hard and then will get rewards.

However, using pictures with indigenous producers seems to be a double-edged weapon. It appears that pictures are used for illustrative purposes (along with a legal disclaimer). Detailed attention was paid to the packaging (a very unnatural behaviour) allow for all kinds of information to be found. As the majority of discussants were not very familiar with fair trade packaging they were passionate about what they saw, which was widely perceived as an attempt by marketers to manipulate shoppers. The consequences of this potential misleading cue was -given the ethical connotation of Fairtrade purchases- perceived to be even worse than if it had been for other products. In this respect, it was generally thought that the disclaimer should still not allow these techniques to be used. This was usually expressed in a relatively calm tone with the exception of one occasion when some anger was expressed at the messages portrayed and the images created.

MORGAN (YF): (reading) Any photographs used on this pack simply represent..is representative. It is not an actual Fair trade farm or farmers who supply the products

MORGAN (YF): What's the bloody point in having somebody down on the ground if it is not even a true representation...Well, it's a representation of it... if it is not an actual real photo? There is no point really unless you are going to show the real photo on there.

CG You'd prefer not having any or

MORGAN (YF): (unintelligible) a bloody fake photo of the, you know, around the corner you know blooming somebody faking in it

MORGAN or just don't do it at all

Morgan felt misled by the use made of the pictures. When she realised that she might be wrong in thinking that the product was actually produced as it appeared in the picture, the cognitive dissonance expressed was shocking, as was the repeated use of the word 'bloody' as an expression of her anger.

The marketing tools used in the communication can be interpreted very differently from the intended message, and may have had a counterproductive effect. This again links

back to the issue of trust (see section 6.4.5) that is entangled in all the information sources reviewed. With regards to differences across lifestages, the young families seemed to be the shoppers the most affected by this issue. Discussants from this segment felt they had been manipulated by information or at least misled and their emotional feelings abused.

Other on pack elements which discussants mentioned included:

- Country of Origin: There was a consistent mention of ‘developing countries’ (Fair trade countries) across all the groups. The association of fair trade with developing countries was strong (showing an understanding of the definition and purpose of the scheme). However, the belief that Fair trade goods only come from African countries was also strongly held and reported across the groups. At the same time, there was no mention of specific countries so that the exact provenance was unknown unless a detailed exploration of the packaging was conducted (unlikely in the supermarket). Nevertheless, provenance does not seem to be an important attribute. In preliminary discussions about grocery shopping in general³⁷, a number of discussants reported having a certain interest in the provenance of their food. However, the observation exercise revealed that this information was rarely consulted, again illustrating the potential for an attitude-behaviour gap. It is also a feature of focus groups, in which people act and behave differently from their ‘normal’ state, which supports the need to conduct observation in real life to capture the natural behaviour of shoppers.

On certain products, small inserts about ‘Producer Stories’ explaining the benefits of Fairtrade to producers and details of the fair trade scheme attracted positive comments and stimulated a positive emotional state - the story provided a realistic and tangible context upon which discussants could build their expectations. By using these small narratives, the aim is to create a link and reinforce connections with producers. It helps the consumers visualising the people from whom they purchase the products.

LILY (YF): Actually the photograph of people who live there and the whole story... I thought it was so nice, I actually bought it.

³⁷ Not reported in the context of this study

This young mother commented that the story touched her emotionally and that the sensitive dimension, altered positively her purchase decision. However, although recognising this effect, the temporal effect was also recognised and the potential to lead to information overload was highlighted.

The quote below reveals that this strategy should be used cautiously, to limit the risks of overloading the potential buyer with too much information.

TEGAN (YA) I think...It doesn't even need to have a whole story. On your bananas there is so much information on the labels anyway...It just... just the general kind of knowledge or like, information out there and then look on the additional information on the packaging itself.

Once again there is a contradiction here as not many discussants reported using these sources of information yet, at the same time, many reported a need for such information about the real benefits of fair trade (see section 6.4.1). This issue will be further researched in stage III of the study.

Awareness of and attitudes towards the FAIRTRADE Mark were commented on both spontaneously and when prompted, revealing the extent to which the use of the label extended beyond mere product recognition. The different functions of the FAIRTRADE Mark, as expressed by discussants are now reviewed in detail.

The FAIRTRADE Mark can be

- a direct purchase cue (identification tool, automatic process activated for a low cognitive involvement task) as it provides strong enough evidence (of the fair trade attribute) to stop information search and reduce the need for further processing. This behaviour was evident across all lifestages:

NATASHA (YA): I just look for the label.

ALICE (P) I always look for the sign actually, cos that's the Fairtrade actually...if I was looking for a specific... ermm if I was going out to buy Fairtrade stuff I would look for the logo first

KATIE (OA): I don't even know if their bananas are Fair trade to be honest cos they are not having stickers on their bananas in Tesco.

ELEANOR (P): If you wanted Fairtrade maybe then you could look the sign and get the Fairtrade

The identification of a product was identified by many discussants purely by the presence of the label on the packaging, leaving them with no need for further information search, reducing the perceived risk of the purchase by providing some form of external guarantee.

JADE (P) well obviously if you are going through with your tea selection (...) if you see the fact that it is Fair trade that could help you, be the deciding point.

CG: Right

JADE (P) Cos I am not particularly a coffee buyer and I would just go through and select. Fair trade has sometimes influenced my decision.

KATIE (OA): On some products it says Fairtrade... I mean it is quite prominent, isn't it?

This reveals that the format of the information can potentially influence its salience and its potential to capture attention:

- to discard a previously selected purchase (a more complex role for claims than simple cue to confirm a purchase decision).
- to trigger the demand for more information search; as highlighted by some discussants:

CHLOE (YF): I think once it catches your interest then you are in the shop and you go 'oh! that's Fair trade'

DAISY (YF): Yeah and if there is more information and then you'd learn more about it and then you'd understood... I think people could definitively do it more often.

KATIE (OA): I'd like to have known what FT was. Before I knew anything, I would have presumed that the people that produced the stuff got a fair deal out of it.

NICOLE (YF): Usually if it's got Fairtrade it'd just go in (unclear). It just goes in and most of it I could read at home.

Interestingly, this discussant did not discard the information entirely, reporting that some information gathering occurred post purchase. In this respect the label may simply trigger more information search.

This is a positive finding in the light of our research proposition: being exposed to information in the purchase situation, via the packaging can trigger both interest and further search.

In summary, this section of the chapter has presented the findings relating to the role of external sources of information. Mostly, we have seen that only basic information is used (if any at all) to prompt a Fairtrade purchase. External information is accessed by accidental exposure most of the time and rarely actively searched. Certain external sources of information are preferred over others as the format of the information they provide might be more easily understood. External sources of information mainly contribute to increasing awareness.

The use(s) of each element of the packaging, in relation to information provision was (were) reviewed. The perceived functions a credence attribute (in the present case the FAIRTRADE Mark) can have were also reviewed. Their role is more complex than one may think. The attention paid to information at the point of sale is limited (as reported) and very specific. As such, the importance of the context in the way the FAIRTRADE Mark is used has been revealed, highlighting the need to research more in depth real-life purchasing decisions. Shoppers might be interested -but under the influence of more pressuring issues at the purchasing decision time- might postpone their information search. This reinforces the need to observe shoppers acting naturally to observe their behaviour and to get insights in the mode of reaching purchasing decisions.

The observation exercise is an effective way to investigate the elements that discussants are most interested in. A strong evidence of the use of heuristics (packaging colour, claims) in purchasing decisions was given. This simplifies the identification of products. In turn, this reduces the allocation of cognitive resources involved in the purchasing decision.

Discussants express higher information needs:

- when they are at the point of purchase (situational involvement), when the FAIRTRADE Mark may be identified and be either a trigger to purchase or a reinforcement tool
- outside of the shopping context, when time pressure is reduced and more attention given. In this respect, more education via information sources used regularly for other matters- newspapers, stores magazines – seems possible.

Delivery timing and relevance of the issue appear to be crucial factors in influencing the likeliness of discussants to read or discard certain information.

Neither the influence of the brand, nor that of the product category appears in the discussion of the focus groups. This does not mean that they do not exist but does mean it is conceivable that knowledge can be transferred across categories.

6.4.3 Norms

Discussants often referred to 'the majority of people', 'most people' revealing their need to position and compare themselves with other shoppers in an attempt to normalise their behaviour.

Two types of norms are called upon to justify self-behaviour:

- Social norms, imposed by the society on shoppers.
- Personal norms, self imposed and linked to each individual system of values and priorities. They are those things that make us act responsibly.

Norms strongly guided discussants' decisions: the influence of the altruistic dimension (i.e. personal norms) seemed stronger than the moral dimensions (i.e. social norms). Altruistic purposes were central and helped both the personalisation of producers and the connection between shoppers and producers. This in turn reinforced repeat purchase behaviour. The (mis) representation of beneficiaries of the scheme as 'poor and in the need' was evident across all the groups. This is illustrated by discussions focussed on taking up the role of a saviour for these producers. Only one participant mentioned the influence of 'Personal relevance' on shopping behaviour and specifically on Fairtrade foods purchase.

Social norms often have the greatest impact in deciding a first time purchase. Countless references were made during discussions (e.g. 'doing my bit', 'what you should do'). The initial understanding of fair trade is often rooted in the social benefits for producers, and linked to their neediness. Associations and comparisons were made between charity and Fairtrade. The discussions invariably highlighted the importance of the moral dimension of the purchase:

TEGAN (YA): There is this kind of moral saying that we should buy Fair trade now so

NIAMH (YA): Depends on where your priorities are, what is important for you.

PHOEBE (YA): You are making a conscience-driven decision. That's where for me it links with the sustainability message.

ZOE (OF): With the Fair trade products I am buying I feel I am doing my bit, which is a lot more than some people.

But acting in line with social norms is acceptable until a certain extent as was also highlighted by this group of shoppers, in which guilt was felt and experienced up to a certain point only.

NICOLE (YF): I think that you know for me, if I buy quite a few FT products and if there is one thing I decide not to buy FT then I don't kick myself in the back.

The choice is imposed somehow on the shopper and does represent an effort as opposed to being natural, thus stressing the importance of social norms. However, the importance of norms in influencing decisions seems to be temporary with many shoppers describing similar experiences.

GEORGIA (OA): I think I have bought I am bored of the all Fair trade thing so I just put it in and it become an habit.

TIA (YA): I just buy what I usually buy: I buy Fair trade coffee, I don't buy Fair trade juice because we drink too much, I buy PG tips, I don't buy the Fair trade tea. I just buy the Fair trade bananas.

Here a reference to Veblen's theory of Status Display seems necessary. Indeed, this theory explains the importance of emulation in the development of consumer society. The theory also describes how we compare ourselves with others in deciding what and how we consume (Veblen, 1899, p.25). For instance, by buying a Fairtrade certified product, one might expect to communicate a certain social status which will be displayed through interpersonal interactions. In an attempt to understand Fairtrade purchasing behaviour and involvement therein, some suggest that that it should be disaggregated in a series of decisions, that might be connected by common values or that can be the result of situational influences. Peattie (1999) argues that this approach to research makes it possible to identify compromises and trade offs occurring during decision processes.

Many discussants reported habitual behaviour; which supports the mediating/moderating role of involvement. Some shoppers could not consider making extra efforts to purchase Fairtrade products. This is explained by Miller (1998, p. 130) who argued that some ethical shoppers do not accept the categorisation ethical shoppers which would imply attaching expectations (or stereotypes) about values held and behaviour.

TEGAN (YA) I am sure that people that live entirely on Fair trade, half of them are really into environmental constant way of life because they know about it, because they are involved in that.

This expectation in engaging in a way of life that does entail commitment is perceived as a barrier. This contrasts with a dissonant view detailing reasons used to justify the purchase in certain cases.

YASMIN (OA) I don't drink an awful lot of coffee and I buy that (Fairtrade) because I just think at least I know ...it's all sort of... You see these programs and ethically you think how this sort of ... You are helping that particular group of people in, you know, these sorts of countries so you're just hoping that the money is going to them.

This discussant, initially classified as 'Involved in fair trade', revealed in this comment that she purchased Fairtrade products only because of the social benefits thereof, suggesting that her values are highly developed and she buys Fairtrade product on purpose. She might be an extreme example of someone really committed to the fair trade, and for whom the sensory attributes are not prevalent in the purchasing decision. However, in other comments she made she seems not to translate her attitudes into behaviour

YASMIN (OA) If I did not like it, it would not necessarily mean I would buy just because it is Fair trade.

In contrast, the expression of purchase decisions made under the influence of personal norms is scarce:

NATASHA (YA) I'd buy coffee purposively cos it is Fairtrade.

MORGAN (YF) I would not go and buy Fair trade chocolate it probably tastes the same but I am scared for my comfort zone. You're still buying what you know.

This last quotation exemplifies that habitual purchases are sometimes held so strongly that very little can be done to alter behaviour and trigger interest for new or different (fair trade) products.

Fair trade blurs the boundary between trade and charity; shoppers are encouraged to build relationship(s) of concern with struggling producers working on the other side of the world to produce the goods they are buying and consuming. Pictures are important in that they help to convey a more personal dimension with the products, and help in re-creating a connection between consumers and producers. Pictures simplify the

personification of the beneficiaries and a representation of the conditions of production is communicated clearly.

With regard to the influence of lifestage on the role of norms in the choice of products, it was mainly the Young Adults that to referred most strongly to it. They are also the lifestage most confused about the purpose of the scheme.

6.4.4 Involvement

This section builds upon the previous one in reviewing the different behavioural consequences of involvement in fair trade. We have seen that the issue of fair trade is not a persistent one, and that shoppers mainly act on a temporary basis, highlighting situational involvement.

MORGAN (YF): It is something that is not constantly in your face, no offence. But take that board down and (interrupted)...Over a certain period of time -might be a week or a fortnight-you soon forget.

Gradually, after purchase, the interest fades away (situational involvement). This illustrates that until involvement in an issue reaches a certain threshold, regular purchasing behaviour is not attained and other attributes are more salient.

Most of the 'Involved in food' discussants shared the following view

JADE (P): It is not something I would say 'I'll go in the shop and I am only going to buy fair trade.' It just attracts me. I like that so I am going to buy it, and it's a bonus because it is fair trade.

This supports the view that the point of sale is where discussants' attention should be grabbed and retained. The way they think at that time might be very different from when they enter the store or answer a survey.

Throughout this chapter we have seen that differences in attitudes and behaviour exist. It is also important to note that involvement might be a factor that explains the variation but other factors could intervene as well and as such it is important to understand the behaviour of the discussants we have studied in greater detail (see chapter 7).

6.4.5 Trust

Trust has been mentioned repeatedly throughout the chapter in relation to information sources, as it influences greatly the use of different sources of information. The main characteristic of credence attributes is that the verification of the claim is costly for individuals. The believability of the claim then is a major issue for discussants. This section explores discussants' comments relating to this topic. Trust relates to the Fairtrade claim itself, the certifiers, manufacturers and retailers. Overall, discussants were not sure that the premium paid helps to support the fair trade cause.

NATASHA (YA): That's the bit they do say. I keep thinking what does that mean? How much of that is going on the packaging or the people that have brought here on the admin?

TEGAN (YA): I heard reports that it has been hijacked by people and although it is Fair trade it does not help the workers; actually it has been hijacked to increase sales. That is why it is more expensive and then it does not necessarily help... but then I don't know what would be a better route to help a couple of growers in Kenya.

Both strong scepticism and low understanding of the meaning of the fair trade scheme were revealed. Few discussants suspected that manipulation of the information for vested interests could be possible, and that being critical towards the information provided was essential. Nonetheless, products were still purchased, as it appears that norms exerted a greater influence on behaviour.

PHOEBE (YA): Who says that the increase is not gonna go down the line and the whole process is gonna get an increase rather than just the original workers.

CHLOE (YF): You'd like to think it is a little farmer with children but what if it is something that is government owned? A lot of third world countries are run by despotic dictators where you don't know...

With respect to issues of trust, Young Adults and Families seemed to be the most reluctant to trust claims. These discussants were much more likely to express doubts about diverse facets of the scheme. They enquired about the fair trade supply chain as they were worried about the potential unfair treatment given to the primary producers. A common desire for clarification and concerns about being misled by information were repeatedly expressed

PHOEBE (YA): I am interested in making sure that my money does not buy things that I find offensive

ELEANOR (P): You have the feeling it's gonna come out that Fair trade, they're not really; it's cos they're all trying to outdo each other. So they're all jumping on the bandwagon with the fair trade.

Manufacturers' claims were sometimes assumed to be made on a temporarily basis to follow trends of the market and were often perceived as manipulative.

No references to specific information sources were made, with some discussants expressing blind faith and belief in the claims made. As mentioned earlier³⁸, the attitudes of Young Mothers and Pensioners were particularly damaged (albeit only temporarily) if they suspected that there might some misleading information on the packaging.

Repeated references to the positive influence of the opinion of experts on trust emerged in the groups. Endorsement of the claims by an authority acts positively on the belief of the claim. However, discussants seemed to be likely to be more influenced by endorsement of products by certain brands. Specifically, both the influence of the brand image and manufacturer reputation were shown to have positive effect on the perception of the Fairtrade product. With respect to differences across lifestages, Pensioners were the discussants who reported the greatest need for evidence of claims' authenticity:

ELEANOR (P): You want to have a proof of it.

JADE (P): I just give them the benefit of the doubt.

Young shoppers also tended to likely to think this way, with endorsement enhancing credibility and trust towards the concept.

TEGAN (YA): [If Cadbury had their own] it would add a lot more credibility to the Fairtrade brand because it is a brand and they are trying to promote it as a brand in its own right. The co association with Tesco's or Cadbury's I don't know... if it is just fair trade chocolate that are just Fairtrade by themselves.

NIAMH (YA): because it's Heinz and of course you go and 'oh that's Fairtrade' and you know if they had the bigger brands then people buy them automatically.

MORGAN (YF): If Cadbury had his [Fairtrade chocolate bar] I would definitively buy it.

³⁸ Section 6.4.2 p176

NIAMH (YA): Is it Cadbury taking advantage of fair trade? To get that reputation...

This highlights that the brand image and reputation supersedes the Fairtrade claim, but that the Fairtrade scheme could benefit from this association where the endorsement of fair trade is perceived to be genuine. This may evolve over time with the accumulation of knowledge:

CHLOE (YF): 'Once it catches your interest then you are in the shop and you go 'oh that's Fair trade' and you...

This specific case outlines the role of in store cues and information in enhancing interest in an issue, creating purchasing involvement. The link is also made between situational and enduring involvement.

The importance of trust, both of the retailer and its reputation, in the product's perception and evaluation was reported to a much greater degree than was expected:

NIAMH (YA): Surely it is Tesco's responsibility to promote their products.

JODIE (OF): Because I think it is on trust. Tesco producing their own brands with 'Fair trade' stamped on them... you trust Tesco is sort of like responsible that that money is going to where it should be going, not just using the logo and...

ABBY (OA): You are putting your trust in the supermarket; it is the supermarket's responsibility that they have checked the background of their products.

This is potentially associated with entire faith in the claim, or conversely, results from a complete disinterest in it. Either way the consequence is a reduced need/desire for information search.

Regarding the Fairtrade Foundation, official certifier of products, discussants were not highly aware of its existence or purpose. Nevertheless, they liked the idea that products must be approved by an independent organisation before reaching the retailers' shelves.

PHOEBE (YA): The Fairtrade Foundation is an organisation with respect and credibility.

PHOEBE (YA): What kind of profits do they make? If they are a trade mark or a branding they must be making some money out of it...

NICOLE (YF): It should be approved by this Fairtrade organism who is actually managing this. and the money is going back to the right people. That's quite reassuring I think.

Interestingly, providing too much information could also raise suspicion from discussants, which in turn, potentially has a counterproductive effect.

DAISY (YF): Because you know enough information about something, then you stop to regular products like you know. When you do weekly shopping you go in, you pretty much know what you want.

Regarding differences observed across lifestages, Young adults were the most sceptical about the claims made by the Fairtrade Foundation, with respect to both the mechanisms and the benefits of the scheme. Endorsements of products by major companies were for these discussants, the best way to increase the trustworthiness of the claim. Pensioners were also cynical and sceptical, confronted as they were with confusing, and often contradictory, information and often comparing it strongly with the 'Organic' claim. These discussants expressed greater need for information with the purpose of confirming and reinforcing their choices and behaviour. This highlights that their behaviour is highly dependent on social norms and that continuous reassurance needs to be given to these shoppers.

Conversely, Older Adults and Families approached trust from a different perspective, placing considerable faith and trust in supermarkets or other economic actors instead of the Fairtrade Foundation.

There was no evidence that trust was affected by product categories, the general impact of which is discussed in the final section, along with the lifestage of the shopper.

6.4.6 External Factors

1) Lifestage

Differences in the use of sources of information have been highlighted throughout this chapter. The unique point mentioned here refers to the difference in knowledge between Younger and Older discussants.

Discussants from the Older lifestages appeared to be more knowledgeable on certain issues. Older shoppers have had more occasions to purchase food, thus, more occasions to learn. Discussants from Older Families were the only ones to mention environmental benefits in relation to Fairtrade standards. Differences between Young

Adults and Families were also observed, and it is proposed at this point, that this might be an effect of the influence of family members (notably children).

2) Product category

The discussions revealed that the importance of the FAIRTRADE Mark varies across categories. In behavioural terms, this might mean that the Fairtrade attribute is being ignored, if not valued. This would suggest that the interest and further involvement might be 'support specific' (product specific). This further supports the findings of the dunnhumby data presented in Chapter 5 showing that certain product categories perform better than others, with differences also observed across the different CAMEO segments.

The presentation of these findings has established that relationships seem to exist between the variables we study in the context of Fairtrade foods purchases. The discussions provided insights about the ways in which knowledge about fair trade is constructed including direct experience of products (practical experience) or accumulation of information (theoretical knowledge). However, we acknowledge certain limits to these focus groups. Discussants may have failed to exchange all information they had and groups may have focussed only on shared information (Levine, 1995) or on a subset of all they knew. Additionally, we point that had they been interviewed individually rather than forced to share information with people they did not know. On one hand, discussants expressed important needs for information but also reported the perception of irrelevant information in the purchasing situation context. There is thus a form of paradox here, where discussants do not use information available to them – reported uses of information are low, and probably overestimated- but regret the lack thereof, on specific elements. Whilst first time purchases often entail a more thorough search, interest fades away and habitual behaviour is built (situational involvement gradually disappears). As a form of declarative data, it may be that once discussants in the groups have identified the obvious, routine activities and sources of information, it might be, that the group dynamics did not lead to consideration of 'what else'. In other words, that discussants did not or were not encouraged to further dig into underlying reasons of their use of certain sources of information. Though, this comment should be lessened as in some groups, the discussion revealed the major role of norms and prompts via children's education to maintain both a high level of interest and regular purchasing.

Language is our primary access to people's experiences. Because experience is not directly observable, data about it depend on the participants' ability to reflectively discern aspects of their own experience and to effectively communicate what they discern through the symbols of language. In addition, one should remember that people do not have complete access to their experiences. The capacity to be aware of or to recollect one's experiences is intrinsically limited. Although self-report evidence is necessary and valuable for inquiry about human experience, it is not to be misconstrued as mirrored reflections of experience.

As a result of the focus group findings a preliminary conceptual model of the relationship between the different constructs is proposed (Figure 6.4).

The use of information is at the centre of a network of factors, hence influenced in many ways. The focus groups revealed in first instance that the opportunity to encounter information was a major determinant of further information search. In the context of an accidental exposure, there is not any active choice of information source made by the individual; only preferences in the type of information and trust in the information source intervene in this case. As expected the weight of previous experience as well as that of knowledge are great in deciding the use of information. Finally, the repeated references to the importance of the context were noted, and so were the differences in behaviour observed for different product categories.

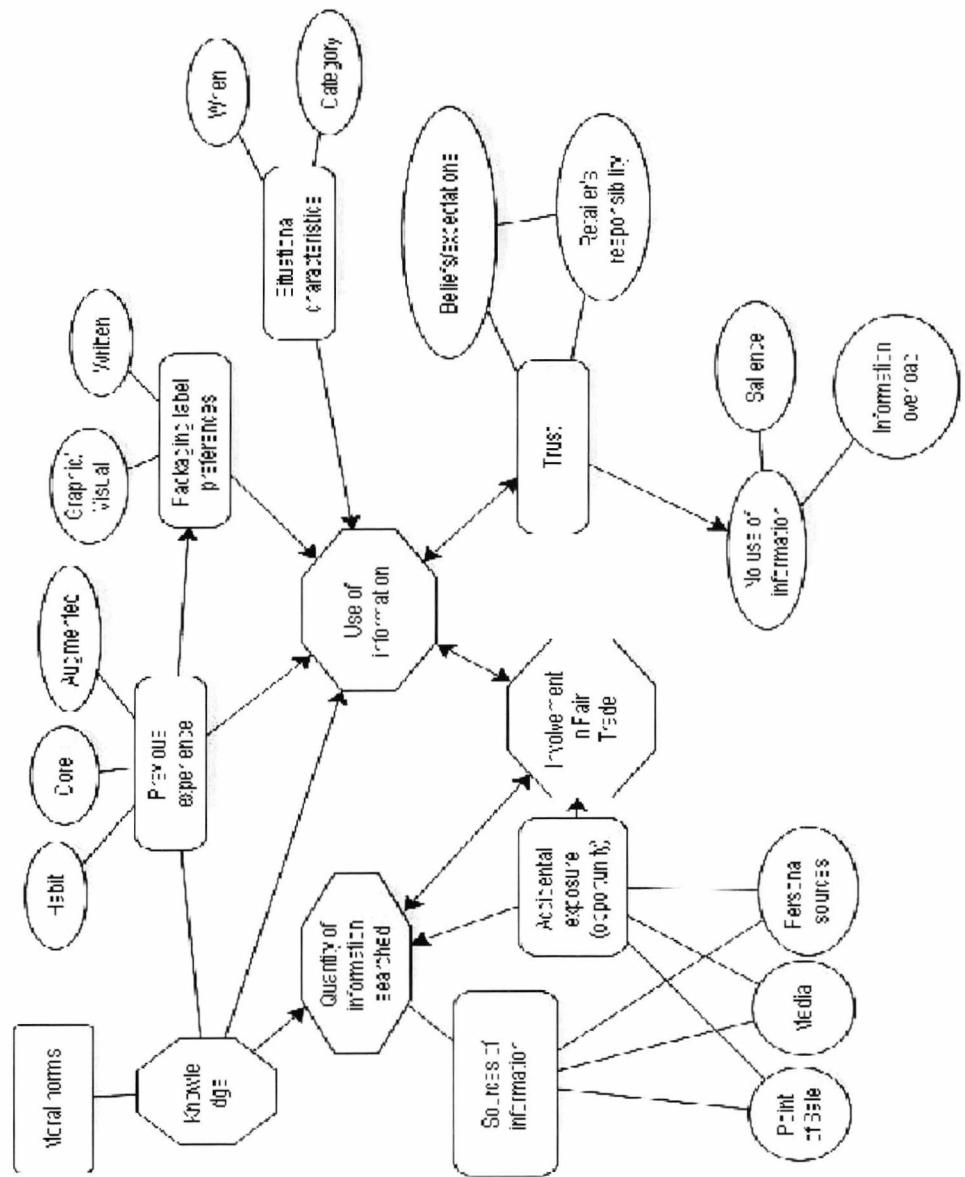


Figure 6.4: Model of analysis

6.5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings of the focus groups during which attitudes and behaviour towards fair trade, Fairtrade foods and the FAIRTRADE Mark were explored in relation to the research questions. The analysis followed the structure established at the end of chapter three, and aimed at capturing the internal and external search activities.

Our sampling criteria, based on the literature and the dunnhumby data allowed focussing on involvement and lifestage to form the discussion groups. Early in the analytical process it was identified that discussants who could be qualified as 'Involved with food'- a transition level from Less Involved in food to Involved in fair trade- were the most interesting in the context of our research questions. Hence, it was decided to focus the analysis on them and discuss at length the heterogeneous nature of their behaviour.

The thematic analysis reveals that the likeliness to pay attention to information is as much under the influence of situational circumstances as it is of personal relevance. Discussants access information mostly fortuitously, although exposure does not necessarily imply processing. The importance of personal sources and independent organisations was highlighted in providing reliable information. The way in which the different elements of the packaging were perceived and used was reviewed, outlining differences across lifestages. In this respect, the important role of trust has emerged, supporting previous literature on labelling.

The salience of different elements varies across the different lifestages providing justification for all of them to exist. It is still interesting to investigate further in order to evaluate the impact of potential modifications (increasing logo size, adding producer stories etc...). Implications for communication strategies are foreseen. Certain discussants might not be reached by the existing information policies used and never have an opportunity to see the information. The Fairtrade Foundation's annual nationwide campaign is an example of this, in that it mainly reinforces behaviour of existing Fairtrade buyers but fails to attract new ones.

Our approach, exploratory in nature included an observation exercise during the focus group sessions, to best approximate the situation of purchase and help discussants to recall their behaviour. A physical observation of the products was sought to help eliciting

unconscious behaviour that could be observed. The role of credence attribute and of on pack information appears however to be more complex than originally assumed. As such, the importance of the context in the way the FAIRTRADE Mark is used has been revealed, highlighting the need to take a closer look at 'real-life' purchasing decisions. This is because the influence of other factors in the grocery store might prevent shoppers from searching for (let alone using) information.

Chapter 7

Accompanied shopping

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Shoppers' attitudes towards fair trade issue and their previous experience of purchase of Fairtrade products have been explored in focus groups. The analysis thereof, presented in chapter 6 highlighted that shoppers broadly fall into three groups:

- 'Less involved'- these individuals are less interested than others in food issues and have few requirements for information and labelling- they are avoiding the information.
- 'Involved in food'- these individuals are part of the mainstream segment, they are attuned to food issues but tend to change their behaviour on a short-term basis. They would revert easily to their original patterns once media focus on the issue has reduced.
- 'Involved in food and fair trade'³⁹-these individuals are generally very interested about food issues, very attentive to new information and aware of the details.

Accompanied shops further deepen the insights obtained in the focus groups. They also provide a better understanding of information search strategies used when choosing Fairtrade products. In turn, this helps exploring and identifying potential discrepancies between attitude and actual behaviour, as such allowing the study of the influence of contextual variables. The focus groups provided evidence that shoppers react differently to different communication channels and different information formats. The response to

³⁹ Again in this chapter, this group of shoppers will be referred to as 'Involved in fair trade' to ease the reading.

displays, signs and other forms of point-of-sale of communication is expected to vary across shoppers too. Additionally, the effectiveness of a promotional campaign might vary across segments. In order to explore these differences, accompanied shops were used to observe a 'typical' shopping mission undertaken by shoppers with different levels of involvement, different attitudes towards fair trade and differing (claimed) purchasing behaviour with respect to Fairtrade products.

From the classification of shoppers derived from the focus groups, it is assumed that individuals located in the middle of the continuum might be the more receptive to information in general and food labelling information in particular. This is because those (involved) shoppers with a strong interest in fair trade, or ethical products more generally, are likely to have researched the issue(s) thoroughly by themselves, whilst the 'Less Involved' individuals may remain impermeable to such endorsements. Indeed, they may even not be aware of their existence. The middle (mass market) however, may take a relatively unconsidered response to endorsements and information, which might help them in making a decision or create confusion if they do not have the necessary knowledge to process information or have an inaccurate understanding and perception of the issue at stake.

We have looked closely at the reported behaviour of these shoppers in chapter 6. In this chapter we look at this segment in further detail, studying their actual behaviour (at the point of purchase) and trying to understand the ways in which they solve purchase decision 'problems' in real life conditions.

The observation of shoppers recruited from the focus groups was compared against a fresh sample of shoppers (new to the study) with different levels of involvement.⁴⁰ This enhanced the validity of the interpretation and account for potential observer effects or familiarity with the topic studied. Over the three weeks of the data collection, 28 shoppers

⁴⁰ In order to limit the influence of the research on these shoppers and to avoid the creation of a bias, Fair trade was not mentioned at the screening stage. The level of involvement of these shoppers was measured at the end of their shopping following the same procedure as that of focus groups' shoppers. Out of the 24 shoppers intercepted, 3 were classified as 'Involved in fair trade', 14 as 'Involved in food', and 7 as 'Less Involved in food'. This classification is independent from any Fair trade food purchases on the day.

were observed doing their main ('typical') shop. In the analysis which follows, all comments refer to shoppers classified as 'Involved in food', unless otherwise stated.

Comparison of information search behaviour across shoppers and categories formed the focus of the analysis. These are considered in the following sections.

7.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Fairtrade food purchases were rarely observed; we therefore sometimes refer to information search for other credence foods. Overall, the data obtained confirms that little resources are allocated to information search. Understanding of the fair trade concept (certification process and meaning) is low and so is the level of interest for this issue. Additionally, these observations revealed widespread confusion about labelling issues. As might be expected, information needs in new purchase situations are significantly higher than in repeat purchase situations. When considering these purchasing decisions, basic product information is still fundamental but additional attributes are considered (e.g. production information). Familiarity with the product sometimes leads to further exploration of on pack information.

Several points relating to the store environment should be noted:

- The issue of overcrowding is a concern for many shoppers when food shopping. Some of them report choosing quiet times to go shopping. Working people who cannot always avoid busy shopping periods (weekends) are usually less positive about food shopping.
- Informal observation suggests that most shoppers walk through a store at a more or less leisurely pace. When examining merchandise either visually or physically, they must "break their stride": typically, shoppers slow down as they engage with the category explored visually before stopping to compare and evaluate alternatives. As a result, the navigation of the store can be broken down into a succession of walks/stops; each being related to a specific activity conducted by the respondent.
- The Sport relief campaign was taking place at the time of data collection. Sainsbury's is one of the main partners of the event. As such, a number of in store signs, on shelf and on product labels were temporarily displayed. This might have altered the usual store environment and might have influenced shoppers' willingness to pay attention to other information. Having said that, even when

prompted none of the observed shoppers mentioned seeking or looking at those signs.

7.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Accompanied shopping trips -Stage III of the research- occurred a year after the focus groups. The six discussants who accepted to be observed during one of their main shop were:

- Amber
- Victoria
- Tia
- Lucy
- Katie
- Chloe

In this section, we report behaviour observed and analysis thereof. These are presented along with a summary of the discussant's views expressed during the focus groups sessions and supported by the analysis of grocery till receipts.

Elements uncovered during the post-shopping interview help to strengthen the analysis and allow a deeper understanding of in-store behaviour with regards to Fairtrade food purchases.

The six cases are next presented.

7.3.1 Amber (YA)

Amber is a Young Adult, living with her partner. She enjoys shopping and taking her time to browse the aisles, but most of the time she goes shopping with a specific purpose: she knows what she needs, gets it and leaves the store. This is so as to avoid temptation and to stop herself from spending too much. She walks passed her usual store everyday-Tesco- but usually shops twice a week (Sundays and Wednesdays). She sometimes shops in Waitrose.

During the focus group, Amber expressed confusion about the fair trade principles, illustrating her difficulties in reconciling all the issues she faces. She further detailed the dilemma encountered to reach a purchase decision.

I have to weight up: should I get fair trade or should I support the farmers here?

She also displayed a certain interest for credence foods, although her knowledge of the range of Fairtrade was limited, and explained her information search

I buy organic, I would look for the word 'organic' so whilst browsing I am just looking for the organic, and Fair Trade is pretty much the same, so that is brilliant.

At the same time, she highlights that the use of heuristics helps in limiting the effort exerted. The layout of shop also aids the localisation of products.

I'd just look at the front of it, but I would never look at the back of it, I just tend to remember the packaging.

Amber conducted a limited information search focussing on front of packaging. This in conjunction with previous comments highlights a desire to avoid information overload. Amber chose to discard some information, and to base her decision on a limited number of informative elements, in order to reduce the complexity of the purchasing decision.

Amber was observed shopping on a Wednesday evening. Amber looked at specific aisles and categories of products, refraining from looking at others. She bought mainly from a regular repertoire of products (as confirmed by her grocery receipts). She displayed a highly functional shopping pattern. On several occasions however, Amber browsed thoroughly categories, choosing products to take advantage of offers when and if possible, and changing her initial choice when identifying a better offer. As such, Amber revealed herself to be a price-conscious shopper: she conducted detailed calculation of price per kilo for certain products. Amber justifies this behaviour as a way to avoid waste.

During the shopping, Amber did not buy any Fairtrade foods, although she shopped categories where she could have bought Fairtrade variants. During the post-shopping interview she reported having considered Fairtrade products in the fresh category -there is not any available-but decided not to buy. It seems that on that shopping occasion Amber

was more focussed and conscious of budget constraints issues and that most of her attention was directed to this, ignoring or discarding other information.

During the interview Amber explained why point-of-purchase information fails to attract her attention:

I have already acknowledged that this one is Fairtrade.

Only if you're not familiar with a product you are going to look more carefully.

I would not say about signs or anything in store, I don't see them really..

Her information search behaviour was limited as she relied on her previous knowledge and familiarity with the products. She considers she knows enough to make an informed decision. Nevertheless, Amber was able to associate certain product categories with fair trade, demonstrating a specific level of knowledge. At the same time, she over estimated availability of Fairtrade alternatives in certain categories (fresh produce, cereals).

I think the cheese I do know is Fairtrade because I have looked at that before.

Amber revealed that her trust in certification processes and claims is limited. She solves this issue by considering only those categories of products, in which she believes more in the claim.

I mean organic foods and the like, you are actually not sure all the ingredients are organic in the product.

Yeah I'd keep checking for fruit and veg but not for processed products.

At the same time, she reported to buying processed Fair trade foods, highlighting a difference in judgment for these two claims.

If I was buying coffee that would be something I would look for because that's definitely important is Fair coffee, ice cream as well because of the things like that.

The shopping environment is not the right place to communicate with Amber as she has more pressuring issues in her mind, mostly looking for the cheapest options available. As such, she noted the higher importance of enduring involvement over situational involvement.

You gotta tell me before I enter the store.

Thus the impact of in store communication is likely to be limited, whilst other forms of communication might persuade her to try the products once she sees them in store.

In summary, Amber appeared to only buy Fairtrade foods in very few categories, although she was aware of the availability of Fairtrade foods in other categories. She made judgements on the plausibility of the claim across categories and points out the varying salience of the attribute across categories. The price issue is too much of a barrier to buy across categories and she only buys regularly in certain categories. Amber did not mention norms entering her decision process and when prompted during the interview she referred to personal norms rather than to social pressure as motivating her purchasing decisions.

7.3.2 Victoria (YA)

Victoria is a Young Adult who lived with her parents at the time of the focus groups but had moved in with her husband at the time of the accompanied shop. This might have affected her purchasing behaviour. She mainly shops at Tesco, likes the convenient location of her usual store, close to her workplace. She does a main shop every two weeks and then tops up about twice a week on fresh foods. She also happens to do some shopping for her sister who had just had a baby.

During the focus groups discussions, Victoria reported to closely inspect nutritional panels and to carefully check the carbohydrate content, as she watches her diet. This consistent behaviour meant that during her attentive examination of the packaging she would be exposed to other on pack information, although she might not see it. In those circumstances she may have been exposed to the FAIRTRADE Mark. However, this behaviour denotes a general interest for information and a willingness to exert efforts to make an informed purchasing decision.

In her explanation of purchasing Fairtrade foods during the focus groups, Victoria referred to the emotional dimension associated with those products.

It is better to know that someone work for this put their touch, and it's personal and it is part of the scheme.

She understands the principles of fair trade but acknowledges that in certain occasions there is a lack of information that complicates the identification and the choice of products, even if one is familiar with the FAIRTRADE Mark.

Detailing her information search strategies, Victoria has identified brands and categories in which Fairtrade products are available. She repeatedly mentions and cites available products. This specific knowledge about a reduced repertoire of products is supported by her actual shopping behaviour. During the observation she browsed thoroughly the aisle of Instant coffee to find the Fairtrade, explaining her information search as follows:

I was looking there, where it should be, I could not see a Fairtrade thing on there (nb: Carte noire). Nescafé the coffee other ones look like they're fair trade but they are not...is like I can't see if they are Fairtrade or not... it's not really easy to see... well I could not see if they were or not... so I can't see.

The presence (or absence) of a logo on the front of the pack can potentially affect her product choice. Victoria has learnt to recognise and locate the logo in a specific area on the product packaging.

I could not see a Fair trade thing on there (Coffee Carte Noire) but I am pretty sure that they are

She feels unsettled not being able to recognise a Fairtrade from a non-Fairtrade product. This illustrates mobilisation of cognitive resources and deep information search as she experiences a dissonance between what she knows and what she is confronted with in this specific situation. This highlights that in the purchasing situation, even having some knowledge about the scheme is of little help as Victoria was confused by the different alternatives available to her (one product she was also considering was Rainforest Alliance labelled) the following extract illustrates this:

Plus there this thing on there (nb: Rainforest Alliance label) but I don't know if there is the same or not... but I don't know so I'm going to buy that one (nb: Fairtrade labelled) cos I always get that one anyway.

This exemplifies how similar labelling initiatives increase the degree of complexity of purchase. When facing difficulties in identifying the FAIRTRADE Mark, this shopper uses a bypass strategy-and trusts her habitual behaviour. In this specific case, the salience

of the Fairtrade attribute is difficult to assess with certainty but seems high, as the two considered alternatives bear an ethical label.

Habitual behaviour might limit the search for – and in some cases end prematurely- information search activities. In this respect, Victoria, as shown per her grocery receipts, is a regular buyer of avocado, bananas and Instant coffee Fairtrade but would pay more attention as she reported to Fairtrade for fresh produce.

When it comes to fruit and veg I try and buy fair trade or organic.

During the post-shopping interview, Victoria explained that on that specific shopping visit, she was stocking up freezable products as she was due to go on holidays in the following few days. Therefore, her attention was mainly directed towards this issue throughout her shopping.

She nonetheless chose Fairtrade products consciously and kept on checking on prices and labels on shelves.

When questioned about her choice of the Fairtrade avocado (an item she picked immediately from the shelf) she explained

I never used to buy Fairtrade avocados I used to buy the cheaper ones but the Fairtrade ones are nicer so I tried them and liked them so kept buying.

Along the interactions with Victoria, what was apparent is that, for her, the taste of the products she buys is more important than the Fairtrade attribute. The importance of satisfaction with hedonic attributes takes precedence over other considerations in her choice of products. Nevertheless, once the Fairtrade nature of the product is acknowledged, she accepts the premium charged as a better performance of the product can justify a higher price.

Finally, when exploring the influence of factors influencing information search and purchase Victoria did not mention norms, even when prompted. Her personal values and the importance she attaches to the Fair trade issue seemed to dominate in her purchasing decisions. Likewise, trust in the label was not an issue reported spontaneously but was acknowledged when questioned about it.

7.3.3 Tia (OF)

Tia is married, has three children of whom two still live with her. She does her main shop in Tesco once a month and tops up in Sainsbury's twice a week. She sometimes goes to Waitrose. She shops with a list as she is on a budget.

During the focus group, Tia appeared very knowledgeable about fair trade and reported to regularly buy Fairtrade foods. She was the only respondent across all focus groups to mention the environmental dimension of the fair trade scheme, which she was able to explain in more detail, which demonstrated an extended, accurate knowledge.

The case of Tia is interesting: she pays attention to the Fair trade products in a different way to other discussants: in recognising the FAIRTRADE Mark on products she can easily identify the products and can avoid them in the purchase situation. Although Tia is knowledgeable and has had experience with the products she is involved in a different way, she displays a negative attitude about fair trade mainly in relation to the price charged. Her repeated references to price and to her constrained budget highlight that it is too much of a barrier stopping her to purchase products in all categories, although she is aware of products available. She further mentions the size of her household and consumption levels as additional barriers.

I just buy Fairtrade coffee, I don't buy Fairtrade juice because we drink too much, I buy PG tips I don't buy the Fairtrade tea, just buying the same things, bananas, coffee...

Her interest for the fair trade issue seems therefore to be in relation to a specific goal, allowing her to maximise the resources spent on Fairtrade products. When asked about information exposure or search Tia admitted not having looked for anything actively in a recent period and just relying on what she has learnt over time to assess products and form her opinion on the issue.

This reported behaviour was confirmed during the accompanied shopping. Tia only bought Fairtrade bananas and did not consider any other Fairtrade products. Nonetheless, Tia checked carefully information on products for certain categories and paid specific attention to price and serving size. She did not notice or mention any in store signs in the shop at any time during the shop.

When probing her behaviour during the post-shopping interview, she reported to have to shop with a list to which she must stick allowing very little room for improvisation and impulse purchases. Therefore, she is in a really rational and functional mode when she shops and only gets items she needs. She does not browse aisles and only gets her usual products in an almost mechanical fashion. This leaves little space for accidental exposure to unfamiliar products and although Tia is attracted to offers she is most of the time directed to her habitual products -as confirmed by her groceries receipts. This also explains that she does not conduct a thorough examination of the product packaging.

On the bananas, I know they are Fairtrade but it is not labelled. I don't think there is anything on that, they don't put anything on the single item. (pause. Examines the bananas) 'oh hold on there's the label here !'

In this specific example, Tia knows that the bananas are Fairtrade and does not check repeatedly the information. The specific context of the post-shopping interview forced her to look at the product more carefully- not her natural behaviour. She then noticed the FAIRTRADE Mark and, given her surprise at the time, it was probably one of the rare occasions during which she has looked at it. This observation typifies the cognitive process of many shoppers; Tia knew that most bananas are Fairtrade, which reduces her need to look for information. She has no need to check this information regularly. Consequently, she does know where to look on the product to find the FAIRTRADE Mark and has to consciously look for it to see the label.

During the post-shopping interview she heavily emphasised importance of price across all her purchasing-decisions. Her attention for credence goods -that she believes are more expensive- is limited, as her household size does not allow for such expenses on a regular basis.

In summary, Tia appears to be an 'Involved in food' shopper as she has to carefully check price and products characteristics to make sure she can afford the products she chooses. She therefore developed her knowledge about fair trade (e.g. recognising the FAIRTRADE Mark and being aware of the category in which they are available) so as to make sure she could discard those products once in the shop.

She indeed buys regularly certain Fairtrade products (bananas and coffee) but it is mainly because she either cannot avoid them (all bananas are Fairtrade labelled in

Sainsbury's) or because she primarily likes the taste of the product and Fair trade is just an incidental attribute. As such she does not look for the FAIRTRADE Mark to confirm a purchase. Tia does not pay attention to displays and informative elements at the point of sale as her familiarity with the store is enough to locate the products she needs.

7.3.4 Lucy (OA)

Lucy is married and was living with her children and her niece at the time of the accompanied shop although they are usually 4 persons living in her household permanently. She does most of her shopping at Tesco, some of it in Sainsbury's and more rarely at Aldi or Lidl and tends to buy in bulk. She shops twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sundays and chooses stores according to convenience and facilities offered.

During the focus group discussion, Lucy appeared to be knowledgeable about fair trade concept and understand the aims and principles of the labelling scheme.

Lucy reports to be heavily influenced by brands and to look primarily for them to decide the products she buys. When prompted about the first occasions in which she bought Fairtrade she reported about their accidental nature and she could not identify the products at the point of sale and differentiate the products from the non Fairtrade labelled ones. Throughout her discourse Lucy reveals that most of her purchasing decisions are made at the point of sale, and that even brand-loyal she allows for variety and trial of new products. With this open attitude and available attention for new information, she could be convinced to buy a product on the basis of information provided.

In certain cases, she notes that the decision is carefully weighted between the ethical and non-ethical alternatives across different categories as a result of salience of the claim. This highlights that the complexity of the choice and the existence of some cognitive processes, outlining a much more demanding purchasing decision than what was thought. Finally, Lucy -in a similar fashion to Tia- reports feeling constrained by her household size, which affects the alternatives she can buy. The grocery receipts show that Lucy not only regularly buys Fairtrade bananas, but also buys other Fairtrade foods (fruit, sugar and coffee). However, she would not venture outside these categories.

On a general note, during the shopping observation, Lucy bought freedom foods products (animal welfare) labelled food, a behaviour that was prompted in the post-shopping interview.

I try to be conscious of how I shop, I suppose for ethical reasons.

I am afraid I am very price conscious, simply because I have to.

The opposition of these two quotations show that it is difficult for Lucy to reconcile these two dimensions when shopping. However, in certain circumstances, Lucy's purchases are very well thought and seem to be motivated by other factors:

I buy Fairtrade tea but that's quite expensive, I buy it to take to work but not for general consumption at home.

This strongly shows the influence of social norms and of the consumption occasion on the choice of the product. With strong values communicated through the purchase of such products, it is not surprising to find shoppers reporting high hedonic facets, such as the importance of the status communicated through her purchase.

Lucy was not looking for much information on product packaging during the observation and appears to buy according to price and to habit. Lucy questioned and compared her knowledge in comparison to the general population, as she was conscious that knowledge and awareness are antecedents of purchase; in her case she acknowledged that both the retailer should facilitate the identification and promotion of the products.

People are aware that it exists but they don't know where it is and that it is highlighted.

They should put all the things there that are fair trade altogether because that would focus people or make the signs bigger.

To summarise, Lucy is a regular buyer of certain Fairtrade products and has bought products during the observation. However, Lucy looks as if she is a frustrated yet aspiring ethical shopper as she reports to be constrained by her household size. She in certain occasions is pushed towards certain products and buys as a result of social norms. Consumption occasions create particular conditions – situational involvement- to which Lucy gives meticulous attention in order to preserve a certain social status. In that sense social norms would act as an antecedent for information search. Despite this, overall, Lucy did not look for much information neither on product packaging nor in the store during the observation and appears to rely on her previous experiences and knowledge.

7.3.5 Katie (OA)

Katie is married and lives with her younger child, out of her six children. She does most of her shopping at Tesco but occasionally shops at Mark and Spencer's, Sainsbury's and Waitrose depending on where she is and the available time she has. She is not, in her own words, an organised shopper, does not have a list. As such she has to navigate each aisle to make sure she gets everything she needs. However she can afford this shopping pattern as she is not often under time pressure. She does keep an eye on serving sizes as she wants to avoid waste and has happened to look closely at several front and back of packaging labels, sometimes after detailed consideration she even replaced products on shelves (e.g. when the product contains an unwanted ingredient).

She displays certain knowledge about fair trade although she was not sure of the specific details. In her justifications and explanations of purchasing motives she emphasises personal norms thereby showing that in certain occasions the nature and category of the product does not matter much as long as a purchase is made, a way of contributing in some way to a larger movement.

You helped a little bit, just buying certain products, you know, that feels good.

When considering the issue of information search, Katie reported that her son has had the greatest influence on her starting to buy Fairtrade products.

My son buys a lot of fair trade and he told me 'you ought to try'. I went to Marks and Spencer and found their coffee, it's really nice coffee, and I like it.

Katie also is able to differentiate the amount of information given in store across retailers. The place of shopping might affect the amount of information one can be exposed to. In her opinion she is differently encouraged and incentivised to buy products from the Fairtrade range across stores and perceives a different involvement of retailers in the Fair trade movement. This suggests that contextual conditions and shopping environment-situational- influence the receptiveness to information. Regarding information search on products, Katie seems to be familiar with the FAIRTRADE Mark and identify easily the products. This illustrates that she had previously conducted some information search and that her previous experience has been converted into knowledge. At the same time, Lucy does not seem to pay particular attention to this attribute highlighting a greater salience for sensory attributes than for the credence nature of the product. This supports that the Fair

trade attribute is incidental and not primordial in her choice of product, and thus acts as a reason for which she would not look for information. This emphasises the previously noted importance of the contextual environment in orientating her towards the Fairtrade range using point of sale communication.

Her grocery receipts collected over a period of four months show that she regularly purchases Fairtrade sugar, bananas and coffee. She bought from these three categories when she was observed shopping. This appeared to be a fairly habitual behaviour, as she did not check for any specific information in store. The post-shopping interview further questioned her behaviour. She reemphasised the points she had made in the focus groups discussions about

- The importance of her relatives in getting her to buy Fairtrade products in the first instance.
- The difference of products' availability across retailers

Regarding information search and exposure Katie also underlines the importance of media as such but also as a conveyor of messages from experts and authorities.

It would be good to have an ad about fair trade to know how they do it, which should show everything in an ad.

You know Jamie Oliver? He should be the one doing something to promote fair trade, you need some role models, experts on food to show you the way. I think he would be good to promote it.

In the store Katie contradicted herself from what she said in the focus group; this might just reveal that the involvement level at the point of sale is not enough to draw her attention to these products.

I think I would have to look for Fair trade it's not what you call prominent.

This confirms that accidental exposure is the main reason to be exposed to Fairtrade products in contrast to deliberate search.

However she then makes some distinctions between products categories

For the sugar is different, this sugar (nb Fairtrade) is not white as such, I usually get the usual one and the white one.

To summarise, Katie has an interest in Fairtrade products, knows about fair trade and does buy regularly from certain categories; she is also more likely to buy when she shops in certain stores than others as she perceives that certain retailers are making greater efforts to promote the Fairtrade range. Personal norms have a greater influence on her purchasing behaviour than do social norms. She regularly buys Fairtrade products in her trolley but decides on her purchase along price, offers and retailer visited.

7.3.6 Chloe (YF)

Chloe is married, mother of 2 young children. She does not mind shopping and would navigate the whole shop if she were not constantly under time pressure. She is an organised shopper, always carries a list, written in the same order as the shop is organised. She shops twice a week and sometimes does her main shop online. She chooses her store for convenience reasons: the store is quiet and there is free parking provided.

During the focus groups discussion, Chloe revealed that she shops the Fairtrade range only as an alternative choice or a substitute when her usual products are not available. In those occasions, she does not conduct any information search and may only realise that the products are Fairtrade after the purchase.

She refers to social and personal norms as her motives to buy Fairtrade foods and she attributes higher value to the Fair trade than the mainstream products.

When looking at products she appears to read the packaging and attributes to each characteristic a monetary value. For instance, the country of origin of certain products implies for Chloe higher logistic and shipping-costs that she thinks will be repercutated in the price the end consumer will pay, compared to a local product. In this association of attributes to monetary value, Chloe has learnt that certain attributes conduct premiums and has integrated that in her check to decide a purchase. In doing this thorough check she makes judgments and uses simple rules to discard products.

Commenting on her information search activities, Chloe reported that there is not enough information regarding fair trade. She also highlights that the information does not stand out and that it only appeals to people with a certain level of prior interest. This means she might not make the effort needed to find the information. This is interpreted as a desire for easier, more accessible information to be given. Having said this, it is likely that her erroneous perception of a lack of information for fair trade is used to justify her poor

attention for such information and might reveal that other more pressuring issues are at stake during her shopping as she has limited time to allocate to information search. Overall commenting on previous information search, it appeared that she has encountered information relating to fair trade as she was searching for other information and not in a specific purpose. She further comments:

I think once it catches your interest and then once you're in the shop and you go 'oh that's Fair trade'

This implies that once a threshold of enduring involvement is reached then prompts (in the form of the FAIRTRADE Mark) might induce a purchase.

Further, in her comments, Chloe mentions the following

I want to know it's really making a difference to someone

This highlights that trust is an important issue for her and that she will purchase if she can get some guarantees and reassurance about her purchasing decision and the impact it will have. From her grocery receipts although buying in many categories where Fairtrade options are available Chloe only appeared to buy mainly in the fresh produce category on a regular basis.

Chloe was on a special shopping mission on the day she was observed. She had to cater for two dinner parties in the following days, and had to get some specific ingredients she had never bought previously. When observed picking up products Chloe would consistently designate the products by their brand name, and explained:

I have always been really very branded, for some reasons with Marks and Waitrose I trust it but I don't for Tesco's or Sainsbury's

I always buy Twinings with the yellow every day tea. For certain things and then for other things I am happy with the supermarket's version.

She emphasised this point throughout the observation. This might direct her attention to specific things –brand names- and she may be discarding most of the other information she might come across – a similar behaviour to that of Lucy. However that behaviour varies across product categories.

Kidney beans, I go for the normal as opposed to organic but I just feel I that you're paying extra for no reason. Very often for meat I might go for organic, if it strikes me but for stuff like that I would not, I would just go for normal.

This highlights the different purchasing behaviour displayed across categories.

Finally the post-shopping interview provided further insights into Chloe's shopping behaviour. Speaking about information search on products themselves, Chloe mentioned the value of the association of written and visual information. The two formats in which the information is conveyed increase the likeliness to understand the claim. If familiarity with the visual logo was low, then the claim could be read and purpose of the label understood from the additional information provided.

Well Organic as a word would be written on the label. They would have it.

Chloe recognises the FAIRTRADE Mark and is aware of in-store signs that help her locate and identify the products. Familiarity and specific knowledge were also touched upon.

For some reasons Fair trade has always been associated for me with fruit and veg other than that I don't know.

The product category shopped seems to be an important factor for Chloe to consider Fairtrade alternatives. This is a major influence in predetermining the attention paid to claims and credence attributes.

Lastly, Chloe re-emphasised the importance of enduring involvement in deciding a fair trade purchase.

If you did not go in store saying that you will buy Fair trade then you won't get it.

In summary, Chloe seems to have a certain interest for fair trade and is not constrained by a budget. The analysis of both her grocery receipts supported by her self-reported behaviour exemplify that she is very loyal to brands. That is why it is very difficult for her to consider buying a Fairtrade product if it is not from a known, trusted brand. Further, she describes that her enduring interest in involvement is not strong enough for her to systematically think about the fair trade issue when she shops.

Summary

Overall, the insights gathered during the observations conducted with the focus groups discussants confirmed that the majority of purchase decisions follow habitual behaviour, with a considerable reliance on memory and previous experience. Ronis, Yates, & Kirscht (1989) define habit as frequently repeated behaviour or alternatively as behaviour that is in some sense automatic or out of the awareness of the subjects.. Habit here is also seen as automatic behaviour performed unconsciously, which fits with our observations. Previous work on habit suggests that the familiarity with the context and the purchase situation might trigger automatic responses. Repetitive behaviour can be the result of several factors- such as conscious decision making, brand loyalty, expression of a goal- however as Wood and Neal (2009) suggest, when repetition occurs in stable contexts, a context- response link is built (as much as in the SR model) that further can be called upon when in presence of a similar situation. In other words, individuals might offer as a purchasing motive for a specific brand, taste whilst overtime it is the context in which the choice of the product is made that drives the specific choice of the brand. Nonetheless, repeat purchases might just be the expression of a continued preference for a particular product. Since the data collected is of qualitative nature and based on respondents reports, caution should be taken in interpreting the data. Individuals usually offer habit as an explanation for their behaviour because it is readily accessible compared to other reasons/motives. Wood and Neal (2009) the habitual consumer suggest that habitual responses are rigid in their expression and are independent of current goals, suggesting that enduring interest for an issue need to exist for this to develop.

Although habit might explain behaviour there is still a paradox left unexplained. While habit was found to be a potential strong explanatory variable of behaviour, the majority of discussants said they did not plan in advance to buy Fairtrade in most categories and that they only happen doing so. The important differences noted across product categories would have benefitted from further investigation. The data further revealed that consumers were thinking – or might have been lead to think- in different ways of the issue of fair trade. Some of them would mention specific products, manufacturers and brands and not necessarily of the general issue of fair trade (i.e mentioning Cadbury when making a reference to fair trade chocolate) whilst other discussants would take a more general approach to Fair trade. This too might be revealing

habitual behaviour and repeat purchase of certain brands. This was partially identified in Mc Donald *et al* (2009).

With specific reference to Fairtrade products, we note that knowledge about the categories in which alternatives are available is limited. All participants buy from a limited repertoire. Their purchasing decision and information search activities are largely shaped by their knowledge.

On the whole, what emerge from these individual cases, is that

Fairtrade foods purchases are most often made incidentally and the information is not noticed at the time of purchase (when the product is put in the trolley) but might be when the product is subsequently handled at the point of purchase or later.

Taste (hedonic attributes) and previous experience often take precedence over ethical considerations. The inclusion of the hedonic facets in conjunction with utilitarian inputs highlights the critical importance of emotive influences as part of decision-making. An important progress came with O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy ((2003) cited in (Spanjaard, Freeman & Young 2009)) arguing that to increase validity, decision criteria should include both hedonic and utilitarian aspects of the product. These findings tend to support this view.

Information search activities are minimal or really specific (e.g. use by date, weight, colour, appearance) for grocery shopping in general. This also applies to food products. Quite distinctively, to "touch and feel" a product is regarded as a vital element of information search for certain categories (fresh produce, bakery goods) which products seem to be more fitted for this type of evaluation. By touching products, sensory mechanisms to acquire information are activated and used. Further, different ways of touching products are observed, including: static holding, contour following, texture evaluation and enveloping. This exploratory process helps to gather information about texture, hardness, temperature or weight of an item. To stand in front of a shelf – immobilisation- is needed, as full attention is allocated to the comparative task. The participants used some of these processes to make a judgment on the products they considered.

The importance of household composition is also evident. It is likely to affect the attention given to Fairtrade products in the long term; shoppers might exclude Fairtrade products *a priori* from the set of alternatives considered; either for budgetary reasons or due to portion sizes issues. If considered, they might experience more difficulties in integrating the Fairtrade products in normal shopping repertoire in the long run.

The importance of norms – social and personal- was reiterated in both shopping observations and post shopping interviews highlighting that some purchases are made under certain forms of peer pressure. This might limit the information search to the mere identification of the fair trade attribute, as additional information would be irrelevant for the individual.

The product category shopped seems to be an important factor, and this was evident for the 6 observed shoppers on the basis of both observations and reported behaviour. This supports our expectation that the category in which one buys from influences the degree of relevance of certain attributes (i.e. the fair trade attribute seems to be more salient than others).

These insights have been obtained in a reduced sample of shoppers, of whom some might have remembered the purpose of the focus group discussions and shopped accordingly. In order to cater for this potential source of bias and to control for the observer effect, a second group of shoppers oblivious to the real purpose of the study were also observed and interviewed following the methodology described at the beginning of the chapter. The findings for these shoppers are presented in the next section.

7.4 OBSERVATIONS OF ‘CONTROL’ SHOPPERS

Overall, the observation of shoppers recruited ‘cold’ was similar to the behaviour of focus groups’ discussants.

For a large majority, these shoppers seem to be buying Fairtrade foods without noticing it. Products are rarely bought for ethical reasons and during follow-up interviews a wide spectrum of reasons were given as purchasing motives. The following comments are representative:

CG Have you bought any Fairtrade product today? (she had)

Interview DEBORAH (YF) I don't think so. I did not think about it. I don't think I have anything as far as I know.

CG Are you conscious of having bought any Fairtrade products today?

Interview SHIRLEY (P): No. Have I? Have I? I don't make a special point in choosing those.

The identification of Fairtrade products does not appear to be easy for these shoppers. Although awareness of the presence of the FAIRTRADE Mark on the product packaging was evidenced; this symbol was rarely looked for. If shoppers do not perceive additional value in choosing the labelled option, the attribute becomes irrelevant in the final choice. It follows that with limited browsing of categories, Fairtrade purchases are just incidental. On-going or goal-oriented information search might result in exposure to Fairtrade labelled products, which is the usual way through which shoppers encounter Fairtrade foods.

The behaviour of shoppers for whom we obtained evidence that the fair trade attribute was not looked for actively - was questioned during the post shopping interviews. Convenience is a major factor in purchasing decision and was pointed out

Interview KAREN (OA) it's what's there and what I need; I would not go to see what is that. It is just whatever comes up to you.

BETTY (YF): I use Fairtrade tea the sugar is Fairtrade I'd like to see more Fairtrade products I'd buy Fairtrade chocolate if I buy chocolate. It is only if it is convenient, only if it is what I want.

CG is it important that your tea is Fairtrade labelled?

BARBARA (P)_Yes- it is! Well I am glad they do do the Fairtrade. But I would not go somewhere else to get Fair trade, I would still shop in this store cos it's convenient.

The regular choice of these products has been integrated in the normal shopping routine, and a certain degree of planning was established for these shoppers.

Habit heavily directs the product choice. The time taken for decision-making is very short, with the product being located on the shelves and picked up immediately. The identification of the packaging suffices to validate the choice and the product is placed straight in the trolley. For certain categories of products (e.g. perishables) additional information might be checked (e.g. use by date, serving size). For these decisions, the attention is focussed on the product of interest and the remainder of the product category is

completely ignored. The shopper allocates few resources to the purchasing decision and quickly moves on to the next item.

In these instances the shoppers' determination is perceptible; they have a clear idea of what they want. Experience and knowledge of the products are crucial in deciding the purchase; they neither have a need for nor a desire to look for information. In this context, price is the main information checked and might sometimes be a deterrent to purchase. Self reported reasons of information search report high brand loyalty, preferences and habit, as the main reasons for purchase. It seems difficult to alter the purchase decision and to convince these shoppers on the sole basis of providing information at the point of purchase about the Fairtrade range. These choices were prompted and questioned:

(Observation) Picks up both Fairtrade tea and sugar. She picks both quite automatically. Does not seem to compare or consider any alternative.

BARBARA (P) I have decaf tea cos my husband has got high blood pressure

Other types of product choice were observed but none of them related to fair trade purchases; they are briefly presented to account for the variety of behaviour existing across shoppers and situations. Those are

- on going information search: with brief, non-physical comparison of the products. Familiarity with the packaging accelerates these decisions.
- category browsing: products are picked up swiftly but shelves are still surveyed. This suggests that although the choice of product is almost immediate comparison with alternatives occurs, can be longer and may lead to modification of initial choice.

These are two examples of information search conducted at the point of sale that suggests that there are some basic, universal behaviour performed when evaluating alternatives. The specific case of information search for Fairtrade products is now considered.

Personal sources of information have been cited as keeping up to date with new product launches and broaden awareness about the fair trade issue and products

Interview BARBARA (P) Well I have a friend who's quite keen on it so she quite often does little projects at work and she comes and say 'have you tried this or that fair trade'... So she keeps abreast.

If no information sources were spontaneously mentioned during the follow-up interviews, the question looked at likeliness to search for information. A range of behaviours were reported:

Interview MICHELLE (OA) (I am) not interested in reading an article I haven't got enough interest to look at what it is more closely.

Interview MARIA (OA) I am not interested enough to bother, to look for more information about it.

All shoppers in our sample are Fairtrade purchasers; their restricted information search pattern is interpreted as signalling that information needs are satisfied. Once the purpose of the scheme is known, further information seems obsolete; the information has been acquired but is only sometimes used to make a purchasing decision. For these shoppers, only awareness of the FAIRTRADE Mark is necessary to be able to locate a Fairtrade product in store. This highlights the superficial, temporal and practical interest displayed by these shoppers for ethical concerns. In this sense, their involvement with the issue is highly situational, really being the purchasing involvement, depending more on timing than on general interest for an issue.

It is argued that the level of interest in an issue influences the extent to which shoppers are responsive to information. Even when there is consideration of the whole product category, Fairtrade products do not stand out so they might not be recognised. This has practical implications, and suggests that packaging needs to be more attractive and better promote the fair trade nature of the product, given both the high awareness and recognition rate reported of the FAIRTRADE Mark. The observed shoppers have the crucial knowledge needed to identify products, as they are all aware and able to describe the FAIRTRADE Mark.

Interview MARY (OA): Yes I recognize the little logo, and the little... It's the only way to see it.

Interview BARBARA (P): From their symbol, they have a symbol of them don't they? So you can see that they are Fairtrade

Interview BRENDA (OF): So you look at information and the logo to locate the where they are

However, the information of the product needs to be concise and clear. This is supported by further comments that contrast with previous views. Certain elements of the packaging (e.g. picture) may be irrelevant, sometimes misleading in considering a purchase. However, if and when the product is bought for its ethical nature, the simple logo is used as a confirmatory attribute but may in certain circumstances leads to further problems as described.

JENNIFER (YF) I feel a bit 'iconed out' it is good to have a balance words and icons

This is indicative of the confusion felt by shoppers who might experience difficulties in recognising and differentiating among all labels at the point of purchase. Logos were recognised in interviews as having tremendous value in simplifying communication if used wisely. These logos are used as heuristics to ease the purchasing decision. Yet, too many icons on a packaging could potentially be overwhelming. Scattered information could increase efforts or even raise anxiety unnecessarily. In general, product choice is reported to be often made on the basis of price and promotional activities; thus implying that these are signalled to shoppers at the point of purchase. Shoppers are alert and pay attention to signs orienting them towards discounted products. This is a behavioural consequence of an increased state of situational involvement.

Waves of observations were conducted before and during the Fairtrade fortnight. This enabled the assessment of the impact about fair trade displayed in the store at two different times. Examples of stickers displayed on the floor are shown in Figure 7.1 below.



Figure 7.1: On floor stickers used during the Fairtrade fortnight (Sainsbury's store)

In the unique store used for the observations, these stickers were located in front of the largest categories (bananas, coffee, chocolate, sugar). For other categories in which Fairtrade alternatives are available, in the best case, only leaflets were displayed next to

shelves. Generally, shoppers did not notice the signs flagging the Fairtrade products in categories. Their attention seems to be focused on other elements of the grocery shopping, illustrating the failure of these support to attract attention. Shoppers do not appear to consciously look up in the air- missing the hung signs- or down the floor but to have a horizontal screening of their environment. More than signs used to locate products, previous experience transformed into knowledge are relied upon.

Interview MARY (P) I know where they are, I know where to go, so...but that's sort of ermm tea and coffee and biscuits and bananas

Barriers to information search are both internal and external; time pressure being a major obstacle in the use of signs in the store, and familiarity with the store layout being the prevailing factors. In addition to familiarity, habitual purchasing behaviour modifies the relevance of information, thus impacting its use.

Interview BARBARA (P): They tend to keep them together so you can see the tea with the Fair trade symbol.

Interview MARY (P) There is no such signs as 'Fair trade this way', you go in the aisle and then you have to look

NANCY (OF) I don't think there is any information that I am using I just go out and look for them.

Browsing behaviour may not always result in any Fairtrade product being purchased. Information search is not necessarily resulting in actual purchase.

Shoppers were prompted and asked to explain their information search processes thus uncovering elements involved in the purchase decision. In order to obtain an accurate description and limit the 'memory lost' effect, shoppers were prompted directly after they made their choice.

Three reasons may potentially explain why shoppers do not conduct information search for Fairtrade products, they:

- may not see the information
- may know enough information for their choice already
- may not value the information very helpful

Specificity of knowledge is very high. Shoppers associate strongly certain products categories with Fairtrade. This highlights a partial awareness of the product range that in

turns leads to specific behaviour. Repeated exposure to products and information may potentially influence the assimilation of the information.

CAROL (OF) Sainsbury's have the Fairtrade tea and the Fairtrade sugar. I am aware of this.

Emotional dimension is also evidenced in this group of shoppers

MARY (P) (purchasing a Fair trade product) tells something about a person, not a lot... if they go out of their way to buy these products it obviously means that they have some concern for third world country people, poorer and that they are being paid adequately for their work, so yes it does tell something.

Regarding the prior experience and familiarity, supportive statements from shoppers continuously refer to the importance of familiarity in the choice of product:

BRENDA (OF) I think If you're gonna buy Fairtrade products you know you going to buy Fairtrade aren't you... You gonna come with that mind set I am gonna buy Fairtrade products?

If that was verified on a larger sample and generalisation could be made, then it would mean that information at the point of sale was an ineffective trigger of purchase in attracting attention and convincing shoppers to purchase the products. This contradicts most of the literature on the influence of in store signs on shoppers' behaviour.

Lastly, we present findings relating to the influence of the concepts explored in this study: product category, involvement and lifestyle influences are first presented; however data emerging from the field revealed that other factors might impact on the why, when and how the FAIRTRADE Mark is used or thought to be used as a source of information in the context of a purchase decision.

CYNTHIA (OA) for me it makes more sense that Fruit and vegetables are Fairtrade and coffee than juices or biscuits. I mean I can see more the impact on producers for basic, simple products... so yeah for me it's like that.

Actual consequences of the purchase are actually envisioned here along the influence of her own behaviour- also known as perceived effectiveness. This has been mentioned on several occasions.

Previous sections have shown that fair trade alternatives tend to only be considered for certain food categories. Outside those, the importance of the fair trade attribute lessen

and 'Involved in Food' shoppers do not pay particular attention to the ethical claim. This suggests that shoppers may simply be ignorant about the nature of their purchase.

Many shoppers mention the necessity to have their mind set attuned to such matters while shopping – having a certain degree of involvement in the issue. This might suggest that for certain shoppers, the 'support' (i.e. the product) of the claim or the activity (i.e. buying food) might not be suited for caring about social justice. In these conditions two factors contribute to the low attention paid to information: the salience of this information, and the level of involvement of the shopper.

Interview BRENDA (OF) I am not going to do that... it's not that I am not interested but my mind is other way so you're not going to look at for information about that I don't think.

Shoppers suggest that thorough thinking ahead and planning are prerequisites to purchase. This implies that impulse purchases of Fairtrade products are unlikely for these shoppers as they have strong predetermined attitudes towards the products. To change these attitudes a more comprehensive approach and greater educational effort would be needed. Further, there are important deterrents to purchase (e.g. price, packaging size) therefore, these shoppers have little interest and perceive little value in looking for information that will not be of practical use.

However, for issues that will incur an extra cost (premium) more consideration of the purchase might occur. This in turn implies that a balance needs to be found between economic reasons and personal values held.

Interview DEBORAH (YF) I suppose integrating it into the whole week shopping is a hard thing isn't it?

Moral and normative issues have repeatedly been mentioned in post-shopping interviews as justifications for purchase or non-purchase. Certainly, the influence of morality and the importance of altruistic motives in converting occasional into committed shoppers has been evidenced in the context of other credence foods ((Schäfer 2002) in (Klockner & Ohms 2009)) and are confirmed in the present study. The degree to which personal norms are contributing to the choice is also important: shoppers were uncomfortable when non-purchase of Fairtrade products was prompted and were referring to either personal or social norms and different values held to justify their behaviour themselves. Although norms do not enter the information search process and as such are

outside the scope of the study it seems important to mention them as they can be considered antecedents of involvement.

In summarising the points relative to the enduring involvement, according to the observations conducted, it seems that the point of sale information is not a strong enough stimulus to convince shoppers to swap their usual for Fairtrade foods.

The importance of hedonic facets of the product are emphasised in many cases in determining the likeliness of repurchase in the category. As such, it is important to note the variation observed for the salience of the FAIRTRADE Mark across categories. Yet, the importance of utilitarian aspects is reported, exemplifying general agreement on the constraint that small size packaging imposes on shoppers.

Interview CAROL (OF) it's like with the sugar I was buying the Fairtrade sugar... When it was more expensive (i.e. when introduced) I would not buy it. But for the same price or a couple of extra pennies then that was fine. But then the family complained, Fairtrade sugar is coarser than the other one so I stopped buying.

With respect to the influence of household members and the choice of products: this study shows the additional constraint that it puts on one's ethical concerns, which might have to be traded off against hedonic purposes. The importance of providing a product that household members like is more important than values and attitudes held towards products and in the present case, the fair trade issue. The core product has to be satisfactory to secure future purchases. This indicates that it might be more difficult to pursue and sustain ethical choices without the support of family members or friends. This factor would limit the extent and the scope of information search for Fairtrade alternatives.

Shoppers who seem to have stronger personal norms tend to show a different way of reasoning, basing their purchase on altruism and solidarity. Perceived achievement and emotional state seem to be more significantly reported:

Interview MICHELLE (OA) I suppose if you buy Fairtrade is that you care about the third world and the people there.

The inclusion of an emotive dimension on the production information strengthens the degree of consumer involvement. This might contribute to an upward shift in the hierarchy of the production mode as an attribute used to make a purchase decision.

An increased awareness about the labelling scheme also brings concerns and worries related with to potential risk involved (i.e. being misled). These concerns might enter the purchasing decision process in certain cases and trust is seen as an important factor of the purchase decision. Due to the credence nature of the product, inducing incomplete information, shoppers need reassurance on the claim's objectives and goals. The search for information in this situation to verify the claim has occurred through experiencing different products. While shoppers are favouring the certification of products as a means of differentiation and signalisation, they also would be more likely to buy if they could confidently believe in the genuine benefits involved.

As a last point in this analysis, we refer to the issue of price acceptability in adding to the existing literature. It is argued that higher involvement contributes to an accrued acceptance of price.

MICHELLE (OA) I suppose if it's harder to produce in certain places for them it's got to be dearer ain't it?

It is interesting to contrast this across involvement groups as perceptions and importance of price in the decision making process vary across these segments.

MELISSA (YF) I am not really under pressure with the price so it is what I like

MARY (P) that we are paying more? I don't see that as a penalty I see that as us being fair

Actual observations have shown that even when Fairtrade products are discounted, shoppers do not necessarily notice or consider them. Therefore, the effectiveness of promotions in expanding the customer base might be very limited and temporal. Therefore the challenge is to capture and retain consumer attention and sending them a clear, unambiguous yet convincing message.

7.5 DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Observations allow relevant aspects of the participant's experience to be explored. They also permit interrogations of the processes by which choices are made –albeit not always known by the participant. In summary, the observations have confirmed the fairly

limited penetration of Fairtrade products (see Chapter 2 Table 2.3 p35) but they have also served to produce insights about the influence of external factors on shoppers' choices.

Grocery shopping is generally viewed as a mundane task, conforming to rigid rules of habit and routine where simple decision processes exist. It is argued that supermarkets are cognitively demanding environments where shoppers may experience difficulties in gathering information, as they are surrounded by information and have limited cognitive resources available. When confronted with too wide a choice, to protect themselves from information overload, shoppers ignore some of the external –irrelevant- information and rely on familiarity and previous experience to reach a purchase decision. In other circumstances, information search is conducted to various degrees and may include other attributes beyond price and brand name.

However, registering the availability of the product does not imply that a purchase will be made. This is because purchasing routines are strongly established, and difficult to change. Exposure to the product is one step but might not be enough to overcome all barriers to purchase. Many shoppers report being left with no choice when retailers convert entire ranges of their private label products into fair trade alternatives. In this respect, it is argued that shoppers are made ethical by default; i.e. they do not have the choice to willingly choose a fair trade alternative against a non-alternative. The choice of purchasing a Fairtrade product is not theirs anymore but the retailers'.

By fully converting private-label ranges, retailers reduce consumers' information search efforts. Although providing a limited range of products is a way to cater for shoppers' demand of convenience, it must not be forgotten that ethical concerns might not be preponderant in the choice of product. Shoppers can rely on heuristics and on the association of the retailer name with both the Fairtrade label and the category.

Summary

As a result of this whole study, a structure of associations and links (Figure 7.2 below) is proposed with the aim of summarising the insights gained through focus groups, participant observations and semi-structured interviews. The categories in octagons illustrate the concepts set to be explored at the outset of the study. Two levels of subcategories that have emerged from the empirical are represented by rounded rectangles

and ellipses. The observations reported in this chapter have confirmed previous findings of the literature and shed further light on other issues:

Several types of factors influence the use of information: internal and/or personal factors, external factors and contextual factors.

- The left part of the model combines knowledge and prior experience (contributing in the creation of habitual behaviour) as important antecedents of the use of information. Even knowledge about fair trade seems to be limited, and understanding is heterogeneous in the sample.
- Limited external information search is conducted in shopping situations unless specific circumstances arise. In the majority of cases, the shoppers observed had a fairly recurrent repertoire from which they buy (this is supported by grocery receipts, see chapter 4 and Appendix C). This supports that information needs are moderated by situational factors (upper part of the model).
- Information on the product is only rarely noticed in store, it seems that the prominence and impact of the FAIRTRADE Mark are important. The increased media visibility over the Fairtrade fortnight campaign and the temporary in-store signs fail to capture shoppers' attention. This suggests that ad hoc information in store is not effective in getting attention from shoppers, who on another side report seeing the permanent signs. This type of information support might not be enough to act as a prompt and reminder and help overcome barriers encountered by shoppers, let alone trigger purchase.
- Awareness precedes recognition of the FAIRTRADE Mark but this tool will only be used if it is valued and considered relevant to the choice on the condition that the core product is liked (satisfactory hedonic dimension) which is linked to packaging preferences and to the expressed necessity to pair written and graphic information on pack.
- More than the lifestage it seems that it is the household size that limits the repertoire of products considered, with large households being less likely to buy premium priced products. It was definitively shown that the category of products (manufactured vs. natural products) looked at had an impact on the salience of the fair trade criteria. Ignorance may actually play a large role to this respect; indeed a low knowledge was evidenced when shoppers were questioned about the range of products available. Information search was looked at in different cases and the

results clearly show that different motives and reasoning apply to different product categories.

- Issues of credibility of the claim and trust are often revealed. Trust seems to be a mediator of the types of sources included and/ or used (trust as confidence) but trust (as reliance) relating to both the institution conducting the certification and to the retailer certification are impacting the use of information (see right part of the model).

Specifically, looking at the influence of variables proposed to influence the information search strategies, observations and follow up interviews permit to conclude that

- Consumer involvement seems to have an influence on shoppers' propensity to look for information. The 'more involved' shoppers observed tended to invest more resources when searching for food products, to spend more time looking for products or simply to explain that they were looking for Fairtrade products. Specific conditions often tended to direct towards the purchase of a Fairtrade product (end consumer, consumption conditions). Significantly, if the fair trade attribute had been essential to decide the purchase in the first place, it seems that the salience of the attribute slowly deteriorates in shoppers' agenda (typical of situational involvement). In this sense, more frequent campaigns such as the Fairtrade fortnight would be needed to reinforce purchasing behaviour. However, it was expected that this promotional activity would trigger more purchases than what was actually witnessed.

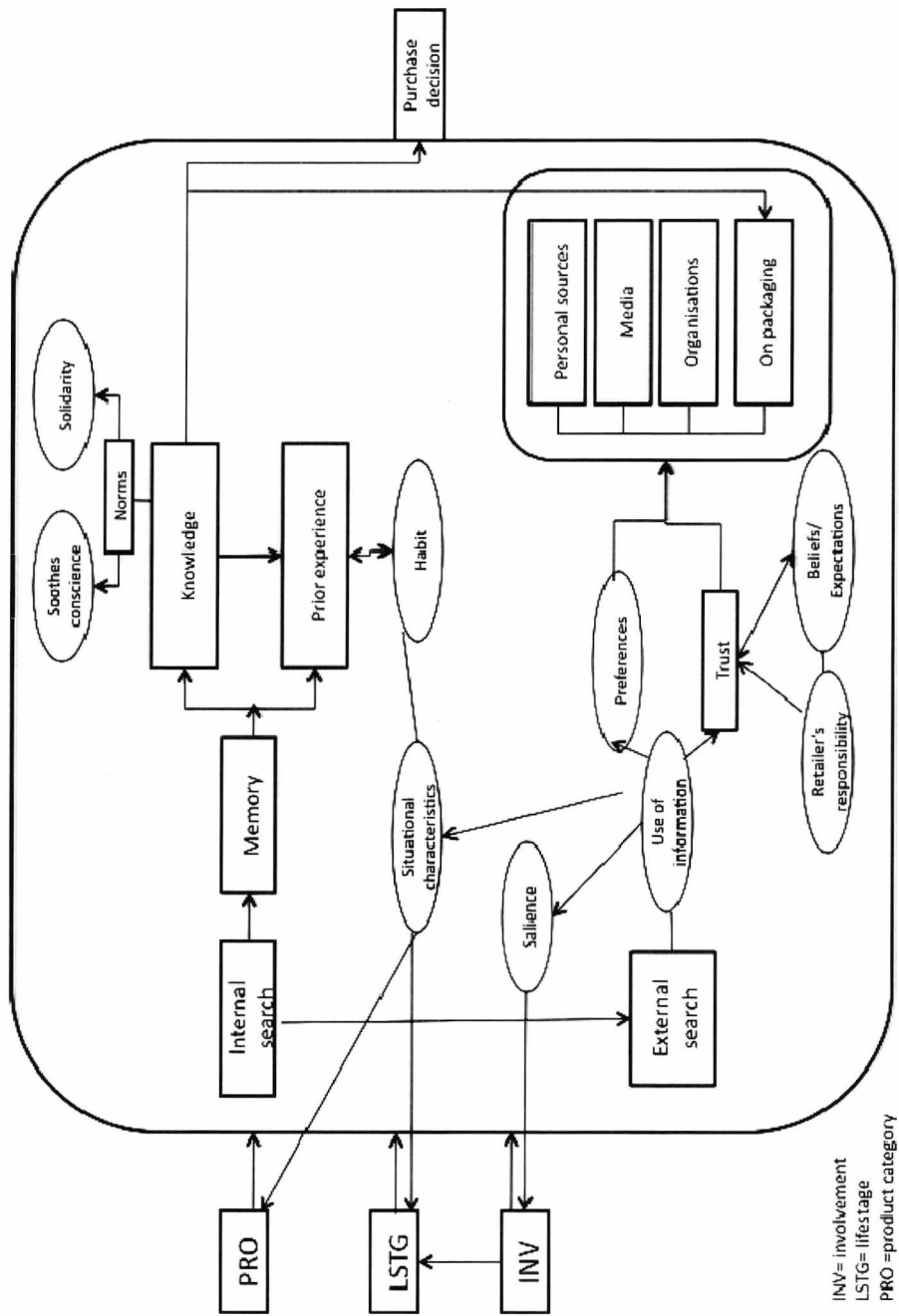


Figure 7.2 : A network of associations based on empirical data

7.6 CONCLUSION

People need to enter the store with their mindset attuned to fair trade issues; situational involvement can only act as leverage if some form of enduring involvement exists. Situational involvement created through in store signs at the point of purchase is not powerful enough to overcome price barriers. Fair trade purchases are often qualified as special purchases, thus outlining a specific purchase involvement.

The convenience aspect of the purchase is essential to many shoppers (e.g. well known brands getting the Fairtrade certification) as it requires no change in their behaviour. Secondly, it was highlighted that the perceived personal effectiveness was low.

A final finding questions the widespread belief that shoppers are becoming increasingly avid of ethical goods. It appears that 'Involved in Food' shoppers are more likely to trade off their values and relax their standards if a cheaper alternative becomes available. Shoppers interpret Fair trade purchases differently and considerations might be disparate depending on the food category considered. Grunert and Juhl (1995) suggest that high involvement in comparison with low involvement decisions are more susceptible to the influence of values. That involvement may matter importantly in the adoption process of Fairtrade foods is also indicated by the increased sustained figures of sales volume of following the annual awareness campaign.

It appears that responsibility for increasing the market share of the Fairtrade range relies on retailers. This is supported by the increasing number of stores selling products (see Chapter 2, Table 2.3, pg 35). Rather than showing an increased interest from shoppers the growth of the market is the result of business practices. The choice is steadily removed from the shoppers who are made ethical by default. One of several framing strategies used by the retailers to attract shoppers, consists in promoting Fairtrade products using emotive influence and importance of norms (social and personal, i.e. morality). The emotional dimension appeals to shoppers' heartstrings by putting producers' stories on the front of pack. This aims to attract a large proportion of shoppers and various promotion strategies adopted highlight economic, environmental or social dimensions of the Fairtrade claim at the time but rarely the three altogether. The consumer choice therefore exists in the shadow of the retailers'.

Chapter 8

Discussion and Conclusions

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the thesis. The research context is revisited. The findings of each stage of the research are reviewed separately and together, to draw conclusions. Contributions at the theoretical, practical and methodological levels are highlighted. The chapter closes by outlining the limitations of the thesis and suggesting potential areas for further research.

8.2 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The topics of food choice (Shepherd, Magnusson & Sjöden 2005, Shepherd 1999) and of involvement (Michaelidou & Dibb 2008, Mittal 1995, Laurent & Kapferer 1985, Zaichkowsky 1985) have been the focus of academic research for many years. Yet, the literature is still growing.

Following several food scares, UK consumers have learned the hard way to consider more carefully their food choice. Some of these consumers have expressed this via a greater importance attached to credence attributes such as GMO content, nutritional benefits, provenance or methods of production when reaching purchasing decisions (Verbeke & Ward 2006). Traditionally, however, purchasing decisions for everyday foods are assumed to be of low involvement. Furthermore, involvement has been recognised to be an important determinant of consumer decision making for Fairtrade products (Bezençon & Blili 2006).

Whilst increased use of labels is said to encourage responsible purchases (Schlegelmilch, Bohlen & Diamantopoulos 1996, p. 51), there is still little evidence that this format of information is an effective tool of communication for all consumers (Shaw *et al.* 2005). In fact, we do not know if any of the on-pack

information can actually have an impact on decisions. As an example, Cafedirect rebranded post 2002 its instant coffee from 'Cafedirect' to '5065' and accompanied this with a size reduction of both the FAIRTRADE MARK and growers' comments on its product packaging (Davies,2007) . Given this, the need to explore the effectiveness of the on packaging elements in informing shoppers and triggering more information was justified.

This chapter summarises the findings of the exploratory, mixed method research designed to explore the following research questions:

Does interdependency between information search and involvement exist for Fairtrade food purchases?

What role does the FAIRTRADE Mark play in influencing the choice of Fairtrade products and how does the level of consumer involvement affect this role?

A preliminary review of the literature revealed that situational characteristics have an important influence on the attention paid to information.

A parallel, yet important, research objective of the study was to explore the differences between claimed and real behaviour. Numerous inconsistencies between what people report as their behaviour and their actual behaviour exist in the literature. Hence, this study specifically examines this issue and compares reported and actual behaviour at the point of purchase. The study aimed therefore to **Explore the differences between what people say (attitudes and perceptions) and what people do (behaviour).**

This study specifically examined the issues at the point of purchase, i.e. the supermarket. The intended objective was to characterise the differences between behaviour and reported attitudes.

A summary of the results of the research is presented below.

8.3 STAGE I: DUNNHUMBY: DATA ANALYSIS

There is a considerable amount of literature dealing with attempts to portray the profile of fair trade buyers. Most have used demographic and socio economic variables to segment consumers, other includes behavioural (d'Astous & Mathieu

2008) and psychographic (Doran 2009) variables. Yet, only limited validity is given to these studies as there is a wide discrepancy between self reported and actual behaviour as sales figures confirm (Mintel 2008, Cowe & Williams 2001).

In stage I of the research the dunnhumby data was analysed to reveal actual as opposed to estimated measures. Specifically, the data was analysed to reveal the buyers' profile that was subsequently used to define a sample frame for recruitment purposes in stage II.

The purpose of stage I was to better understand the UK's fair trade food market⁴¹, to review the key performance indicators and to compare them against non-Fairtrade labelled alternatives. Further analysis helped to reveal the purchasing pattern of the best performing segments- identified through the CAMEO geodemographic segmentation- by looking at the strongest associations of product categories. The results of this stage are summarised next.

8.3.1 Key Performance Indicators

The market is expanding, resulting from an increase in distribution and in the number of products introduced. The market share of most categories is low with the exception of a few categories (chocolate bars, coffee R&G and sugar).

8.3.2 Proliferation of Fairtrade purchasing behaviour

The majority of Fairtrade food buyers are unique customers, buying in only one Fairtrade category. Only 9% of all Tesco Fairtrade bananas' buyers buy in the four best performing categories (bananas, coffee, tea and chocolate). This figure falls down to 6.5% of buyers patronising the entire range of Fairtrade foods. The identification of important variations across CAMEO segments pushed for a more detailed analysis at such level.

8.3.3 Best performing segments

3 CAMEO segments appear to be the most attracted by Fairtrade range. An investigation of the actual purchasing behaviour was conducted at the category

⁴¹ with no differentiation between branded and own label products

level for both Fairtrade foods and non-Fairtrade substitutes⁴². Whilst findings confirmed that the fair trade shopper is likely to be wealthy, less affluent segments proved to be of importance with regards to purchasing frequency and volume bought. Further analysis was conducted to explore the content of baskets.

8.3.4 Basket analysis- most powerful associations

Two objectives were pursued with this analysis:

- Identifying the products most likely to be bought with any Fairtrade foods.
- Identifying the Fairtrade categories that are most bought with each other.

Other Fairtrade products, organic products and products with environment claims are likely to be found in baskets of Tesco shoppers containing already at least one Fairtrade product.

The same analysis, conducted for each Fairtrade category at the CAMEO segment level revealed that

- bananas are associated with every category.
- coffee and tea are categories often bought together.
- variations existing across CAMEO segments in the number of products bought and in the number of products found in the top hundred most bought along with each category, thus revealing a different likeliness to browse and explore the Fairtrade range.
-

The analysis had substantial implications for stage III.

Jointly, with the main findings of the literature and the results of stage I helped the recruitment of discussants for the stage II of the study.

⁴² Controlling for buyers who would (would not) buy in the category, regardless of the Fairtrade attribute

8.4 STAGE II: FOCUS GROUPS: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of conducting focus groups was to investigate attitudes towards fair trade as a concept and to explore discussants' understanding and use of the information provided. Discussants were exposed to several products so as to provide an opportunity to witness the attention paid to on pack information and to question contextual factors changing the amount of information sought. These issues were explored across a large spectrum of discussants with diverse profiles in ten groups.

Given that involvement has been recognised to be an important determinant of consumer decision making for Fairtrade products (Bezençon & Blili 2006) and that Charters and Pettigrew (2006) did not use any scale to measure involvement, a similar method was adopted to classify discussants.

Consequently, discussants were arranged as 'Less involved', 'Involved in food' or 'Involved in food and fair trade'.

This enabled the identification of elements differentiating discussants. Different levels of interest (internal characteristics) or external factors affected the attitudes and reported behaviour. A larger spectrum of views was displayed by 'Involved in food' discussants. By focusing the analysis on this group, further questioning of the role of the different factors studied was possible. The following conclusions were drawn from the analysis.

8.4.1 Internal information search

The extent of knowledge -explored along four dimensions (see Wagner (2003))- revealed that the understanding of the concept is low to moderate, in line with Borel (2007).

Discussants are confused by the similarities of fair trade with other schemes, yet they easily associate certain categories with fair trade. Stronger connections of fair trade with non-processed and exotic categories versus processed (composite) ones were observed. The perception that fair trade products have to be

indigenous to qualify for the certification is well spread. Additionally, the more established the category the easier the linkage.

Prior experience of Fairtrade foods is usually limited to a few categories. Expectations about quality and taste are crucial and repurchase is decided in line with product satisfaction. Three types of purchasing decisions were identified: habitual, incidental, and non-conscious.

8.4.2 External information search

Discussants do not appear to specifically seek information about fair trade, information is mostly accessed by accident. A minimal attention is paid to information at the point of sale -passive exposure being the rule- as the issue is not central in the purchasing decision. The use made of each element of the packaging was observed during a confrontation with a sample of products. Different functions are identified for the FAIRTRADE Mark with potentially more complex roles for the Mark than predicted.

8.4.3 Importance of norms and trust

Two types of norms might influence purchases. Social norms often have the greatest impact in deciding a first time purchase: discussions invariably highlighted the importance of the moral dimension of the purchase. In contrast, the expression of purchase decisions made under the influence of personal norms is scarce.

Trust is a variable whose influence is transversal; its role is mentioned across the different phases of information search activities. By definition, the verification of the claim of credence attributes is costly for individuals. Discussants rely on the retailer's actions and are confident that it would not do anything to damage its own reputation. Trust is differently important across lifestages: young adults are the most sceptical about the claims made by the Fairtrade Foundation, pensioners are the most confused by the often contradictory information they have access to. Conversely, Older Adults and Families they gave evidence that they put their faith and trust in supermarkets or other economic actors instead of the Fairtrade Foundation.

8.4.4 Importance of involvement, lifestyle and product category

Early in the analysis, knowledge and information search behaviour variability were linked to consumer involvement both with food and the fair trade concept. The salience of different elements was found to vary across lifestyles. The usefulness of on packaging elements in various contexts and for different audiences supports different provides justification

Adults and families differ in their information search strategies for Fairtrade foods. This led to the proposition that household characteristics strictly speaking matter more than lifestyle in terms of the extensiveness of the repertoire influence on the set of products bought and the resources allocated to food shopping.

Familiarity (higher number of purchasing occasions) explained that older lifestyles appear more knowledgeable about certain issues in comparison with other lifestyles. Conversely, a stronger influence of emotions and feelings towards young shoppers was found.

The discussions finally revealed that the importance of the fair trade nature of the product varies across categories. Expectations and sensory performance *a priori* change with the category, and fair trade attribute is often qualified as a bonus.

The importance of the FAIRTRADE Mark varies as discussants have built strong links with certain categories and refer to other variables to identify the products. Similarly, the importance of the fair trade attribute changes across product categories: if the fair trade attribute is not valued it will be ignored. This suggests that interest and further involvement might be 'support specific' (product specific).

Based on these findings, and preliminary established relationships between variables, an intermediate model of analysis was proposed. Although focus groups permit the exploration of attitudes, perceptions and motivations, the attention paid to information might have been forced. With the purpose of further deepening our understanding of information use and the identification of situations leading to more detailed information search, the imperative of observing shoppers in their natural shopping environment became evident.

8.5 STAGE III: ACCOMPANIED SHOPPINGS SUMMARY

CONCLUSIONS

Six focus groups discussants were selected, observed shopping and interviewed. Further, supplementary observation of additional informants following similar recruitment procedures and *modus operandi* increased both internal and external validity of the findings.

8.5.1 Main findings

- Knowledge and prior experience are important drivers of the purchase decision. Focus groups insights were supported during observations: On pack information is not sought unless specific information is needed. The FAIRTRADE Mark (implying awareness and knowledge) is only relevant to the choice if the core product is liked in the first place. It, therefore, seems that prominence and impact of the visual are important.
- Limited information search is conducted in shopping situations unless specific circumstances arise. In the majority of cases, shoppers buy from a limited set of foods, an habitual behaviour supported by the cross analysis of till receipts, interviews and observations that explains low information needs. Fairtrade foods are usually encountered during browsing activities; yet, even during the Fairtrade fortnight temporary in-store signs failed to capture consumers' attention. When questioned, none of the participants knew about the Fairtrade fortnight or had noticed signs flagging the Fairtrade foods. This suggests that *ad hoc* information in store might be ineffective in catching shoppers' eye.
- Many shoppers are not conscious of the ethical nature of their purchases- which are primarily decided on other than ethical grounds. Categories for which the offer is entirely (e.g. bananas) or partially (e.g. tea, coffee) Fairtrade labelled are the best performing, arguing in favour of constrained behaviour. The Fairtrade attribute is rarely expected, known and searched for at the point of sale.

8.5.2 Importance of involvement, lifestage and product category

Specifically, observations and follow up interviews revealed that

People need to enter the store with their mind set and attuned to fair trade issues to act upon it. Situational involvement can only act as leverage if some form of enduring involvement exists. The influence of involvement on consumers' propensity to look for information is supported. It seems that the salience of the Fairtrade attribute slowly deteriorates over time in consumers' agenda.

Informants constantly work out the number of serving size of their food. This highlights that more than lifestage, it is household size that limits the repertoire of products considered. To this respect, shoppers might exclude Fairtrade foods a priori from the set of alternatives considered; either for monetary or for pack size issues. Even though the odd purchase might occur, larger households might experience more difficulties in integrating Fairtrade products in their normal shopping in the long run.

Finally, observations confirmed that shoppers do consider different sets of attributes across categories of products (manufactured vs. natural products). This further supports the importance of consideration of the product category when looking at information search strategies.

8.6 RESEARCH: CONCLUSIONS

A general interest for the fair trade concept exists but only a low rate of conversion, from intentions into purchases, is reported. A basic knowledge and understanding of the purpose of fair trade is sufficient for shoppers who recognise easily the FAIRTRADE Mark.

Our findings suggest that the influence of the context is paramount in reaching a purchasing decision. Further there is evidence of the use of different sources of information or factors for decision-making, across product categories. This confirms previous findings that the consideration of credence attributes is not consistent over time- supporting previous findings (Uusitalo, 1990; Peattie, 1999, McDonald, 2009)-and is bound to be affected by more pressuring constraints.

The detailed analysis of the 'Involved in food' shoppers reveals that they tend to take a more critical view of fair trade food and of the fair trade concept- a parallel established with organic foods, in Bodini Richter and Felder (2006) 'Involved in food' shoppers struggled to regularly act on the basis of their ethical stance as they question the credibility of the claim and ask for more tangible, visible results. Whilst these consumers are buying fairly traded alternatives in certain categories they are likely to dismiss those same alternatives for other categories; with this system of trade offs they reach a balance in their purchasing behaviour. This segment of consumers seems to be more impressionable through emotional and visual elements.

The observation of their actual behaviour revealed that low attention is given to information and that the Fairtrade attribute is rarely considered. The increasing amount of information available for consumers seems to complexify the purchase process. The several information sources and the various ways, in which they convey the information, leave sometimes the potential consumers less sure about the impact of their actions. Labelling appears to be a simple way to inform about products' characteristics, the FAIRTRADE Mark appear to be used for the identification of products. However, whilst a general knowledge of fair trade scheme was evidenced, specific research about products or manufacturers was non-existent. Potential explanations include the low level of consumers' involvement, supporting the proposition that consumers are looking for simple information, acting as heuristics –shortcuts- helping them to make a purchasing decision. Another potential reason might be that these shoppers have developed repeat purchase behaviour and that they are knowledgeable about the products' features (McDonald, 2009).

The main barrier preventing these shoppers from expanding their consumption-leaving aside the higher price- is the perception that not much is communicated about the benefits induced by purchases.

Interviews and observations allow proposing various reasons that motivate information search relative to fair trade.

The degree of attention paid to information is affected by consumer interest on first ground and relevance (involvement) of the information in a second time.

Overall, superficial, temporal and practical interest was witnessed. On the basis of this sample, it seems that information at the point of sale is ineffective in triggering purchases, attracting attention and convincing shoppers to purchase the products, but the size of the sample limits the ability to generalise. This contradicts most literature on the influence of in store signs on shoppers.

Food purchasing is considered to be a low involvement activity, although little empirical evidence is available. Certain issues seem capable of incurring extra consideration of the purchase depending on the influence of situational factors too. High involvement decisions appear to be more susceptible to the influence of values; offering support for Grunert and Juhl (1995b). However, whenever an extra cost is foreseen, a deeper evaluation results in a trade off between economic reasons and personal values. Sustaining this behaviour in the long term is a challenge: 'Involved in Food' shoppers are likely to relax and reverse their standards easily if a cheaper alternative becomes available. In summary, the level of involvement may matter in the adoption process of Fairtrade foods an illustration of which is provided by the peaks in the sales volume of Fairtrade foods following the annual Fairtrade fortnight campaign. This adoption is however mostly temporal and the surge in sales does not transform itself in a long-term trend.

A final finding questions the widespread belief that consumers are becoming increasingly avid of ethical goods. Acknowledging the existence of such phenomenon, the greater share of the market growth is the result of business practices. One of several framing strategies used by retailers consists of promoting fair trade foods using emotive influence and emphasising the importance of social and personal norms. Concomitantly, the various promotion strategies implemented highlight either the economic, environmental or social dimensions of the Fairtrade claim but rarely the three together. The choice is steadily removed from shoppers who are made ethical by default.

These findings permitted to elaborate a model of information search for Fairtrade foods purchases presented in chapter 7 Figure 7.2 page 241.

8.7 CONTRIBUTIONS

This thesis is the first to examine the potential interdependency between Information search and Involvement in the specific context of Fairtrade foods, using a multi method approach. Small-scale studies, similar to this one, can offer salient insights.

8.7.1 Theoretical contributions

Supporting evidence that involvement and information search are correlated. This supports and extends previous literature findings (Verbeke & Roosen 2009) and Garcia Martinez and Poole (2009). Additionally, empirical observations supplemented by interviews suggest that the enduring component of involvement is more important than the situational one. Hence, the challenge to both raise awareness and increase interest 'to induce a positive predisposition prior to the point of purchase' (Fearne 2008) is of utmost importance.

A specificity of 'Medium involved' shoppers. Charters (2004) argues in favour of a continuum of involvement rather than a simple high/low dichotomy. Further empirical evidence is provided in the specific case of Fairtrade foods- that this intermediary level acts as a transitional stage between lower and higher levels of involvement as had been suggested for wine (Charters, 2004) and for sustainable foods (Fearne, Garcia & May 2008). Individuals belonging to this segment are the potential greatest source for future growth of the market, given they can be convinced about the claims made. Although, ethical consumerism is moving deeper into certain shoppers' behaviours and value systems this takes time and requires the provision of tailored information and education.

Information at the point of sale is not of much use. This finding is against expectations and previous literature. Whilst consumers need basic information to reach purchasing decisions, they do not seek or notice information about fair trade. This thesis shows that on a small sample, there is little evidence that in-store marketing elements (i.e. temporary campaigns) are effective in triggering interest towards labelled products (this excludes signs signalling offers). Consequently, regular campaigns such as the Fairtrade fortnight seem ineffective in pointing towards Fairtrade products. Whilst it appears that the FAIRTRADE Mark enjoys a high rate of recognition as reported in surveys, the present study struggle to identify

the ways in which it is been used in the purchase decision process (McDonald, 2009)

Scepticism about the growth of the ethical consumer base. The study shows that, overall, the FAIRTRADE Mark is neither sought, nor crucial in deciding food purchases. Products are bought for other reasons than their ethical nature. As such, the majority of people buying Fairtrade foods appear to do so passively in the majority of cases. The analysis of the UK market points in favour of greater impact of structural changes than of the contribution of new consumers integrating Fairtrade foods to explain market growth.

Household size is a better indicator than lifestage. This thesis provides evidence that small households (both Young and Older, and Pensioners) are most likely to be interested by, and knowledgeable about the fair trade concept. Previous studies have used predominantly 'age' and 'household composition' to discuss involvement with food (Bell & Marshall 2003). Following findings showing that young parents tend to pay more attention to the procurement of foods for their household and that young adults tend to be more egocentric, we used lifestage. Findings show that when considering premium products, household composition takes precedence over lifestage with regard to final purchasing decisions.

The salience of the Fairtrade attribute varies across product categories. Even though an individual might be interested and deeply concerned by social features of the production processes, this will not imply that only Fairtrade foods will be purchased. The fair trade characteristic is evaluated conjointly with the support of the claim (the product). The data collected underlines the inconsistencies in ethical purchasing behaviour, even within a same shopping mission as Peattie (1999) had identified, outlining that consumption should be apprehended as a sum of single purchases not as a global, coherent behaviour (McDonald, 2009). Thus, to be valued, the FAIRTRADE Mark needs appropriate support. This potentially explains why some categories -for whose the Fairtrade claim appears more credible-are more successful than others.

8.7.2 Practical contributions

Individuals are more sensitive to continuous information directed towards them rather than *ad hoc*, temporary information. Respondents report to have encountered information about Fairtrade accidentally. This should be considered by

practitioners when designing Fairtrade marketing campaigns. This suggests that promotion of Fairtrade foods has to be product-specific and cannot be based on a generic communication tools, as using information about a purchase cannot predict for sure subsequent similar behaviour.

The positive influence of media on purchasing decisions was confirmed. Stakeholders involved in the promotion of fair trade should make appropriate use of this communication channel. If one of the objectives pursued is to reach sustained purchasing behaviour, then continuous reminders should be sent to shoppers so as to sustain their level of interest. 'Involved in food' shoppers are generally more critical about fair trade and more likely to be responsive to food experts and authorities. The use of this communication channel - currently limited- should be developed to capture consumers' attention.

Involvement as a segmentation variable. Consumer involvement with fair trade seems to influence behaviour, creating potential to segment the market accordingly, albeit presenting challenges regarding measurement issues. Differences existing in the likeliness of individuals to look at different elements on packaging and at the point of sale could serve as a basis to classify discussants and cater for their various information needs and preferences.

Children are the key drivers to increase involvement- Children have a great importance in disseminating knowledge. By creating an environment in which they make reference to fair trade, schools participate in creating enduring involvement, and a set of references that may trigger interest and have long term repercussions. Concrete managerial implications of this might mean that the packaging of Fairtrade foods should be designed so as to capture children's attention.

8.7.3 Methodological contributions

The use of a multi method approach, very much in line with ethnographic practices, is the strength of this thesis. This methodology was deemed more effective to uncover deep meanings of behaviour. The external validity as well as the robustness of the results were improved. Other methodological contributions include:

Failure of involvement measurement scale to mirror actual behaviour. To really understand consumer behaviour, research should not be based on reported behaviour. The methodology used to measure involvement did take into account the inconsistencies. This method gives a better approximation of real behaviour than questionnaires that individuals fill in a few minutes. In order to capture consumer behaviour appropriately, static research does not suffice, as it does not account for the process building the outcome.

Conjoint use of interviewing and observations. This allows controlling for socially desirable answers. It is easier to mark an answer on a questionnaire than adopting a false posture in an hour-long observation. Although some elements of subjectivity exist in designing and conducting an interview, these elements are definitely minimised in real decision situations.

A different perspective on the well researched relationship between involvement and information search. The verbal data generated through direct interaction with respondents in focus groups, and observations supplemented by interviews allow a systematic in depth research. This thesis contributes in supporting the use and resurgence of ethnographic methods in marketing studies. Marketing research could benefit of borrowing ethnographic methods and longer immersion in environments.

A novel, innovative way of using a primarily commercially oriented database in academic studies. The use of the dunnhumby (sic) database provides a useful tool to access actual sales figures at a disaggregated level. It helps identifying the best performing segments (using diverse segmentation variables) and establishing patterns of consumption via the analysis of weekly purchasing data.

8.8 LIMITATIONS

The first limitation of this study is its geographically narrow coverage. It examines individuals' behaviour of a restricted area, in South London. Although authorisations to conduct research were sought from a number of stores- and mainly Tesco- only one positive answer was obtained, from Sainsbury's Ltd. Limited time and resources available for the research, and validity of the

dunnhumby data across the spectrum of UK average shoppers⁴³ led to pursue the study in these circumstances. Focusing on a single store format - supermarkets- might also have affected the composition of the sample. Shoppers with higher levels of involvement might shop in specialised, dedicated stores, and more generally, shoppers' characteristics might vary across points of sale. During stage III, less than reported purchasing occasions were witnessed which might limit the validity of using such variables in the future as sampling frame.

Qualitative research is often criticised for its lack of reliability. This research was not primarily aimed at generalising findings produced, the exploratory nature of the study imposed however to conduct robust observations and analysis. Adler and Adler suggest that researchers should conduct their observations '*systematically and repeatedly over varying conditions*', that is, in order to '*ensure the widest range of observational consistency*' (1994, p. 381). Even though accompanied shops were conducted in a unique store, we ensured observations were conducted at different times and days in order to capture a wide spectrum of Fairtrade shoppers during the '*cold calling recruitment*' phase.

In addition, limitations inherent to each method used ought to be noted.

The language and wording expression of each individual can affect focus group success. Ethical issues like fair trade are often complex and are likely to be affected by social desirability. Certain individuals might have difficulties in expressing clearly their opinions. Further, a particular attention was given to the possibility that due to the fact that discussants' first language was different from that of the researcher of the present study, the meaning of some of their expression might have been missed.

To avoid the potential of misunderstanding of verbal data and distortion of meaning, the need for prompting was reinforced. Doing so, allowed to uncover the specific, sometimes hidden, meaning participants attributed to ideas. As much as this was identified, explanations and precisions were asked to clarify underlying meaning but in some occasions this might have been missed.

⁴³ See Appendice H

The sole observation of people purchasing products restricts itself the scope of the study. People interactions with food should be viewed using the pre to post purchase (and use) framework (Marshall & Bell 2004). Claiming that the time spent to choose a product is related to the extent of information search (Kendall & Fenwick 1979) or by measuring the length of the decision purchase decision we can give a fair account of it would highly be misleading. A shortcut of the study, therefore, is to have assumed that the systematic observations and de-embedded acts at the point of sale reveal the global purchasing act. On the other hand, the criticism that accompanied shopping, conducted on small sample lack validity can be defended. Each observation solely aims in being an account of the reality, with no objective of generalisation whatsoever. The collection of grocery receipts over the period of data collection substantiated that observed actions reflected usual behaviour.

If informants are too aware of the presence of the researcher during observations, this might introduce unnatural behaviour, a phenomenon known as reactivity. Even though a number of strategies-identified by previous researchers-were used to control this, it is impossible to ascertain informants were not being influenced at all in their behaviour. The use of till receipts allowed controlling for irregularities in purchasing behaviour although the method suffers from limitations: the data may be incomplete, a gap in records, or bias created if some information is removed from the dataset by the informants.

Finally, the focus groups sessions generated about 200 pages of transcription (16-18 pages per group) and the accompanied shops coupled with semi-structured interviews added another 100 pages. The information to be analysed amounts to such a large quantity, that it becomes necessary to impose limitations on the sample size.

8.9 FURTHER RESEARCH

8.9.1 Methodological issues

Further research could begin by examining the research problem in different contexts and with different samples. Particularly, the frequency of purchase does not seem to be a good indicator for fair trade involvement (participants are buying

regularly the products because these products are the only available option). Likewise, the socio economic profile is not necessarily anymore a good indicator of Fairtrade foods purchases. Fairtrade buyers are commonly encountered, and only frequency and volume purchased vary across segments. A similar research could propose to compare purchasing behaviour, knowledge, preferences for information sources and level of involvement across socio-economic classes.

Over twenty measurement scales of involvement have been identified by O' Cass (1996) of which Zaichkowsky's (1985), Mittal (1989a), Laurent and Kapferer (1985) are the most popular. In parallel, Charters and Pettigrew (2006) measured involvement on the basis of behavioural characteristics only. An intermediate solution was used in the present study, using Mittal's scale (1989a) and moderating it with qualitative data. This permits to show that quantitative data only partially reveals involvement and that contextual factors have to be accounted for in their potential influence on involvement. Further research should look into the application of this method to other goods- credence and experience - to test the validity of the method.

8.9.2 Importance of Enduring vs Situational Involvement

A key finding of the study confirms the challenge of increasing situational involvement even through specific campaigns. Therefore the important, managerial, implication for organisations promoting Fairtrade (e.g. the Fairtrade Foundation) is to carry on education campaigns, partnerships with schools, and foster involvement with universities and other institutions to diffuse awareness and knowledge across the population. Whilst manufacturers have to (or have come to) realise that information on packaging is not attended (see Starbucks' rebranding strategy (Elliott, 2004)) a need to find other supports to promote their affiliation to the Fairtrade scheme will arise. Further research could look into ways to increase enduring involvement. This presumably supposes to understand what makes consumers ethically aware.

In this respect, it is important to note that support is found for consumers' low attention for in-store information. Other sources of information are more convenient, preferred or used. The credence attribute does not seem to trigger

additional search (except in few instances) but shoppers would have sought and encountered information anyway.

When purchases are conscious, consumers usually know of products and of the fair trade concept before entering the store. Fairtrade foods purchases are habitual, or unconscious. We echo Fearne's findings on organic food (2008), proposing that the fair trade characteristic does not fit with well an impulse purchase decision, implying that shoppers need to have a certain level of enduring involvement with fair trade to consider the range.

8.9.3 The role of product category

The importance of the fair trade attribute across product categories has been noted several times in the study. Growth of the market is mainly attributed to a wider distribution and increase in number of products introduced. Shoppers create stronger associations between raw, natural and unprocessed products with fair trade as opposed to composite products for which the link with developing countries seems to be missing. This might mean that the expansion of the range of products, produced from Fairtrade ingredients might be definite. Further research could assess quantitatively the demand for Fairtrade products in specific categories.

8.9.4 Segmentation

The last potential area for further research identified in this study refers to segmentation. Is segmentation of Fairtrade buyers feasible, desirable and helpful in tailoring information provided to each segment? Surely, due to space constraints, the on-pack information has to be limited and can only accommodate so many needs. For other supports for information it might prove useful for marketers to look further and understand the best ways to get their messages across.

8.10 CONCLUSION

The rapid evolution of the fair trade market, combined with the increased interest of multinationals (e.g. Cadbury's) getting the certification for Fairtrade stimulates academic studies in this area. In order to address the relative lack of comparative work in Fairtrade purchasing behaviour studies, the present study focussed in part on questioning the existence of similar information search

strategies across different categories of products. The move from a 'niche' to a 'mainstream' activity has raised questions. What effect will the institutionalisation of the Fairtrade market have on consumers? Will the attribute become less important for them and fades away, when other, more pressuring, issues begin to take more media and organisational attention? Arguably, for consumers who are involved in the fair trade concept, purchasing Fairtrade products will be part of natural behaviour, and they would repeat buying products, although they need less of reminders and prompts compared to other shoppers.

This thesis set out to investigate the potential interdependency of information search and involvement in relation with Fairtrade foods and as such to extend the work of De Pelsmaker and Janssens (2007) and of Bezencon and Blili (2006) tackling the question from a different perspective, and applying a different methodology.

The multi method approach proposed, combined actual sales and segment data, and then entailed the use of qualitative methods to observe real-life behaviour. The research idea originated from the realisation that some Fairtrade products become less identifiable on the basis of packaging only (reduction of size, change of location of the FAIRTRADE Mark and other indicators on products packaging). Stage II and III answered calls for increased use of qualitative and ethnographic methods in marketing in order to better apprehend issues consumers face in their everyday life.

The extent of information search was not necessarily modified as a result of the nature of the good –credence vs. experience-. Different levels of involvement with fair trade and food were evidenced in the sample, which contradicted most of the literature generally considering food to be a low involvement commodity in developed countries.

Insights from the thesis were summarised in this concluding chapter, separately and in combination. The contributions and limitations of the study were revisited and areas for future research were suggested.

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Appendice A : Operationalisations of involvement

The issue of the dimensionality of involvement has been one of importance in the literature. In parallel with a number of accepted definitions, scales to measure the concept have been developed with various levels of dimensionality. The controversy in the measurement is a consequence of the existence of different definitions. A scale can have any number of dimensions in it. Most scales existing in pure science have one dimension only (e.g. weight, height, time). Social sciences concepts can hardly be explained along a single dimension. We define 'dimension' in this context as a number line. It is first important to decide how many lines are needed to measure a construct. One-dimensional concepts are generally easier to understand; using a unidimensional scale to measure a multi dimensional concept will only describe it partially. For many psychological constructs only the effects can be observed not the concepts themselves; therefore the construction of measurement scale is of major importance.

To the multiple definitions correspond a large number of scales. O'Cass (1996) lists that over than twenty measures and nine manipulations checked have been developed over the past four decades. Michaelidou and Dibb (2008) list the different studies of involvement according to the dimensionality of involvement found by the authors (In the interest of clarity the Table 3.2 below summarises existing scales and dimensions). Although few authors still propose to measure involvement along a unique dimension the major part of scales are multidimensional. A major critic from Cohen (1983) is that unidimensionality does not allow one to separate involvement from antecedents on one side and from consequences on the other side.

This reflects the conceptualisation of involvement and the integration of temporality aspects of involvement. Additionally, the use of the construct in several contexts called for a need to adapt measurement tools specificities of the situations.

Authors	Type of involvement studied	Definitions	Measurement scale
Dimensions			
Lastovicka and Garner, 1978	Product involvement	2	Normative importance Brand commitment
Zaichkowsky 1985	Involvement with product	1	
			20 items 7 points bipolar semantic scale
Kapferer and Laurent, 1985	Product involvement	5	Perceived importance of the product: its meaning Perceived risk associated with the product: perceived negative consequences of a wrong choice Perceived probability of making a wrong choice Perceived symbolic value of the product: refers to the sign value Hedonic value: refers to the emotional appeal and the ability of the product to provide pleasure and affect
			16 items 5 points Likert scale
Mittal and Lee, 1989	Purchase decision involvement	4	Degree of caring: the amount of care the consumer has in making the choice Perception of variation in type of brand Importance of brand choice in the purchase context Concern over the outcome of choice: represents the risk component of making a good choice
			14 items 5 points Likert scale
Slama and Taschian, 1985	Purchase involvement		General personality trait measuring the cross product involvement in purchase activities
			33 items 6 points Likert scale
Bloch et al, 1986	Enduring involvement		Hedonic: refers to the product interest Time spent thinking about the product: captures the cognitive aspect and behavioural outcome of involvement Average importance of the product to the performance of social and career roles: refers to the self image
			4 points scale 5 points scale
Higie and Feick, 1989	Enduring involvement	2	Hedonic Self expression
			10 items 7 points semantic differentials
Knox et al, 1994		3	Product hedonic
			14 items

			Product sign	7 points Likert scale
			Product utility	
Zaichkowsky, 1994	Involvement with ad	2	Emotional: the affective based measure of involvement	10 items
			Cognitive: the rational nature of involvement	7 points bipolar semantic scale
Van Trijp et al, 1996	Product involvement	3	Importance	3 items
			Interest	7-points Likert scale
			Degree of care when choosing a product	
Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006	Product involvement	2	Pleasure and enjoyment derived from shopping: hedonic nature	15-item
			Importance attached to the product: reflects symbolic nature of the product as a means of self expression	5-point Likert scale

Table 3.1 A synthesis of the dimensions of involvement found in the literature (adapted from (Michaelidou & Dibb 2008))

Appendice B : Previous uses in the literature of accompanied shops

Authors	Year	Research question	Sample size	Method used	Other methods used conjointly
Bettman	1970		5	Verbal protocols	Store visits
Murtaugh	1985		24	Think aloud-verbal protocols	Accompanied shop
Park <i>et al</i>	1989		68	Think aloud Unobtrusive observation	Accompanied shop
Lehnerd <i>et al</i>	2001		21	Unobtrusive observation	Accompanied shop Follow up interview
Rayner <i>et al</i>	2001	How do consumers use health related endorsements?	49	Think aloud Direct observations	2 shopping trips Receipts collection Follow up interview
Shimway cook <i>et al</i>	2002		36	Direct observations	Observation way home to store Accompanied shop
Henry and Reicks	2003		70	Think aloud	Accompanied shop
Clarke <i>et al</i>	2004		8	Direct observations	Focus groups Diaries Accompanied shop Kitchen visits
Jackson <i>et al</i>	2006				Videography Follow up interview
Silberer Buttner		Process tracing of inner states of shoppers	81	Videography	
Coupland	2005		2	Direct observation	Ethnography Focus groups
Sinha and Uniyal	2005	Segmenting the grocery market	284	Unobtrusive observations	Observations
Geiger	2007		146	Observations	Structured observation Unstructured observation Survey
Spanjaard, Freeman, Young	2007		12	Unobtrusive observation Video taped	Survey Videography Follow up interview Archival data
Bassett, Chapman and Beagan	2008		36 families	Direct observations	Interviews preparation, cooking, consumption and clean-up of a family meal,

Zanoli	2008		18	Unobtrusive observation	Accompanied shop Accompanied shop Follow up interview
Aschemann and Hamm	2008	Factors capable of explaining purchase behaviour regarding food products carrying a claim?			
Food standard agency	2009		113	Direct observation Think aloud	Accompanied shops In store bag audits At home bag audits
ANZFA		Information search and attribute importance	256	Unobtrusive observation	Focus groups Survey Observations

Appendice C Grocery receipts synthesis

	Amber	Victoria	Tia	Lucy	Katie	Chloe
Week 1	1/cereal bars	0	0	0	0	0
Week 2	No receipt	1/ avocado	0	1	0	1/sugar
Week 3	No receipt	1/bananas	1/bananas	0	No receipt	2 bananas
Week 4	1/coffee	0	0	2/ sugar; bananas	2/ tea; bananas	1/bananas
Week 5	No receipt	0	1/bananas		No receipt	1/bananas
Week 6	1/cereal bars	3/ coffee, bananas, avocado	1/bananas		0	0
Week 7	1/cereal bars		1/bananas		0	1/bananas
Week 8	1/cereal bars		1/bananas		0	0
Week 9	1/cereal bars		1/bananas		0	0
Week 10			1/bananas		0	0
Week 11			1/bananas	1/bananas	0	2/bananas
Week 12			1/bananas	1/bananas	2/ sugar; bananas	1/bananas
Week 13			1/bananas			0
Week 14			2/ bananas			

Appendice D : Store authorisation

Selsdon

Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd
130 Addington Road
SELSDON
CR2 8LA
020 8657 9397

05 February 2010

Ms. Claire Garcia, Ph.D candidate
University of Kent
Kent Business School
CANTERBURY
CT2 7PE

Sainsbury's
Try something new today

Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd
33 Holborn
London
EC1H 2HT

Telephone 020 7695 6000
Fax 020 7695 7610

Dear Ms. Garcia

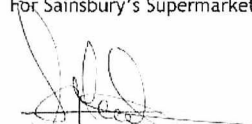
Further to our telephone conversation this afternoon, I confirm that the dates for your study have changed and will now take place during **22 February** and **10 March 2010**.

As detailed previously in Steve Rollason's letter of 26 January, we are happy to allow you to undertake this fieldwork and draw your attention to the following conditions.

- The study must not impede customer flow
- The study must not intimidate customers
- The study should take place between 09:00 and 17:00
- Leaflets should not be handed out

On arrival at the store, please approach our Customer Service Desk and ask to speak with the Deputy Manager. Please remember to bring this letter with you.

Yours sincerely
For Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd



Sandra Manley
Manager's Secretary

Registered Office as above
Registered number 0447392 England
A subsidiary of J Sainsbury plc



100% post-consumer-waste recycled paper

Appendice E : Focus group discussion guide

Stages	Content
5 minutes	<p>The aim of the research is to investigate your food purchasing behaviour specifically Fair Trade products. You should feel free to express your opinions and relate your experiences, there is no right or wrong answers, all views are appreciated.</p> <p>In order to help future analysis we will tape record the discussion, but the results will be strictly anonymous and there will not be any way to identify you.</p>
Introductory questions	FGQ1: We will go around the room, and you'll give us your first name, where do you shop, what you do for a living and detail your household composition
5 minutes	How do you feel when doing your grocery shopping (frequency, place, list or not, pleasant or not activity)?
Transition questions	RQ1 Is there a specific information search conducted for groceries?
20 minutes	<p>FGQ2: Can you tell us what a traditional/classic shopping trip is? (under time pressure/ careful choice of products). TELL ME THE STORY</p> <p>FGQ3: How do you navigate around the shop? You enter the shop and then..</p> <p>And what make you stop in an aisle?</p> <p>How do you make the choice of a specific product in the category</p> <p>FGQ4: Now think and try to remember any special situation when your look more closely at the information on a product? why was that? (prompt :influence of media and external sources of information/ POS?)</p> <p>CHECK VIDEO</p>
Key questions	<p>Part 2: Let's Focus now on Fair Trade</p> <p>FGQ5: Brainstorming session: what does Fair Trade means or entails for you? FLIPCHART</p>
40-50 minutes	<p>FGA1 Pile sorting exercise- in which of these categories could you find Fair Trade products? Discussion (Have you ever bought any of these products Fair Trade products? Which? (sometimes there's only the Fair Trade product nothing else/Awareness of purchase)</p> <p>FGA2: For example here are products Fair Trade and Non Fair Trade products which one would you choose? How do you decide what to buy? How important is it for you that the product is FAIR TRADE in your final choice?</p> <p>FGQ6: Does anyone recognise the FAIR TRADE label? What does it stand for? What is the Fair Trade Foundation and what role do they play? Does anyone care?</p> <p>FGQ7: How do you find a FAIR TRADE product in store? (Prompt: habit? Examples?)</p>

(Does the FAIR TRADE logo on packaging provide useful information for you?
Crucial for the product?)

(Part 3: information provision and level of involvement? CHECK VIDEO

FGQ9: Do you think Fair trade information on the product is only useful for people who are already aware of Fair Trade or could prompt people to consider a Fair Trade option?

Ending questions FGQ10: Imagine you are in charge of the communication for Fair Trade foundation and have to improve the information on product? What would you do? (Prompt: Keep ? change?)

5 minutes

Conclusion Thank you for you participation, it's been a very interesting discussion.

5 minutes Provision of the results of the research available upon request.

Appendice F : Classifications of discussants

University of Kent-Canterbury

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Consent Form Version Date: February 2009

Title of Study: Information search and Fair Trade. groceries purchasing behaviour

Principal Investigator: Claire GARCIA, Ph.D.

University of Kent Department: Centre for Value Chain Research-Kent Business School

Study Contact telephone number: 01227 827 483

Study Contact email: ccg4@kent.ac.uk

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researcher named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to understand better how consumers decide which product to buy and the importance of certain piece of information. Groceries and more specifically food product purchase is the main area of interest.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 100 people involved in the project, which is being conducted in South East of England. Participants will be chosen randomly assuming they satisfy the screening criteria.

How long will your part in this study last?

Your participation in this focus group will last approximately one hour.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

The group will be asked to discuss their choices in the context of groceries purchases. No questions will be directed to you individually, but instead to the group. You may choose to respond or not respond at any point during the discussion. The focus group discussion will be audio taped so we can capture comments in a transcript for analysis.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

We do not anticipate any risks or discomfort to you from being in this study. Even though we will emphasise to all participants that comments made during the focus group session should be kept confidential, it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group at some time in the future. Therefore, we encourage you to be as honest and open as you can, but remain aware of our limits in protecting confidentiality.

How will your privacy be protected?

Every effort will be taken to protect your identity as a participant in this study. You will not be identified in any report or publication of this study or its results. Your name will not appear on any transcripts; instead, you will be given a code number. The list which matches names and code numbers will be kept in a locked file cabinet. After the focus group tape has been transcribed, the tape will be deleted, and the list of names and numbers will also be destroyed.

Will you receive anything for participating in this study?

In order to thank you for your time; you will be paid £30 pounds.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

There will be no costs for being in the study

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the researcher in charge of the project.

Participant's Agreement:

I have read or have had read to me all of the above.

Miss Claire GARCIA has explained the study to me and answered all of my questions. I have been told the risks and/or discomforts as well as the possible benefits of the study.

I understand that I do not have to take part in this study and my refusal to participate or my decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop my participation at any time.

In case I have any questions about the study, I have been told I can contact Miss Claire GARCIA, from the Kent Business School, at 01227 827483 or ccg4@kent.ac.uk

I understand my rights as a research subject and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about, how the study is conducted, and why it is being performed. I have been told I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendice G : Classifications of discussants

After the Focus group analysis

Less Involved		Involved – Food		Involved – Fair Trade	
Francesca	YA	Amber	YA	Charlotte	YA
Alexandra	YA	Jessica	YA	Sarah	YA
Rachel	YA	Victoria	YA	Lisa	OF
Holly	OF	Natasha	YA	Katherine	OF
Paige	OF	Niamh	YA	Melissa	OF
Louise	OF	Phoebe	YA	Anna	OF
Olivia	OF	Tegan	YA	Ellie	OA
Shannon	OF	Naomi	YA	Georgina	OA
Mia	OA	Zoe	OF	Madeleine	OA
Alisha	OA	Tia	OF	Lucy	OA
Samantha	OA	Emma	OF	Charlotte	P
Amy	OA	Jodie	OF	Isabel	P
Leah	P	Georgia	OA	Eve	YF
Sophia	P	Abigail	OA	Elizabeth	YF
Millie	P	Abby	OA	Nicole	YF
Rosie	P	Yasmin	OA		
Hannah	P	Katie	OA		
Harriet	P	Megan	OA		
Lara	P	Alice	P		
Aimee	P	Jade	P		
Lily	YF	Eleanor	P		
Laura	YF	Nicole	YF		
Courtney	YF	Chloe	YF		
Erin	YF	Daisy	YF		
Rebecca	YF	Morgan	YF		
Carol	YF				

Appendice H : Screening questionnaire

Questionnaire

N°

<u>Type of shop</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Top up (close interview) <input type="checkbox"/> Main shop
Occupation (self or partner):

When shopping for food which of the following information, if any, do you look for ...?

	SOMETIMES	ALWAYS	NO
Brand			
Ingredients list			
Country of Origin			
Environmental impact, e.g. dolphin friendly			
Locally-produced goods			
Production methods (organic, etc)			
'Fair Trade' products			
Free range			
Health claim (e.g reduces cholesterol)			

Are you planning to buy

Fruit/ Vegetables	Rice	Cereal bars
Honey	Sugar	Tea
Wines	Coffee	Chocolate

Which age group do you belong to?

20-39 years 40-59 years Over 60 years

Household Composition

Adults	0	1	2	3	4	5+
N° of children 0-9	0	1	2	3	4	5+
N° of children 10-18	0	1	2	3	4	5+

Would you note that we may need to contact you again over the next few weeks.

Provide contact details below

Name and Address	

We would like you to have a look at the statements below and state your degree of agreement with them. Please make sure you have provided an answer for each statement as this essential for the analysis.

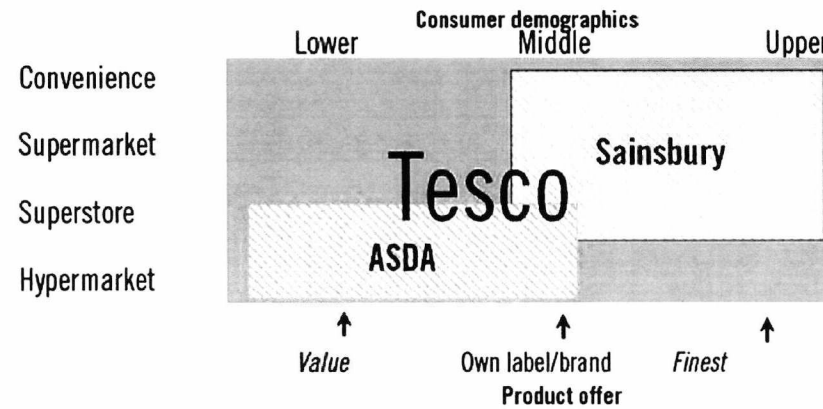
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Neutral	Agree	Agree somewhat	Strongly agree
I have a strong interest in food products							
I would choose my food very carefully							
Using Fair Trade food products express my personality							
Knowing whether or not someone uses Fair Trade food tells a lot about that person							
I would give myself a great pleasure by purchasing Fair Trade food							

To buy Fair Trade food would be like giving myself a present or treat							
You can tell a lot about a person from the brand s/he buys							
It is strange that you have to pay extra for your good behaviour instead of being rewarded for it							
I would search for more information before buying a Fair Trade product							
If there is an article about Fair Trade I would be interested in reading it							
Information in the store helps me to locate the Fair Trade products							
To me taste is the most important aspect of buying food							
Fair trade products have poor quality							
I trust less Fair Trade composite products							

Appendice I: dunnhumby data representative of all UK supermarket customers.

Tesco data is representative of the UK shopper

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Source: Citi Investment Research

As Tesco operates across all store formats, appeals to all consumer demographics and reaches 40% of UK households Clubcard data is representative of the UK shopper

Independent research carried out by Citigroup