Towards the Development of a Scale for Consciousness for Fair Consumption

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Abstract: *The article focuses on fair consumption as one important aspect of ethical consumption. Our study presents aconceptualization and empirical testing of a newscale for consciousness for fair consumption (CFC), defined as a latent disposition of consumers to prefer products that are produced and traded in compliance withfairlabor andbusinesspractices. Results demonstrate reliability and validity of the CFC construct and significant differences to other aspects of ethical consumption such as ecological concern and moral reasoning. Furthermore we can show substantial and significant effects for CFC on both intention to purchase and actual purchase of fair trade products. This aspect has been neglected in existing research.In contrast ecological concern and moral reasoning were only marginally able to explain intended and actual consumption of fair trade products.*
Keywords: *Ethical Consumption; Fairtrade; Scale Development; Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethical consumption describes intentional purchase behavior that favours products and services which have been produced according to ethical standards (Carrigan et al., 2004). Ethical standards comprise among others concerns for the society (i.e. the product or service is produced with minimal harm to or exploitations of humans) and the environment (i.e. the product or service is produced with minimal environmental damages). Since the 1970ies especially environmentally conscious consumer behavior has been intensively researched (i.e. Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Auger & Devinney, 2007; Balderjahn, 1988; Carriganetal., 2004;Gardner & Stern, 1996; Schlegelmilch et al., 1996; Shrum et al., 1995; Webster, 1975). Compared with the huge amount of work about environmentally conscious consumption relatively few studies have been conducted on the other important facet of ethical consumption, i.e. socially conscious consumption. In the last decade, however research on socially conscious consumption behavior has started to grow significantly (Auger et al., 2003; Brenton & ten Hacken, 2006; Brinkmann & Peattie, 2008; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001;de Pelsmacker et al., 2006; de Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Shaw & Shiu, 2003; Vitell, 2003). Specifically the purchase of fair trade products has received increasing attention as an example of socially conscious consumption.Consumption of fair trade products implies that the consumer considers the compliance with fair labor standards in the manufacturing and distribution processes of products in his purchase decisions.Except for the study of Hustvedt and Bernard (2010) no study has investigated the consumers' predisposition to consider compliance with fair labor standards in his purchase decisions as a determinant of demand for fair trade products. Thus to the best of our knowledge no validated scale to measure a consumer's consciousness for fair consumption exists to date. Furthermore studies on ethical consumption do often equate environmentally and socially conscious behavior and essentially focus almost exclusively on ecological aspects of ethical consumption (Anderson &Cunningham, 1972; Antil & Bennett, 1979; Balderjahn, 1988). However it is a major differenceifsomeoneprefersa productdue to the fact of its less damaging impact on the environmentthan other products orbecauseit is produced incompliance with international laborstandardsandsocialjustice. Therefore, rather than conceptualizing ethical consumption as a unidimensional phenomenon, the present paper distinguishes between twointerrelated butdistinct facets of ethical consumption: environmentally conscious and socially conscious behavior.

The objective of the present research is threefold: first, to conceptualize and validate a scale to measure a consumers' consciousness for fair consumption (CFC), second to test whether the new CFC-scale possesses discriminant validity from scales to measure other aspects of ethical consumption (i.e.environmentalconcern and moralreasoning), and third to assess the predictive validity of the new CFC-scale to explain intended and statedpurchase behavior of fair traded products. We want to contribute to the literature by shedding light on the determinants of consumption of fair trade products beyond those from existing research discussed above. Further through analyzing the relative effects of different facets of ethical consumption on consumer behavior and by testing for their discriminant validity we challenge the unidimensional conceptualization of ethical consumerism. The empirical results of the paper at hand will show whether consumer truly differentiate between different aspects of ethical consumption and whether a more fine-grained analysis of ethical

consumption facets yields a better understanding of consumer behavior vis-a-vis the uni-dimensional approach often postulated in the literature (Harrison et al., 2005).

2. SCALE CONCEPTUALIZATION

2.1 Consciousness for fair consumption

Social consumption can generally be regarded as behaviors "that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals" (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). It can be subdivided in three partially overlapping fields: philanthropicconsumption(consume fora good cause,to helpothers), politicalconsumption(consume as a political vote) and fairconsumption (consume for fair working conditions). The present paper focuses onthis last particularly aspect of social consumerism, the consumers' predisposition to purchase fair traded products. In the literature few attempts have been made to measure a consumer's disposition for social consumerism. The scale by Maignan (2001) focuses exclusively on social issues of consumption (Pomering & Dolnicar, 2006). However, thisscale measures onlya general intention to purchase products from socially responsive companies, not the intention to buy a specific fair traded product. The Consumer Behavior Index by Cowe and Williams (2001) captures specific socially conscious consumer behaviors in the past twelve months. This scale indeed measures socially relevantconsumption behavior, but it does not measure theunderlyingconsciousness for social consumption as a cause of this behavior.

To develop a measure of consciousness for fair consumption, we need to conceptualize this construct. Fair consumption is motivated by the personal intention to make a contribution to the protection of workers and employees involved in production processes of products against poverty, oppression and exploitation. We base our conceptualization of consumers´ consciousness for fair consumption on the view that consciousness can be understood as a disposition, i.e. a relatively stable action tendency, resulting from personal experiences, values, and attitudes. In order to operationalize consciousness for fair consumption we apply expectancy-value theory. Thistheoreticalapproachcombinesthe strength ofanexpectationthatanactionleadstoaspecificconsequence(belief) with the valueor theimportanceof thisconsequencefortheindividual(value; Mazisetal., 1975).Theadequacy-importance model was chosen for the measurement specification. It combines a consumer's belief about the adherence with a specific labor standard with the importance or personal concern the consumer attaches to the adherence of this specific labor standard (Auger & Devinney, 2007; Creyer &Ross, 1997).Thus we get the following CFC-model:

$$Consciousness\ for\ Fair\ Consumption_{(i)} = \sum_{j=1}^{J} B_{ij} \times I_{ij}$$

B_{ij}isthebeliefsofconsumer*i*thatthe labor standard *j(j =1...J)* should be adhered to in the production of fair trade products.I_{ij}measurethe importance that consumer*i* attaches to the adherence to each labor standard *j*.

2.3 Item Generation and Purification

After screening the relevant literature, the first step in the scale development process is the generation of a comprehensive set of items that possess content validity (Churchill, 1979). In the study at hand this means that a set of labor standards j(j=1…J) describing fair working conditions was selected. The guidelines of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the UN Global Compactstandards serve toevoke a list of relevant labor standards. In total we developed a pool of 25 items for our CFC construct. Next, we pretested these items in a small sample of students (n=8) for salience and comprehension. Items that were not perceived as salient or as comprehensible in this first pretest were eliminated. In a second step the remaining items were again assessed by three experts on how well they address the compliance with fair labor standards. As a result the 5 most diagnostic items were established for the CFC-Scale: 1. Compliance with the workers' rights, 2. Freedom from forced labor, 3. Abolition of illegal child labor, 4. Non-discrimination in the workplace, 5. Compliance with international statutory labor standards, 6. Fair wages for the workers.All selected items capture the compliance with internationally accepted labor standards and correspond directly with the phenomenological content of the construct. The operationalization of the belief component is realized through the formulation 'I only buy a product if I believe that in its production…', using a 7-point rating scale ranging from one (does not at all apply) to seven (fully applies).The measurement of the importance component is achieved by the formulation 'How important is it for you personally that in companies...', also using a 7-point rating scale of one (not important at all) to seven (very important).

3. SCALE VALIDATION

3.1 Study Design and Measures

In order to test scale validity, we conducted a survey among 352 students enrolled in the Bachelor program in Business Administration at a European university in fall 2010. 54% of the sample were female. In addition to the newly developed scale of consciousness for fair consumption, two related constructs identified in the literature review, the scale of environmental concern and the scale of moral and other oriented reasoning, were included in the study in order to enable tests of discriminant validity.

- Scale of Moral and Other Oriented Reasoning (Pro-social Behavior)

The Prosocial Personality Battery of Penner (2002; Penner et al., 1995) consists of 30 items grouped into 4 sub-scales. For our study we use the 6-item sub-scale 'Moral and Other Oriented Reasoning' (MR)

- Scale of Environmental Concern

The scale on environmental concern (EC) comprising seven indicators, developed by Diekmann and Preisendörfer (2003), was used in our study. The original version of the scale comprises nine items but low item reliabilities and problems of multidimensionality lead us to delete two of them.

Furthermore, we measuredthe intention to buy fair traded products and the actual purchase of fair traded products. The stated purchase of fair-traded products is measured in the categories of beverages, candy, textiles, and fruit.

3.2 Unidimensionality and Reliability

In a first validation step the unidimensionality of the consciousness for fair consumption scale has to be assessed. This is generally done using an explorative factor analysis (EFA) of all items jmeasuring a construct. The construct measurement is unidimensional if only one factor with an eigenvalue higher than one is extracted and all factor loadings λ_j are sufficiently high ($\lambda_j \geq 0.5$). An exploratory factor analysis with all six items developed for the CFC-scale produces only one factor with an eigenvalue greater than one, which explains a total of 76.8% of the original item variance(cf. Table 1). All factor loadings were clearly above the threshold of 0.5. Cronbachs α of 0.93 is above the recommended threshold of 0.8 (Carmines & Zeller, 1979;*Gerbing & Anderson, 1988*). All item-to-total correlations are substantial (Bernstein & Nunnally, 2006). These results indicate unidimensionality and reliability of our CFC-scale.

Table 1: Factor loadings of explorative factor analysis, Cronbach's α, item-to-total correlations (ITT)

CFC-scale	Items	λ_j (f_1)	α	ITT
	B: I buy a product only if I believe that in its production… X *I: How important is it for you personally that in companies...*			
$(B\times I)_1$	… the workers' rights were adhered to.	0.88	0.93	0.83
$(B\times I)_2$	… no workers and childrens s subjected to forced labor.	0.90		0.86
$(B\times I)_3$	… no illegal children labor were involved.	0.81		0.74
$(B\times I)_4$	… workers were not discriminated against.	0.92		0.87
$(B\times I)_5$	… the working conditions complied with the international labor standards.	0.86		0.79
$(B\times I)_6$	… the workers were treated fairly or were fairly compensated.	0.88		0.82
Eigenvalue of the factor		4.61		

n=352; Principal component analysis; extraction of the factors with eigenvalues > 1

3.3 Construct Validity

Convergent Validity

To test for convergent validity of the CFC-scale, we specifiedaconfirmatoryfactor model (CFA) with 6reflectiveitems$(B\times I)_j$ andonefactor thatrepresentstheconsciousness for fairconsumption. Mplus 6.12 was used for model estimation (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2011). The model, however, revealed the presence of correlated error terms $r(\varepsilon_2\varepsilon_3)$ between items 2 (no forced labor) and 3 (no child labor). Instead of deleting one of theseitems, wedecidedto combine these two conceptually related items via computing their mean in a modified item $(B\times I)_{2,3}$. Thereby, it was possible toretainbothaspectsoffairproductionprocessesinthe scale. This model has an acceptable fit according to the recommendationsofHu and Bentler(1998) with a standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) of 0.029 and a comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.955. All individual item reliabilities are above the recommended threshold of 0.4. Compositereliability $Rel(\xi_{jf})$ of CFC-scale is with 0.933 clearly above the required threshold of 0.6. The average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.737 is also above the desired value of 0.5 (cf. column 3 in Table 2). Overall the empirical results confirm convergent validity of the CFC-scale.

Table 2: Criteria of discriminant validity for the CFC-scale

Test criteria	Referencelevel	CFC-construct	CFC, MR, EC-constructs
Indicator reliability: Rel. (x_j)	≥ 0.4	> 0.67	CFC: > 0.67; MR: 0.31 - 0.56; EC: 0.22 - 0.43
Cronbachs α	≥ 0.8	= 0.93	CFC: 0.93; MR: 0.81; EC: 0.78
CompositeReliability (ξ_{jf})	≥ 0.6	= 0.933	CFC: 0.933; MR: 0.817; EC: 0.778
AVE (ξ_{jf})	≥ 0.5	= 0.737	CFC: 0.737; MR: 0.429; EC: 0.337
SRMR	≤ 0.05	= 0.029	= 0.044
CFI	≥ 0.9	= 0.955	= 0.941
Constructcorrelation: $\phi_{ff'}$	< 1.0		$\phi_{CFC,EC}$ =0.377; $\phi_{CFC,MR}$ = 0.216; $\phi_{MR,EC}$ = 0.385
Fornell/Larcker-criterion	AVE ≥$\phi_{ff'}^2$		CFC↔ EC: 0.737 > 0.142; CFC↔ MR:0.737 > 0.047

Discriminant Validity

A test of discriminant validity of the CFC-scale is conducted with the two conceptually related constructs of environmental concern (EC) and moral reasoning (MR) (cf. column 4 in Table 2). In a CFA with all three constructs as exogenous latent variables was specified and estimated. To achieve discriminant validity the correlation betweenthe scalesshould besignificantlysmallerthan1.0 (Terblanche & Boshoff, 2008) and the Fornell/Larcker criterion must be fulfilled (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Both criteria were fulfilled (cf. last two rows in Table 2). Thus, it can be concluded that the new CFC-scale possesses discriminant validity. From a theoretical point of view these results also support our assertion that consumers differentiate between different aspects of ethical consumption. Correlation between CFC and EC israther moderate (0.377). Moreovera low correlation between CFC and MR was detected (0.216). Thus consumers with high EC do not necessarily have a strongdisposition to prefer products that are manufactured and traded according to fair conditions. The moderate level of inter-construct correlations show that environmental concern as well as moral and other oriented reasoning and consciousness for fair consumption are interrelated but clearly distinct constructs.

PredictiveValidity

In a last step we tested the predictivevalidity of the CFC-scale. We tested whether a consumer´s consciousness for fair consumption both predicts the intention to consume fair trade products (INT Fair) and the actual stated purchase of fair trade products (BUY Fair). The related constructs of EC and MR were included as controls in the model(cf. Figure 1).Overall, the model exposes a reasonable fit with SRMR = 0.045 and CFI = 0.930. Consciousness for fair consumption has a strong and significant direct impact with γ_{11} = 0.378 on the intention to buy fair traded products. In addition CFC has also a significant, but smaller direct impact on the actual purchase of fair traded products with γ_{21} = 0.154. EC and MR possess no significant direct effects on the actual purchase of fair traded products. Only moral and other oriented reasoning significantly impacts γ_{13} = 0.257 to the intention to buy fair traded products. Our results clearly confirm that the newly developed scale of consciousness for fair consumption explains variance in both the intention to buy fair traded products and the actual purchase of fair traded products over and above the existing constructs environmental concern and moral and other oriented reasoning. Theseresults support the predictivevalidity of the consciousness for fair consumption scale.

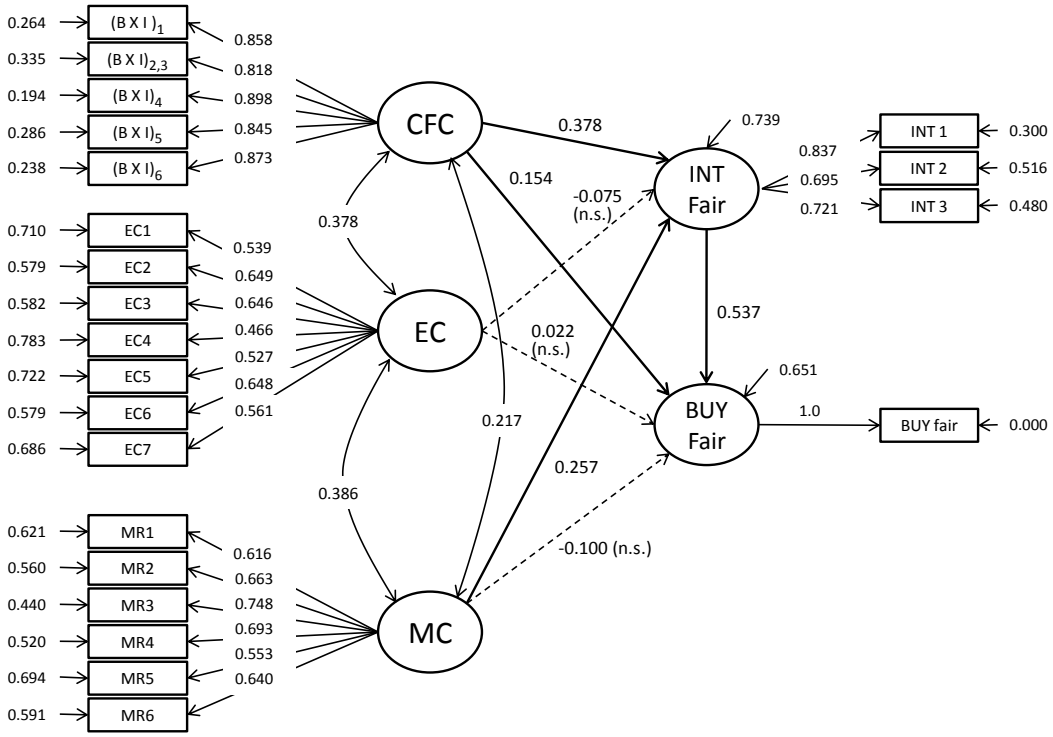

Figure 1: Consciousness for fair consumption (CFC), ecological concern (EC), and moral reasoning (MR) as predictors for buying fair traded products (n=330, standardized solution; n.s.: not significant)

4. DISCUSSION

The first objective of the present research was to conceptualize and validate a scale to measure a consumer's consciousness for fair consumption (CFC). Our results o clearly support reliability and construct validity of ournew CFC-scale. Additionally, the predictive validity of the new CFC-scale was also confirmed through its impact on both the intention to purchase and the actual purchase of fair trade products. The substantial amount of explained variance in intended and actual purchase of fair trade products shows that individual predispositions, as measured by the new CFC-scale, are strong determinants of consumption of fair trade products that have been neglected in existing research.The two constructs of moral and other oriented reasoning (MR) and environmental concern (EC), both facets of ethical consumer behavior, were included in the study in order to assess the degree of overlap with theCFC-scale. The results confirm ourperspective that facets of ethical consumption are interrelated but clearly distinct. Consumer with a high disposition to buy products that are manufactured and traded according to fair working conditions do not necessarily also have a high disposition to buy green products.EC and MR are weak predictors of intended and actual purchase of fair traded products.Preferences for environmentally friendlyproducts do not automatically translate into preference for or purchase of fair traded products.Equating EC and CFC would have resulted in a complete underestimation of the relevance of individual predispositions as drivers of fair trade consumption. Again the more fine-grained analysis of ethical consumption facets and specifically a differentiation between environmentally and socially conscious consumptions allowed for a better understanding of ethical consumer behavior. So the new CFC-scale can help companies to understand which consumer segments are most likely to purchase the fast growing segment of fair trade products, for which product categories fair trade products are most relevant, what prevents consumer with high social consciousness for fair consumption to actually purchase fair traded products and more.

Of course results and conclusions of this study are subjected to some limitations. First, our student sample is not representative for the population of any European country. Future applications and tests should apply the newly developed CFC-scale in different settings (products, populations) in order to further validate this new measurement instrument. It would for example be interesting to apply the CFC-scale to a representative sample of a country in order to understand which socio-demographic variables are related to the consciousness for social consumption and in which parts of the population the willingness to consume fair traded products is highest. Another interesting avenue for future research would be a cross-national application of the CFC-scale. This would allow understanding cross-national differences of consumption of fair traded products.Another limitation of the present study is that the predictivevalidity of the CFC-scale was tested with intended andstatedbuying behavior offair trade products but not with true purchase behavior. Intentions to purchase fair

traded products often do not translate into actual purchase behavior. Futureapplicationsof theCFC-scaleshould therefore usedataonactualpurchasebehavior possibly in cooperation with a retailer.In sum we hope that the present study serves as starting point for future research that builds on and extends our findings on this scientifically interesting and managerially relevant topic.

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