

Attitudes towards Fairtrade Principles and Environmental Views among the Inhabitants of a Rural Swedish Town

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Abstract

This paper evaluates associations between values and preference for the Fairtrade concept and compares the ecocentric and anthropocentric views of Nature. The intention of Fairtrade product labelling is to increase consumers' awareness of products that have a presumably more positive influence on workers' lives in developing countries. The ecocentric view assumes that Nature has an intrinsic value and should be preserved regardless of economic implications. The anthropocentric view, on the other hand, assumes Nature has value only because of the material, physical, or other benefits Nature provides humans. All respondents in the study were residents of Gestad, a small town in a sparsely populated area of Sweden. Among the main results of the study was that self-transcendence values (e.g., universalism and benevolence) were positively correlated with a preference for Fairtrade and ecocentrism, and negatively correlated with anthropocentrism. Conservation values (e.g., tradition and conformity) were positively correlated with anthropocentrism, and negatively correlated with a preference for Fairtrade. Another result was that women were more positive than men towards Fairtrade and ecocentrism.

Keywords

Personal Values, Fairtrade, Ecocentrism, Anthropocentrism

1. Introduction

1.1. Fairtrade and Ethical Product Alternatives

It is not easy to determine if a particular product is produced in conditions that meet certain ethical standards. For this reason, Fairtrade certification, like other labelling systems, tries to make otherwise invisible product at-

tributes visible. Fairtrade certification claims that a product with this label was produced under ethical conditions designed to benefit poor farmers and other workers in developing countries (Grankvist, 2013; Hainmueller, Hiscox, & Sequeira, 2014). Fairtrade certification means, among other things, child labour was not used, decent wages were paid, union rights were recognized, and health and safety standards were complied with Fairtradenet (2015). Hainmueller et al. (2014) offers a critical discussion of the Fairtrade concept. Other authors describe Fairtrade's emergence and history as well as the philosophy behind Fairtrade and other social product labelling (e.g., Hutchens, 2009; Nicholls & Opal, 2005).

A number of studies have been conducted on consumer attitudes on Fairtrade products. Typically, products certified as Fairtrade are unable to compete on the basis of price with products produced under less ethical conditions. Many consumers are unwilling to pay a premium for Fairtrade products even though, in principle, they may support the ideas behind Fairtrade. Some studies have found that female consumers are more willing to pay higher prices (De Devitiis, De Luca, & Maietta, 2012; de Leeuw, Valois, Morin, & Schmidt, 2014; Grankvist, 2010; Morrell & Jayawardhena, 2010; Taylor & Boasson, 2014). Other studies have found no significant gender differences (Cailleba & Casteran, 2011; Pelsmacker, Janssens, Sterckx, & Mielants, 2006). However, gender is only one factor that researchers have studied in this context; other factors are consumers' age and the importance they attach to values.

1.2. Values

Rokeach (1973: p. 5) defined value as follows: "A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence". Values are similar to attitudes in that they include an appraisal of likes or dislikes. However, values, unlike attitudes, are few and relatively stable over time (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). According to Schwartz (1992) this circular value model has the most empirical support of the value models. The Schwartz model identifies ten values types, differentiated by their motivational goals (see also Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004). Figure 1 presents these value types.

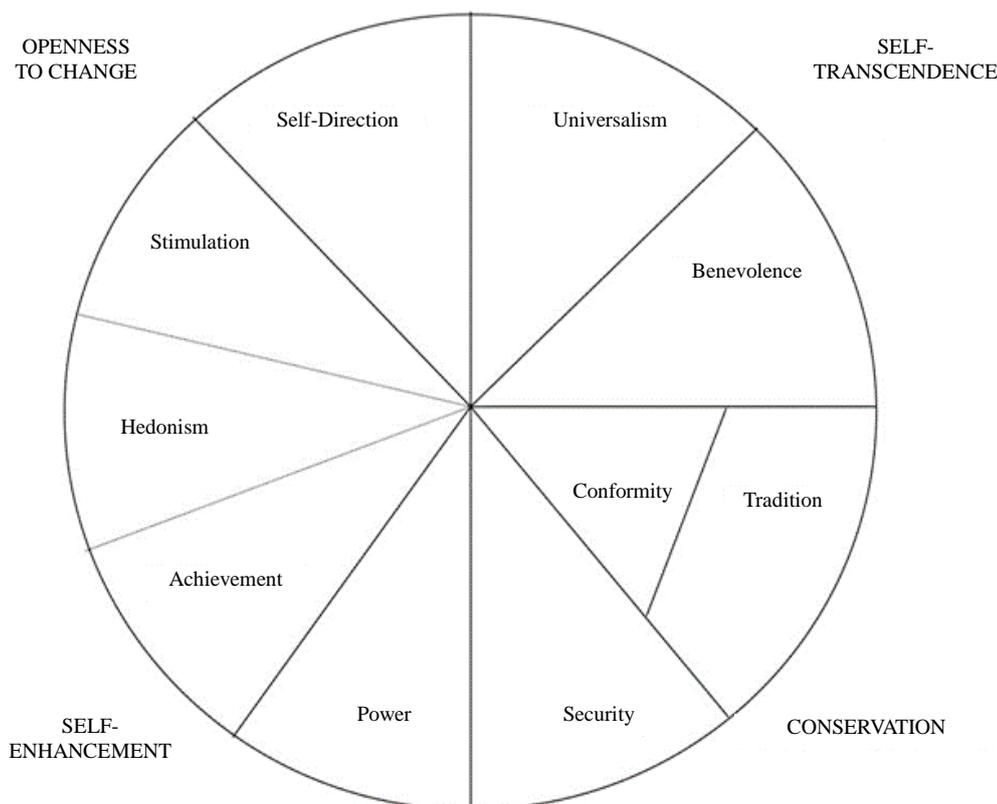


Figure 1. The Schwartz's (1992) value model.

The ten values are located on two axes. One axis, with endpoints “self-transcendence” and “self-enhancement”, presents the range from valuing others’ interests over self-interest to valuing self-interest over others’ interests. The second axis, with endpoints “conservation” and “openness to change”, presents the range from valuing security, traditions, and social norms to valuing new experiences and independent thinking (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). Although researchers have determined that the two axes are generally un-correlated (Schwartz, 1992, 2006; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001), correlation may exist in smaller or special samples.

As far as consumers’ preference for Fairtrade certified products, researchers have positively correlated the preference and self-transcendence values, and negatively correlated the preference and the self-enhancement values. They have also found a negative correlation between preferences for Fairtrade certified products and conservation values (Doran, 2009, 2010; Grankvist & Kajonius, 2015). Similar correlations have been found for the preference for the broader (although related) construct of socially conscious purchasing (Pepper, Jackson, & Uzzell, 2009). Ladhari & Tchegn (2015) used Rokeach’s value model (Rokeach, 1973) to study the influence of personal values on fair trade consumption. They found positive correlations with values similar to the Schwartz’s self-transcendence values, and negative correlations with values similar to Schwartz’s self-enhancement values.

1.3. Ecocentric and Anthropocentric Environmental Philosophies

Sustainable development is usually described in three dimensions: social, environmental, and economic (Brundtland et al., 1987). In the current discussion two environmental philosophies, ecocentrism and anthropocentrism, are in focus. Although both these philosophies assume that living organisms are paramount in the analysis of sustainable development and are concerned with preserving natural resources (i.e., Nature), their motives are theoretically distinguishable (Thompson & Barton, 1994).

Ecocentrism values nature because of its intrinsic value and spiritual or transcendental dimension. Nature, with its animals and plants, must be preserved regardless of the economic implications of preservation measures. Anthropocentrism values Nature because of its material, physical, and other less tangible benefits. This is an instrumental view of Nature that excludes the idea that Nature *per se* has value. However, anthropocentrism may promote environmentally friendly actions if people benefit from such behaviour. For example, if the wonders of Nature increase human well-being then Nature may be worth protecting.

Some studies have found these two environmental philosophies uncorrelated or only weakly correlated with each other (Karpiak & Baril, 2008; Nordlund & Garvill, 2002; Thompson & Barton, 1994). Other studies have found substantial positive correlations at .20 or more (Bjerke & Kaltenborn, 1999; Kaltenborn & Bjerke, 2002; Schultz & Zelezny, 1999). Some studies have found that women have more positive attitudes towards ecocentrism than men (Casey & Scott, 2006; Karpiak & Baril, 2008).

Positive correlations between ecocentrism and Schwartz’s self-transcendence values have been found. In line with this finding, negative correlations between ecocentrism and self-enhancement values have also been found. Research has also shown that ecocentrism correlates negatively with the conservation values. By contrast, research has revealed that anthropocentrism is negatively correlated with the self-transcendence values, positively correlated with the self-enhancement values, and positively correlated with the conservation values (Nordlund & Garvill, 2002; Schultz & Zelezny, 1999).

Studies of the association between ecocentrism or anthropocentrism and other environmental ideas are rare. A Norwegian study, however, found that ecocentrism was negatively correlated with attitudes towards tourism (Kaltenborn, Andersen, Nellemann, Bjerke, & Thane, 2008). Another study found a positive correlation between ecocentrism and attitudes towards carnivorous animals (e.g., wolves) in the Norwegian wilderness (Bjerke & Kaltenborn, 1999).

Relatively few studies have been done on associations between ecocentrism, anthropocentrism, preference for Fairtrade and values. The present study explores these associations in a not previously studied population.

2. Hypotheses

Hypothesis A: Preferences for Fairtrade are positively correlated with self-transcendence and openness to change values in the Schwartz model.

Hypothesis B: Attitudes towards ecocentrism are positively correlated with self-transcendence and openness to change values in the Schwartz model.

Hypothesis C: Attitudes towards anthropocentrism are positively correlated with self-enhancement and con-

servation values in the Schwartz model.

Hypothesis D: Women have a stronger preference for Fairtrade than men as well as more positive attitudes towards ecocentrism.

3. Method

3.1. Participants and Procedure

A return-by-mail questionnaire was sent to residents (over the age of 15) in Gestad, Sweden. Gestad is a small town in a sparsely populated, mainly agricultural, area in the southwest of the country, 96 kilometres north of Gothenburg, Sweden, and 181 kilometres south of Oslo, Norway. All data were collected in the spring of 2010. Respondents were guaranteed anonymity, participation was voluntary, and no compensation was offered. Of the 600 questionnaires mailed, 188 usable responses were received (54% women respondents, 43% men respondents, and 3% respondents who did not indicate gender). The respondents' mean age was 53.12 years ($SD = 15.14$). The youngest respondent was 20; the oldest respondent was 89.

3.2. Instruments

Influenced by [Tanner & Kast's \(2003\)](#) study on the promotion of sustainable consumption, I measured the Gestad residents' attitude towards ethical principles closely associated with the Fairtrade movement. The questionnaire presented respondents with the following four statements (translated from Swedish) and asked them to rank them on Likert scales.

- "It is important to have solidarity with developing countries".
- "When I buy something from a developing country it is important to me that farmers and craftsman are not underpaid".
- "I would refrain from buying a product from a developing country if I knew that the people who produced the product have poor working conditions".
- "I would be willing to pay a premium price to support farmers and craftsmen in developing countries".

Respondents ranked their responses on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from (1) "Do not agree at all" to (5) "Totally agree". The internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was .86, with corrected item-total correlations in a range of .62 to .76.

I used the same items that [Thompson & Barton \(1994\)](#) used in their Study 2 to measure ecocentrism and anthropocentrism. These items were scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) "Strongly disagree" to (5) "Totally agree". The internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the 12 items that measured ecocentrism was .74, with corrected item-total correlations ranging from .16 to .58. The internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the 12 items that measured anthropocentrism was .69, with corrected item-total correlations a presumably ranging from .12 to .49.

The Short Schwartz's Value Survey (SVSS), which is a 10-item, self-report questionnaire, was used (see [Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005](#)). In this survey, respondents are given the names of values and their value items and are asked to rate the importance of the values as life-guiding principles. For example, the respondents were asked to rate the importance of "achievement, that is, success, capacity, ambition, and influence on people and events". The respondents rated the ten value items on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from (-1) "opposed to my principles" to (5) "of supreme importance". Using [Lindeman & Verkasalo's \(2005\)](#) equations, I calculated the respondents' scores on the two main dimensions in the Schwartz model. In addition, the respondents were asked to give their age and gender.

The statistical analyses included descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, which were performed by the SPSS statistical package version 20.0.

4. Results

Significant and positive correlations were found between the preference for Fairtrade and the self-transcendence and openness to change values in the Schwartz model. These results are in agreement with Hypothesis A (see [Table 1](#)).

A significant and positive correlation was found between attitudes towards ecocentrism and self-transcendence values. A non-significant, although not very weak, negative correlation was found between ecocentrism and

Table 1. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between factors of interest.

Factors	2	3	4	5	6. Age
1. Self-Transc (vs. Self-Enhanc)	-.31	.19	-.21	.34	.14
2. Conservatism (vs Openness)		-.14	.36	-.34	.18
3. Ecocentrism			.22	.31	.12
4. Anthropocentrism				-.22	.20
5. Fairtrade pref					.12

Note: Correlations $|r| > .15$ are statistically significant at the .05 level and $|r| > .18$ imply significance at the .01 level, two-tailed.

Table 2. Mean, t-test and Cohen's d. Results comparing females and males on factors of interest.

Factors	Female	Male	t	p	d
1. Ecocentrism	4.08	3.76	3.87	.00	.58
2. Anthropocentrism	3.02	3.03	-.16	.87	.02
3. Fairtrade pref	3.95	3.62	2.45	.02	.37

Note: $p < .05$ imply statistical significance.

conservation values. These results are partially in agreement with Hypothesis B.

A significant and positive correlation was found between attitudes towards anthropocentrism and the self-enhancement and conservation values. These results are in agreement with Hypothesis C.

Women showed a significantly stronger preference than men for Fairtrade as well as more positive attitudes towards ecocentrism (see [Table 2](#)).

If Cohen's rule of thumb is applied ([Cohen, 2013](#)), between a small and medium gender difference exists for Fairtrade and a medium difference exists for ecocentrism. These results are partially in agreement with Hypothesis D.

Ecocentrism and anthropocentrism were positively and significantly correlated. This correlation, combined with results presented above, provides additional evidence that these two environmental philosophies are not independent and exclusionary. Other results show that the older respondents held stronger anthropocentric attitudes than the younger respondents and attached more importance to the conservation values than to the openness-to-change values.

5. Discussion

As the hypotheses of this study proposed, ecocentrism was positively correlated with self-transcendence values in Schwartz's model. The anthropocentric, more instrumentalist view of Nature was associated with a higher degree of self-enhancement values. Furthermore, anthropocentrism was positively associated with conservation values (i.e., opposition to change and conformity with traditions). In sum, these correlations suggest two very different views of Nature. However, as this and other research have found, ecocentrism and anthropocentrism may share common ground with a fundamental concern for Nature even if the reasons for this concern differ.

Fairtrade and ecocentrism are two different concepts. Fairtrade is concerned with producers' and farmers' work conditions in developing countries; ecocentrism is concerned with the relationship between people and Nature in which Nature is assumed to have an indisputable, and non-instrumental, intrinsic value. A common value structure however explains a considerable amount of the variance in both these concepts. Anthropocentrism was also found to relate to values differently than Fairtrade and ecocentrism. Typically, people who are positive towards Fairtrade and ecocentrism try to transcend the self-enhancement value by working to benefit others. They are also more open to change and less concerned with following traditions. However, people with anthropomorphic values prioritise their own interests over societal interests, are inclined to oppose change, and tend to follow traditions and common social norms.

Despite a response rate of only 31%, the spread in respondents' ages and the relatively even distribution between women and men respondents indicate that the study's results are a reasonable representation of the Gestad residents' attitudes and values towards Fairtrade and related environmental attitudes and philosophies. Further research in other rural areas may confirm whether the results of this study are representative of the same demographic.

For this study, I measured the importance attached to values, and applied Thompson & Barton's (1994) Study 2 measures of ecocentrism and anthropocentrism. I also used an original sample—the inhabitants in the small Swedish rural town of Gestad. My findings replicate the main results of earlier studies. This confirmation of results is evidence of the robustness of the relationships between values and attitudes towards Fairtrade alternatives, ecocentrism, and anthropocentrism.

This study provides additional evidence that the preference for Fairtrade alternatives, as well as ecocentric and anthropocentric attitudes, relates to the values in Schwartz's model. The study also supports the conclusion that the preference for Fairtrade and ecocentrism relates most strongly to the self-transcendence value and the openness to change value in the Schwartz model. Anthropocentrism, however, relates more to the self-enhancement value and the conservation value in the Schwartz model.

For future research, the results of this study may be useful in discussions on the factors related to sustainable development and how various groups of people strive to fulfil, or not to fulfil, sustainable development goals.

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