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7 Fairtrade Towns: A Community Based Social Marketing Perspective in Promoting Ethical Consumption

Introduction

Fairtrade is recognised as a major contributor to ethical food and drink consumption, particularly following the successful *mainstreaming* of Fairtrade products and the associated growth in sales volume. Mainstreaming however has created concerns about the potential over-commercialisation of the fairtrade movement and the associated risk of losing its ethical distinctiveness.

This chapter concerns Fairtrade Towns, which have been proposed both as an element of mainstreaming, and as part of a new place-based developmental stage for Fairtrade. It draws on a Grounded Theory based study of Fairtrade Towns to explore them as a form of community-based social marketing that seeks to change consumption behaviours and to influence local social norms and institutions to support Fairtrade, whilst also aiming to preserve its perceived ethical validity. This perspective helps to better understand the marketing dynamics at work through a focus on the downstream and upstream components of efforts to extend Fairtrade consumption and supply within participating towns, and the breadth of the social relationships and interactions that are harnessed to achieve this.

Background

The growth in ethical consumption represents one of the most significant marketing trends of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The 2017 *UK Ethical Consumer Markets Report* (EC 2017) reveals UK ethical consumption to have passed £80 billion, with food and drink representing the largest element of ethical household spending (at £397 per household in 2016, more than double the 2006 figure). An important component of this growth is accounted for by Fairtrade certified products, of which there are now over 4,000 types available in the UK, generating sales of over £ 1.6 billion (EC 2017). Fairtrade has evolved from an alternative marketing initiative appealing only to the most dedicated ethical consumers of forty years ago, to successfully reach mass market consumers and distribution channels (Doherty et al. 2013; Wilkinson 2007). For the family staple of bananas, Fairtrade now accounts for 25% of UK sales, and retailers such as Marks and Spencer and the Cooperative have developed significant portfolios of own-label Fairtrade products such as tea, coffee and chocolate (Doherty et al. 2013).

Even the firmly mass market Greggs bakery chain now uses only Fairtrade coffee across over 1,850 outlets. In addition, some major global brands now carry the Fairtrade label, including Starbucks (for espresso based drinks) and Nestlé (with Kit Kat and their controversial Nescafé Partners' Blend coffee). The growing consumption and availability of Fairtrade products is intertwined with a growth in consumer awareness of Fairtrade. An international 2011 poll of 17,000 consumers found that over 80 percent recognized the Fairtrade mark in the UK, Ireland, Switzerland, Netherlands, Austria and Finland, with 9 out of 10 who recognised the mark expressing trust in it (Globescan 2011).

Fairtrade's successful "mainstreaming" reflects Fairtrade organisations improving their product quality in terms of appearance, taste, aroma, packaging and nutritional characteristics (Lecomte 2003), extending product availability through retail channels (Doherty et al. 2013), and mastering well-established marketing techniques such as labelling and branding (Low and Davenport 2006). These elements are particularly important given that Fairtrade growth is heavily focused on *pleasure* products such as coffee, chocolate, wines, flowers and fruits (Wilkinson 2007).

Another contributor to Fairtrade's mainstreaming success has been the Fairtrade Towns Movement (Lamb 208). This began in Garstang (UK), where a small group of activists lobbied local councils, retailers and other organisations to stock and/or consume Fairtrade products (Alexander and Nicholls 2006). In November 2001 the Fairtrade Foundation accepted their argument that it should be possible to accredit a place of consumption (rather than production) as Fairtrade, and Garstang became the World's first Fairtrade Town against the agreed criteria of (Fairtrade Towns 2017):

- The local council must pass a resolution supporting Fairtrade, and serve Fairtrade coffee and tea at its meetings and in offices and canteens.
- A range of Fairtrade products must be readily available in the town's (or city's) shops and served in local cafés and catering establishments (with targets set in relation to population).
- Fairtrade products must be used by a number of local work places (estate agents, hairdressers etc) and community organisations (churches, schools etc).
- The council must attract popular support for the campaign.
- A local Fairtrade steering group must be convened to ensure continued commitment to Fairtrade status.

By 2016 there were 612 UK Fairtrade Towns and the movement had internationalised, with 1116 more towns located across a further 25 countries including the USA, Japan and New Zealand (Fairtrade Towns 2017). Despite their growth and prevalence, Fairtrade Towns remain under-researched from a marketing perspective. Nicholls and Opal (2005) provided a pioneering framing of Fairtrade Towns as distinctive and innovative marketing networks combining ethical and place-based marketing perspectives. Following this there have been relatively few studies devoted to Fairtrade Town marketing, beyond Peattie and Samuel's (2016) study of the role of Fairtrade Town

steering group members as ethical activists, and Samuel et al.'s (2017) paper exploring brand co-creation processes within Fairtrade Towns.

The success of mainstreaming through the widespread adoption of conventional marketing practices has created two key problems for Fairtrade. Firstly there are concerns that commercial success will be perceived as compromising the ethical distinctiveness of Fairtrade products and producers, potentially weakening Fairtrade's political and developmental message and its core ethical appeal (Golding 2009; Low and Davenport 2005, 2006). Secondly, the success of the mainstreaming strategy has moved the agenda in Fairtrade marketing scholarship away from an emphasis on ethics and Fairtrade as an alternative arena of marketing and consumption, towards more conventional marketing issues and variables relating to branding, pricing, messaging, retail distribution, consumer loyalty and perceived product quality (Low and Davenport 2005 and 2006; Moore et al. 2006).

This chapter focuses on Fairtrade Towns' ability to address these two problems, firstly as vehicles for further mainstreaming of Fairtrade consumption (Lamb 2008), whilst also working to prevent any erosion of trust in the Fairtrade brand; and secondly through Fairtrade Towns' status as highly unconventional marketing networks that invite the use of alternative research lenses to understand the marketing and consumption processes at play. It does this by adopting a previously suggested, but under-developed, perspective on Fairtrade marketing processes by likening them to those of social marketing (Golding and Peattie 2005; Witkowski 2005). It also refines this analogy in a place-based context for Fairtrade Towns by drawing parallels with what McKenzie-Mohr and Smith (1999) conceptualise as community-based social marketing (CBSM).

Fair Trade: From Social Movement to Social Marketing?

Fundamental to Fairtrade is the notion of consumers buying certified products that benefit producer communities through a guaranteed (and generally higher) price than that paid through global commodity markets, complemented by marketing support and community investment. Nicholls and Opal (2005) and Nicholls (2004) argue that the developmental outcome of Fairtrade must be central to all Fairtrade offerings, whilst its marketing should aim to be commercially viable by clearly articulating the social, sustainable and economic connections between producers and consumers. Others, including Low and Davenport (2005 and 2006) and Lamb (2008), similarly argue that ethical virtue should be the starting point of Fairtrade consumption, and central to its promotion should be the altruistic proposition of benefiting distant others. However, this ethical positioning has at times been threatened by mainstreaming, for example through the shift of Café Direct (the UK's largest Fairtrade coffee

brand) away from a strongly ethical branding to instead stress product quality with the ethical component reduced to more of a product augmentation (Golding and Peattie 2005). Moore et al. (2006) and Golding (2009) warn that if the social developmental qualities of Fairtrade becomes lost or obscured, it may lead to the Fairtrade message becoming merely a lifestyle choice enacted in the supermarket with no real social meaning or ethical substance resonating with consumers. This may make Fairtrade consumption more vulnerable to changes in lifestyle fashion, and Fridell (2009, p. 92) warns that the logical conclusion of mainstreaming:

. . . may actually threaten to limit the long-term growth of the network by re-envisioning fair trade as a token project supported by giant TNCs on the sidelines of their larger marketing efforts.

The notion of reframing Fairtrade as social marketing was first put forward by Golding and Peattie, and by Witkowski, both in 2005. Witkowski (2005) explains the potential to frame Fairtrade marketing as social marketing by returning to Kotler and Zaltman's (1971, p. 5) definition:

Social marketing is the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication distribution, and market research . . . It is the explicit use of marketing skills to help translate present social action efforts into more effectively designed and communicated programs that elicit desired audience response.

Witkowski's argument is that Fairtrade's promotion of more socially equitable and sustainable development for producer communities, through the price premium and other benefits that Fairtrade offers, is clearly a social idea that is promoted through the application of marketing skills and processes. As Golding and Peattie (2005, p. 163) put it:

The suitability of social marketing as a discipline to inform and develop Fairtrade marketing is demonstrated by asking the question 'What is the Fairtrade coffee consumer being asked to buy?' The answer is not the coffee, since that is the means to an end. The consumer is being asked to buy into the idea of a fairer world.

Fairtrade is essentially trying to shift marketing norms beyond a conventional focus on consumers' self-gratification and instead factor into their purchase decisions the potential social and economic benefits to distant others (Barnett et al. 2011).

Golding and Peattie (2005) propose a continuum of marketing approaches, varying from entirely commercially orientated, to entirely socially orientated, but with the potential for hybrid positions, such as social enterprises that seek profit for investment in social causes. Fairtrade represents such a hybrid because, although the marketing processes and profit generating activities resemble conventional commercial marketing, the primary aim, and the underlying purchase motive presented to consumers, is social. Although there is a widespread acceptance that Fairtrade is a form of social enterprise, by adopting primarily commercial means in the pursuit of primarily social ends (Peattie and Morley 2008), equating it with social marketing represents

an alternative approach that may yield original insights and suit its social mission. As Golding and Peattie (2005, p. 159) argue:

An alternative to relying on the principles and practices of conventional marketing to make Fairtrade products more commercial, is to look towards the discipline of social marketing as a means of preserving Fairtrade's social mission while also contributing to its commercial success.

A social marketing perspective can be valuable by refocusing marketers' attention away from elements of the core mix, which is helpful since most Fairtrade producers don't compete on the basis of the tangible product or price, and cannot compete in communications budgets against conventional brands (Golding and Peattie 2005). It is also helpful due to social marketing's emphasis on overcoming barriers to behaviour change, which may be relevant to the challenge of encouraging consumers to follow through on good intentions to purchase more ethical products (Chatzidakis et al. 2007). Finally a social marketing perspective can help to focus attention on the importance of a range of actors within the marketing environment in influencing consumers and retailers. One of the criticisms of existing studies of Fairtrade is that they mostly adopt a commodity chain perspective which focuses narrowly on a direct vertical chain of actors linking producers and consumers (McEwan, Hughes and Bek (2017)). Social marketing contexts often lack such an obvious supply chain, and as a consequence may adopt a more holistic perspective to understand influences on the behaviour of campaign targets. This has been reflected in the growing interest in supporting and complementing "downstream" behaviour change amongst targeted audiences (in this case consumers within Fairtrade Towns), with efforts to change the "upstream" institutional and social environment (Andreasen 2006; Goldberg 1995). This may translate very closely into a Fairtrade context, particularly when promoted through Fairtrade Towns within which a range of stakeholders normally considered to be part of the marketing environment, such as local government, schools and churches, can play an active role in the marketing system (Samuel et al. 2017). This is much more reminiscent of social marketing than conventional commercial marketing and its supply chain focus.

Combing the view of Golding and Peattie (2005) and Witkowski (2005) in considering Fairtrade as a form of social marketing with Nicholls and Opal's (2005) characterisation of Fairtrade Towns as place-based marketing networks logically leads to conceptualising Fairtrade Towns as a form of CBSM. McKenzie-Mohr and Smith (1999) propose CBSM as something of an antidote to conventional social marketing campaigns which they see as often overly-dependent on media advertising and skewed towards creating public awareness rather than achieving actual behaviour change. They argue that particularly for pro-sustainability behaviours "Research on persuasion demonstrates that the major influence upon attitudes and behaviour is not the media, but rather our contact with other people" (p. 95). As Stern and Aronson (1984) identify, many campaigns to foster more sustainable behaviour (such as ethical purchasing) fail as a direct result of paying scant attention to the cultural practices and social interactions that influence human behaviour. CBSM instead draws upon

social psychology to develop interventions that are effective because they focus on a community level where interpersonal relationships and a sense of place (Cresswell 2004) are emphasised as catalysts for change (and in the case of Fairtrade Towns this were clearly visible in Wheeler's (2012), sociological exploration of one Fairtrade Town). As McKenzie-Mohr and Smith (1999, p. 16) explain:

The techniques that are used by CBSM are carried out at a community level and frequently involve direct personal contact. Personal contact is emphasized because social science research indicates that we are most likely to change some behaviour in response to direct appeals or social support from others.

Ethical consumers, like others, rely on an array of information sources about the goods or services they consume, with friends and colleagues' recommendations previously shown to be the strongest influence on their decisions (Arnold, 2009; Walsh et al. 2004). This potentially indicates that information and influence from trusted individuals or groups (McKenzie-Mohr and Smith 1999), originating from local places and social settings, for example, family homes, peer groups and work or community settings, may be vital for the credibility and effectiveness of attempts to market Fairtrade products (Tallontire et al. 2001).

The value of adopting a CBSM perspective to understand and promote sustainability-orientated changes to consumption behaviours at a local level is illustrated by Carrigan et al.'s (2011) consideration of a campaign to promote plastic bag use reduction in the town of Modbury. The value of the CBSM perspective included its emphasis on the relevance of grassroots engagement, its integration of upstream and downstream perspectives, and the provision of structured and practical guidelines for initiatives comprising:

. . . four key steps: identifying barriers to change through community-based research; outlining a strategy that uses change tools (including the creation of commitment among members, implementation of behavioral prompts, development of new norms, communication of effective messages, creation of incentives, and making it convenient to act); piloting the strategy; and evaluating the outcomes. (Carrigan et al. 2011, p. 523)

Their study also highlighted the importance of community networks and coalitions and influential "catalytic individuals" in promoting changes to local norms and behaviours.

In our study of Fairtrade Towns, the overarching aim was to understand the marketing processes at work within them. In this chapter we follow the example of Carrigan et al. (2011) in presenting those insights that demonstrate the value of a CBSM perspective in understanding how community-based initiatives and relationships can promote pro-sustainability ethically inspired changes to consumption behaviours at a local level.

Methodology

This study applied the qualitative and interpretive methodology of Grounded Theory pioneered by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which is particularly suitable for phenomena like Fairtrade Towns that lack pre-existing theory or rich data. It applied three core elements of qualitative enquiry to record Fairtrade Town activists' experiences and perceptions. Firstly ethnographic involvement over three years within one Fairtrade Town Steering Group (with permission to record and research), with official minutes and researcher journals acting as data sources. Secondly, semi-structured interviews with twenty nine activists from eleven Fairtrade Towns across England and Wales. Finally, an in-depth exploration of one Fairtrade Town with three days spent with a founder of the Fairtrade Town movement, learning more about the development of the movement and its application in their hometown. All data was subject to immediate line-by-line coding (by hand), followed by focused and then theoretical coding, from which three core categories emerged (a comprehensive account of the methodology, coding process and codes is available from Samuel and Peattie, 2015). The results presented here synthesise codes that emerged from the data that support a view of Fairtrade Towns as an innovative form of CBSM.

Findings and Discussion

Fairtrade Town activist group strategies and activities were primarily focussed on increasing the volume of Fairtrade sales and consumption within their town, but this was balanced by a strong determination to protect the perceived validity of Fairtrade as providing commercially viable but ethically superior products linked to more sustainable development for producer communities.

The initiatives and relationships presented here seek to combine conventional downstream social marketing seeking to influence how and why individuals make Fairtrade consumption choices, with upstream social marketing focusing on the social environment factors (Andreasen 2006) that determine how, where and why Fairtrade consumption choices are shaped within Fairtrade Towns. In some cases it revealed marketing contexts, actors and influences that operated upstream and downstream simultaneously. The contexts in which Fairtrade promotion occurred included obvious ones such as the high street, within local councils (whose adoption of Fairtrade consumption is a requirement of accreditation) and within churches who represent longstanding institutional supporters of Fairtrade (Doran and Natale 2011). It also revealed contexts, not necessarily associated with marketing and consumption, that also represent significant channels of influence, including local schools, community groups and events. The key elements of upstream and/or downstream social marketing observed within the study's Fairtrade Towns are discussed below. The full range of codes

linking the seven different types of mechanism observed promoting Fairtrade (including consumption opportunities, purchase opportunities, educational initiatives, communications efforts, policy measures and governance mechanisms, the physical and mental resources of local activists and organisations, influences promoting behavioural norms, and particular times and occasions) to the various Fairtrade Town marketing contexts involved are presented in Table 7.1.

Downstream Social Marketing Mechanism: Communication

To complement more conventional Fairtrade marketing communications such as in-store displays, or Fairtrade Foundation online promotions for Fairtrade Fortnight, a range of place-based media were employed by activists to influence the local population. This included Fairtrade Town supporters actively using personal connections within the social units they belonged to (families, friendship groups, workplaces or organisations) to create opportunities to discuss and promote Fairtrade within their town. More formally it included working with local authorities to integrate Fairtrade information into local newsletters, guides, directories and websites. It also included symbolic consumption acts, such as the display of Fairtrade products in the home by activists, or religious leaders conspicuously consuming Fairtrade in places of worship. Even the local physical environment was enlisted as a promotional medium through displays of signage and banners, and promotional floral displays in some towns.

Upstream Social Marketing Mechanisms

A range of activist-led initiatives sought to expand the demand for, and supply of, Fairtrade products locally through changes to the local institutional, cultural and physical environment:

Education

The intertwining of education in schools and consumption practices within Fairtrade Towns is a theme thoroughly examined by Pykett et al. (2010), and it was visible within the study towns with frequently strong connections between Fairtrade steering groups, local representatives of related civil society organisations (such as Christian Aid, or Amnesty International) and local schools and universities. Although some educational efforts in the classroom or church might be considered as downstream communication aimed at directly inspiring pro-Fairtrade consumer choices, the aim was more commonly to build community understanding of, and support for Fairtrade, and promote it as an element of local place identity and as a local social norm. Educational

Table 7.1: Upstream and Downstream Social Marketing: The How and Where of Volume and Validity in Fairtrade Towns.

Mechanism (How) Context (Where)	Down and Upstream Social Marketing	Down and Upstream Social Marketing	Upstream Social Marketing	Downstream Social Marketing	Upstream Social Marketing	Upstream Social Marketing	Down and Upstream Social Marketing
	Consumption opportunities	Purchase opportunities	Education	Communication	Policy/Governance	Physical/Mental resources	Normalising behaviour
Family and friendship	Giving of gifts; Serving of Fairtrade products in homes;	Ideologically based conversations and social learning;	Symbolic display of Fairtrade in homes; Consumer lead conversations; Word of mouth;	Time taken to engage friends and family in Fairtrade discussions;			Giving of gifts on special occasions eg: birthdays; and Christmas; Use in the 'Everyday';
Schools/ Colleges and Universities	Fairtrade served in canteens/ meetings; Use in staff rooms;	Fairtrade sold in school shops and by pupils;	Fairtrade taught in lesson under sustainability and global citizenship; Connecting Fairtrade to younger audiences;	Fairtrade activities such as promotional events like fashion shows, stalls etc;	School Fairtrade policies governing Fairtrade consumption and promotion;	Teachers' time and school resources such as classroom displays;	Fairtrade Fortnight events; School meal times and meetings;

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Mechanism (How)	Down and Upstream Social Marketing	Down and Upstream Social Marketing	Upstream Social Marketing	Downstream Social Marketing	Upstream Social Marketing	Upstream Social Marketing	Upstream Social Marketing	Down and Upstream Social Marketing
Context (Where)	Consumption opportunities	Purchase opportunities	Education	Communication	Policy/Governance	Physical/Mental resources	Normalising behaviour	Time/occasion
Civic authority	Fairtrade served in local council meetings as per accreditation criteria;	Fairtrade sold in council canteens;	Linked to promotion of sustainability policies and development aims;	Support for Fairtrade events; Inclusion in newsletters, guides, maps and web pages disseminated to local population;	Fairtrade policies governing consumption and promotion in council offices and other premises;	Support for Fairtrade Towns through resource access including staff; databases; premises; communication; finance; town locations.	Via role as supplier and consistent promotion of Fairtrade Citizen/council lead;	Fairtrade Fortnight for events; Consumption at meetings and council sponsored events;
Religious Institutions (For this study just Christian Churches)	Fairtrade served in meetings and worship groups; Provision of Fairtrade samples;	Fairtrade sold in church through stalls and Tradecraft reps;	Linked to the teaching of the Gospel in sermons and teachings;	Symbolic through consumption by religious leaders; Word of mouth; promotion in places of worship;	Fairtrade policies governing Fairtrade consumption and promotion in places of worship;	Church premises; Church staff time;	Via consistent promotion of Fairtrade; Congregation/Chaplain lead;	Days of worship (Sunday); Fairtrade Fortnight; Church calendar events (e.g. Harvest festival);

<p>Civil Society Organisations (e.g. Christian Aid & Amnesty International)</p>	<p>Fairtrade products/ stock (for promotion and sampling) at events;</p>	<p>Fairtrade products/ stock sold at events;</p>	<p>Presentations to groups and lobbying powers</p>	<p>“Piggy-back” opportunities for Fairtrade for example on leaflets etc; Placing Fairtrade logos and messages into urban landscape;</p>	<p>Influence to keep Fairtrade campaign focus on Fairtrade certified products;</p>	<p>Share experience and knowledge of campaigning; Access to databases of donors and volunteers; Staff & volunteers’ engagement; Fairtrade products/ stock (for promotions);</p>	<p>Fairtrade Fortnight; Various other campaigns such as ‘Make Poverty History’ or child labour awareness;</p>
<p>The High Street</p>	<p>Increased availability in high street catering establishments; and places;</p>	<p>Increased availability in terms of products, and places;</p>	<p>Via point of sale materials (e.g. Co-op stores);</p>	<p>POS displays & literature; Increased in-store visibility;</p>	<p>More floor/ shelf space given;</p>	<p>Increased visibility of Fairtrade produce in local shops and business premises;</p>	<p>During Fairtrade Fortnight promotion is increased (e.g. by Co-op;</p>
<p>Community Groups</p>	<p>Fairtrade sampled at meetings & events;</p>	<p>Fairtrade sold at some meetings & events;</p>	<p>Fairtrade can be focus of educational events (e.g. talks or producer visits);</p>	<p>Fairtrade presentations; Use of group media (newsletters, noticeboards);</p>	<p>Consumption policies of group;</p>	<p>Connection of Fairtrade to local groups’ agendas;</p>	<p>During meetings;</p>

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Mechanism (How)	Down and Upstream Social Marketing	Down and Upstream Social Marketing	Upstream Social Marketing	Downstream Social Marketing	Upstream Social Marketing	Upstream Social Marketing	Upstream Social Marketing	Down and Upstream Social Marketing
Context (Where)	Consumption opportunities	Purchase opportunities	Education	Communication	Policy/Governance	Physical/Mental resources	Normalising behaviour	Time/occasion
Community Events	Sampling of Fairtrade products;	Event sales, sometimes for sampling purposes (to then refer interested consumers to retail outlets);	Meeting Fairtrade producers and others; Opportunities to discuss and be presented with the developmental message of Fairtrade;	Fairtrade presence in most Town events (even if unrelated);		Fairtrade producers' time, visits and stories; Civic / Civil Society supported via reduced insurance rates, physical help, stalls etc;		Fairtrade Fortnight; Inclusion in Farmers' markets; Specific events (e.g. town festivals)

efforts could include improving household understanding of Fairtrade through school-children's projects, and also the inclusion of Fairtrade producers at local events where they could enlighten locals about the developmental benefits of Fairtrade consumption through direct contact or reporting via local media.

Policy and Governance

A supportive environment for Fairtrade consumption choices was created in the study towns through policy and governance initiatives enacted through schools, local authorities, churches, retailers and other organisations. The adoption of Fairtrade as a default option in schools, cafes or council premises, effectively edits purchase and consumption choices for workforces, visitors, customers or students, and shifts the conscious support for Fairtrade from the consumer to those organisations (Barnett et al. 2011; Malpass et al. 2007). Such upstream initiatives have the potential to expand Fairtrade consumption, but the removal of active consumer choice risks disconnecting local consumers from the developmental message at the heart of Fairtrade (Golding 2009, Low and Davenport 2005).

Physical and Knowledge-based Resources

Fairtrade Towns' success was significantly dependent on the investment of time and social capital by local activists (Peattie and Samuel 2016). Beyond this, a range of resources were supplied by local Fairtrade Town market actors to help shape the local consumption system in favour of Fairtrade. Local councils, schools and civil society organisations provided access to a variety of resources to assist with marketing efforts (such as premises, newsletters, noticeboards and databases) whilst other campaigning organisations shared their experience and knowledge.

Normalising Behaviour

One outcome of Fairtrade Town activists' efforts to expand the consumption and supply of Fairtrade products within their towns is that it normalises Fairtrade consumption as residents see Fairtrade products and messages consistently across local shops, cafes, workplaces, schools, churches and libraries.

Hybrid Down and Upstream Social Marketing Mechanisms

Some activist-led initiatives sought to both encourage greater consumption amongst the local population and to influence the local social environment to support Fairtrade.

Providing Purchase Opportunities

A central marketing function of a Fairtrade Town is to develop distribution outlets and sales opportunities for Fairtrade products, and in the wake of mainstreaming this has often involved extending Fairtrade availability beyond the traditional high street (Low and Davenport 2007). This study found activists negotiating to make Fairtrade products available in places not normally associated with retail commerce including schools, libraries and even churches. It additionally found that Fairtrade products are increasingly available to purchase in public buildings, workplaces, farmers markets and at local events.

Providing Consumption Opportunities

Although often closely related to purchase, separate opportunities to consume Fairtrade products as a promotional strategy were constructed by Fairtrade Town activists. This encompassed serving Fairtrade products to others within their own homes, ensuring they are supplied at meetings within local organisations or groups, churches using Fairtrade communion wine, or sampling opportunities being provided at events. Churches for example were often more comfortable introducing consumers to Fairtrade products through sampling and then encouraging them to purchase elsewhere, than having a more overtly commercial role in sales.

Specific Times and Occasions

A number of findings emerge from this study showing that place and time are intrinsically linked to some of the marketing dynamics operational in a Fairtrade Town. On an annual basis, Fairtrade Fortnight was frequently mentioned as a focus for organising events or trying to extend the local reach and profile of Fairtrade. On a more day-to-day basis, lunch times and meetings in many businesses, schools or universities create the opportunity to sell or consume Fairtrade products and special occasions such as birthdays and Christmas provide marketing opportunities within private places for Fairtrade gift giving and consumption. Days of worship such as Harvest Festivals or Easter also present times when faith-based organisations disseminate tailored Fairtrade messages.

Preserving Fairtrade's Validity

A further perspective on Fairtrade Towns that this research revealed, is their role as something of an antidote to mainstreaming and the potential loss or dilution of the ethical core of Fairtrade marketing and consumption due to adoption of Fairtrade by highly conventional companies, the reduced differentiation of some Fairtrade suppliers, and the increasing application of choice editing strategies. This was evident in the emphasis Fairtrade Town activists place on the ethical core of Fairtrade when trying to encourage retailers and business to provide Fairtrade products, or members of their social networks to consume them, and when seeking to connect Fairtrade consumption to the values and practices of organisations throughout their local communities. Fairtrade Towns combination of behavioural influence, upstream and downstream focus, community embeddedness, and emphasis on preserving the ethical validity of Fairtrade is encapsulated in a quote from a Keswick Fairtrade Town Group member:

(Our role) . . . is to promote the buying and the selling of Fairtrade products which means working within our community, working within our community groups as well as working with retailers and wholesalers, so working with the supply side and working on the demand side to promote it. To raise awareness of it and what it does, and therefore to educate the community as a whole, and to make sure also that the profile is maintained so that all of that stays within the context of trade justice . . . so that is what our role is, it's kind of nudging and shoving and talking and singing, if I can put it that way, and also getting others to do the same as well.

This emphasis on ethical validity and community may be important to ensure the continued development of Fairtrade consumption at a time when mainstreaming seems to be losing some momentum, evidenced by the move away from the use of full Fairtrade accreditation by the likes of Sainsburys, Waitrose and Cadbury, and the rise of competing ethical labels, particularly Rainforest Alliance (EC 2017).

What Fairtrade Town marketing reveals, is a quest to expand the volume of Fairtrade sales, whilst protecting the validity of Fairtrade's identity as an ethical and sustainability orientated marketing initiative. As Figure 7.1 summarises, the early solidarity selling era of Fairtrade was limited in its volume and in its validity (from a commercial rather than ethical perspective) by the narrowness of the channels it sought to supply through, and by the compromises inherent in the core marketing mix (Golding and Peattie 2005). The initial growth in Fairtrade by its extension through the alternative high street (Low and Davenport 2007) and the emergence of niche brands, such as Café Direct or Divine Chocolate, brought greater commercial validity without initially attaining mass market impact. A greater volume in Fairtrade sales was achieved through the adoption by mainstream brands and retailers, and the use of choice editing to make Fairtrade the default option in certain consumption contexts, although this may endanger more than enhance Fairtrade's validity due to the threat to the core ethical message (Golding 2009). What Fairtrade Towns offer is a

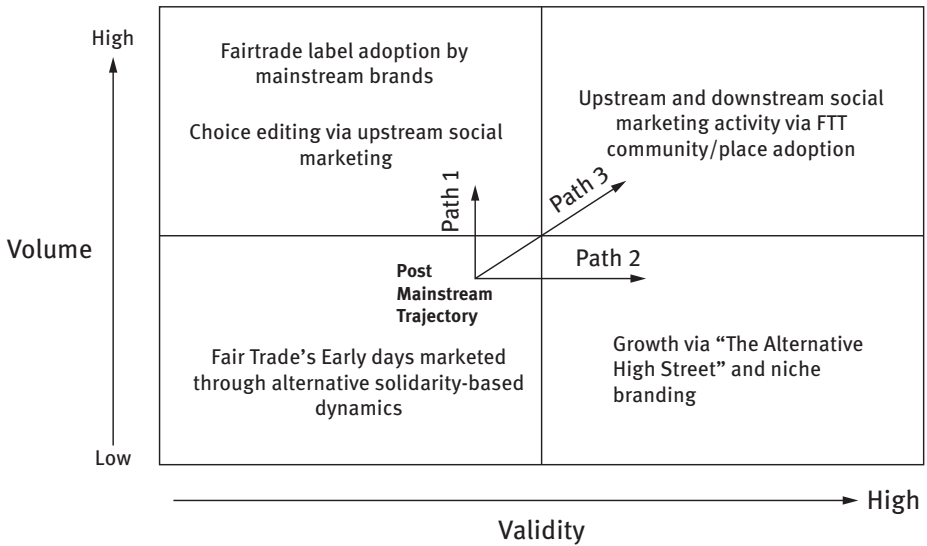


Figure 7.1: Post-Mainstreaming FT Development Trajectories.

third developmental path that integrates Fairtrade consumption into a local community, its organisations, identity and social interactions in a way that can both increase sales volume whilst enhancing commercial and ethical validity. Understood as a CBSM initiative that combines direct downstream appeals to potential consumers with upstream changes to the local institutional and marketing environment that favour Fairtrade consumption, Fairtrade Towns' effectiveness comes from the breadth of social connections and local social capital that are employed to promote local Fairtrade Town consumption.

The Benefits of a CBSM Perspective on Fairtrade Towns

An upstream/downstream CBSM perspective is helpful in understanding Fairtrade Towns' marketing dynamics for several reasons. Firstly it helps to focus attention beyond the usual narrow limits of a commodity chain perspective (Bek et al. 2017) to encompass local organisations and potential contexts for consumption and influence that go beyond those usually considered in commercial marketing. As emphasised by a Bridgnorth Fairtrade Town Group member:

I do think (our role) is to keep the issues alive in our local community, to promote the issues to as many different groups as we can . . . We think our role is to keep promoting it through

different groups locally and to keep putting on events and just to keep the presence locally and to put pressure on any new organisations that come into the town.

Secondly, it stresses the importance of interpersonal relationships and a sense of place which Fairtrade Town activists, operating as local catalysts, rely upon in promoting Fairtrade consumption and support. As a member of the Worcester Fairtrade Town Group expressed it: “We’re always nudging and pushing. Trying to encourage. It’s encouraging through people you know.” Thirdly it recognises that Fairtrade Town groups’ efforts in promoting Fairtrade are about tackling a behavioural change challenge in respect to local consumers, and the retailers and upstream organisations that can influence them. As a Cardiff Fairtrade Town Group member noted:

. . . you can push people who might not know about Fairtrade: ‘So you know we are now a Fairtrade city, this is what we’ve agreed to, so could you have a think about introducing more Fairtrade products?’ – and we do that in shops. Wherever I go, anywhere, every restaurant I go to, I ask: ‘Have you got Fairtrade coffee?’ and even if they don’t, it raises the question why haven’t you got it.

Considering promoting Fairtrade as a behavioural change challenge may be helpful because the activists driving Fairtrade Towns tend to be *believers* in Fairtrade who may not easily appreciate the reasons why people may choose not to consume Fairtrade or why organisations may not already provide Fairtrade products. Finally CBSM provides a structured framework for planning initiatives which encompasses the consideration of the upstream and downstream influences on peoples’ behaviour, and focuses on behaviour change barriers and how to overcome them (Carrigan et al. 2011). This is potentially helpful, because once groups moved beyond the focus of achieving initial Fairtrade Town accreditation, the efforts of their volunteer activists, although an important catalyst for local change, were not always that strategic, structured or systematic.

. . . actually trying to keep the enthusiasm going is always a bit of a pain. Once you’ve achieved the mark, it’s always easy to let it slip . . . Once you’ve got the status, it’s relatively easy to take your foot off the accelerator and think, oh well we’re alright now and toddle on for the next so and so.
(Hereford Fairtrade Town Group member)

Groups would use the full range of behaviour change tools associated with CBSM (creation of commitment among members, behavioural prompts, establishing new norms, communication, incentives, and making action convenient), but in using them relied on their existing social networks and social capital, and the particular opportunities that confronted individuals. Embracing a CBSM perspective more formally, including its emphasis on identifying and overcoming change barriers, may help to make Fairtrade Town groups’ more strategic and effective in their approach.

Conclusions

Fairtrade Towns have been identified as a contributor to Fairtrade's mainstreaming (Lamb, 2008), and also as a further stage in the development of Fairtrade that goes beyond conventional mainstreaming by broadening Fairtrade's appeal through localisation strategies and strengthening the networking and information flows amongst Fairtrade stakeholders (Alexander and Nicholls 2006). Understanding this process from an upstream/downstream social marketing perspective is helpful because it helps to connect the micro, meso and macro marketing dynamics at play (Goldberg 1995). At a macro level, Fairtrade Towns are effective at connecting citizens' and local organisations' purchasing and consumption habits to their ability to act at a distance and benefit distant others reflecting global ethical concerns (Alexander and Nicholls 2006; Wheeler 2012). At a meso level Fairtrade Towns succeed through upstream social marketing efforts to change local social norms and collective infrastructures of consumption and influence local social institutions (Barnett et al. 2011). At the micro level, Fairtrade Towns seek to encourage behavioural change amongst residents, and although that behaviour mostly involves purchasing and consumption of ethical food and drink products, it resembles CBSM rather than commercial marketing for two reasons. Firstly, due to the emphasis on local social interactions and learning, rather than on conventional commercial marketing communication. Secondly, due to the emphasis on engaging people from a perspective of their multiple identities, not just as abstract consumers, but as members of social groups, communities, congregations or local organisations. As Lamb (2008, p. 42) frames it, Fairtrade Towns succeed through *ordinary people* encouraging other people and organisations to become globally responsible (Barnett et al. 2011) through the act of Fairtrade consumption.

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