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Socio-Cognitive Determinants of Consumers' Support for the Fair-Trade Movement

Abstract Despite the reasonable explanatory power of existing models of consumers' ethical decision making, a large part of the process remains unexplained. This article draws on previous research and proposes an integrated model that includes measures of the theory of planned behavior, personal norms, self-identity, neutralization, past experience, and attitudinal ambivalence. We postulate and test a variety of direct and moderating effects in the context of a large survey with a representative sample of the U.K. population. Overall, the resulting model represents an empirically robust and holistic attempt to identify the most important determinants of consumers' support for the fair-trade movement. Implications and avenues for further research are discussed.

Keywords Attitude–behavior gap; Consumer ethical decision making; Ethical consumerism; Fair trade; Theory of planned behavior

Introduction

Research on ethical consumerism has grown substantially since the 1990s and has provided valuable insights into the ways people respond to the moral and environmental challenges of living in contemporary consumption environments. However, the literature remains limited, and additional work is necessary for a comprehensive and unified understanding of the role of ethics in consumption. In this endeavor, some authors concentrate on developing models of consumer ethical decision making, often drawing on socio-cognitive models originally applied in other fields, such as Ajzen's (1985, 1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB), Schwartz's (1977) model of norm activation, and Hunt and Vitell's (1986, 1992, 2006) general theory of marketing ethics. These models build on the premise that consumers' ethical judgments (or related attitudinal constructs) are consistent with their behavioral intentions, which in turn are an effective proxy for actual behavior in most circumstances (Fukukawa, 2002). Nonetheless, studies on ethical consumerism have consistently challenged this premise owing to the widespread observation of the gap between attitudes and behavior (e.g., Bray et al., 2011; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Carrington et al., 2010). For example, consumers often buy environmentally hazardous products regardless of their expressed concern for greener alternatives (Devinney et al., 2010).

Although various theoretical explanations for the attitude-behavior gap are available in the literature (e.g., Bray et al., 2011; Carrington et al., 2010; Chatzidakis et al., 2007), on an empirical level, surprisingly few studies have attempted to provide a more comprehensive approach to narrowing that gap. So far, the dominant approach to increasing the amount of variance explained in ethical intentions or behavior has been the addition of variables that may have an effect alongside established attitudinal

constructs. For example, in applying the TPB to ethical consumer behavior, Shaw and colleagues (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Shaw and Clarke, 1999; Shaw and Shiu, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Shaw et al., 2000) suggest the addition of personal norm and self-identity. However, empirical research is lacking on various other key factors that have since appeared in the literature (Andorfer and Liebe, 2012). In addition, there is a need for research to go beyond the postulation of additional direct effects, to investigate the potential role of constructs in theoretically moderating rather than directly affecting the attitude–behavior relationship, such as the role of consumer rationalizations for not behaving ethically (Chatzidakis et al., 2007).

Drawing on these observations, this study aims to identify the most important psychological and attitudinal determinants of ethical consumerism in a multivariate context. Accordingly, the contributions of the study are threefold. First, it builds on previous research to develop and test a comprehensive model of consumers' ethical decision making, incorporating key additional variables such as attitudinal ambivalence, past experience, and consumer neutralizations. Second, it moves beyond the postulation of direct effects to investigate the potential moderating effects of these variables on the attitude–behavior relationship. Third, the study attempts to provide a more empirically robust analysis through the use of multi-item measures, structural equation modeling analysis, and tests for common method bias.

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows: The next section reviews the current attempts to understand consumers' ethical decision making. Then, we develop a research model and hypotheses. Next, the study outlines the methodology and analysis of data. Finally, we discuss the findings in light of previous studies and provide implications for further research.

Research Background and Theoretical Framework

“Ethical consumerism” incorporates concerns about the environment, business practices, and social justice (e.g., Devinney et al., 2010; Harisson et al., 2005). Much of the research in this field pays attention to the characteristics and motivations of green and ethical niches (Shaw and Clarke, 1999). Studies have attempted to profile the demographic and socio-psychological characteristics of the “socially conscious”, “green”, or “ecologically conscious” consumer (e.g., Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; Webster, 1975), terms that were subsequently replaced with “ethical”, “caring”, and “responsible” to incorporate concerns such as trading relationships with the Third World (e.g., Harisson et al., 2005).

A type of behavior featured predominantly in ethical consumerism studies is consumers’ support for the fair-trade movement. Fair-trade products are “purchased under equitable trading agreements, involving cooperative rather than competitive trading principles, ensuring a fair price and fair working conditions for the producers and suppliers” (Strong, 1996, p. 5). Recent trends have provided support for the fair-trade movement more broadly, for example, by organizing and participating in fair-trade campaigns, donating to relevant organizations, and petitioning (e.g., www.fairtrade.org.uk, www.maketradefair.com). These trends are in line with a widely adopted (at least by the four main international fair-trade networks), broader definition of the movement as “an alternative approach to conventional international trade. [Fair trade] is a trading partnership which aims for sustainable development of excluded and disadvantaged producers. It seeks to do this by providing better trading conditions, by awareness raising and by campaigning” (Krier, 2001, p. 5).

As mentioned, to transcend treatments of fair trade and ethical consumerism, research has attempted to understand consumers’ decision-making processes, based

on popular socio-cognitive models such as Ajzen's (1985, 1991) TPB, Schwartz's (1977) norm-activation model, and Hunt and Vitell's (1986, 1992, 2006) general theory of marketing ethics. These studies attempt to understand how and why consumers behave (un)ethically in a more holistic manner, as opposed to studies that either implicitly or explicitly focus only on one or a few components of the decision-making process (e.g., formation of beliefs, importance of demographic and psychographic characteristics; Vitell and Ho, 1997). Nonetheless, although attitude-behavioral models have some explanatory power, a large part of the ethical consumer decision-making process remains unexplained. Research into other behavioral and decision-making contexts has generally attempted to account for attitude-behavior discrepancies through the addition of further constructs, measurement refinements, and behavior-specific considerations (see, e.g., Ogden, 2003). Accordingly, the remainder of this section draws from previous research on ethical and pro-social behavior to develop an extended conceptualization of consumers' ethical decision making.

The TPB provides a good initial platform for understanding consumer ethical decision making for several reasons. First, the TPB is arguably the most robust of all the attitude-behavioral models, with an impressive record of successful applications in many domains (for reviews, see Armitage and Conner, 2001; Notani, 1998). In addition, this model is widely used in consumer research (De Cannière et al., 2009), including ethical contexts such as the purchase of fair-trade products (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Shaw and Clarke, 1999; Shaw and Shiu, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Shaw et al., 2000), various instances of consumer misconduct (Fukukawa, 2002), software piracy (Chang, 1998), waste recycling (Chan, 1998), and green purchase behavior (e.g., Kalafatis et al., 1999). Conceptualizing consumers' ethical decision

making in relation to this theoretical framework therefore promotes consistency and comparability in this nascent area of research. Second, TPB applications, perhaps more than any other decision-making studies, offer thorough and detailed guidelines on how to construct and validate respective measures (e.g., Ajzen, 2002a; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Francis et al., 2004a, 2004b). Third, the TPB remains, in principle, open to the inclusion of other constructs so long as they increase TPB's explanatory power (Ajzen, 1991). Finally, the TPB is in line with other ethical decision-making models, so long as they allow for a step-by-step (from attitudes to intentions to behavior) view of the cognitive process (Fukukawa, 2002; Nicholls and Lee, 2006).

Briefly, the TPB (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (TRA; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), which suggests that behavior in a specified situation is a direct function of behavioral intention, which in turn is a function of attitudes and subjective norms. TPB differs from TRA by adding a new construct—that is, perceived behavioral control—to address behaviors over which individuals have incomplete volitional control. Perceived behavioral control influences behavior indirectly through its effect on intention but also directly, as a proxy for actual behavioral control. The following hypotheses summarize the main premises of the TPB:

Hypothesis 1: Attitudes positively affect intention to support fair trade.

Hypothesis 2: Subjective norms positively affect intention to support fair trade.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived behavioral control positively affects intention to support fair trade.

The sufficiency of the TPB in explaining moral behavior is criticized on five main grounds. First, because it is essentially a rational-choice model, the TPB ignores

the role of altruistic, non-rational motives in guiding behavior (Kaiser et al., 1999; Sparks and Shepherd, 2002). Personal feelings of rightness or wrongness, as reflected in measures of “personal norm” or “ethical obligation”, were deliberately dropped from the original version of TRA, but they remain at the forefront of moral behavior research (Manstead and Parker, 1995) and are key constructs in Schwartz’s (1977) norm-activation model. In contrast, by incorporating “subjective norms”, the TPB focuses on conventional responsibility in the form of social expectations, rather than ethical responsibility based on deliberately made moral judgments (Kaiser and Shimoda, 1999, Kaiser et al., 1999). Accordingly, an increasing amount of literature provides support for the utility of this construct over and above traditional TPB determinants (e.g., Evans and Norman, 2003; Godin et al., 2005; see also Conner and Armitage, 1998, for a review). Thus:

Hypothesis 4: Personal norms positively affect intention to support fair trade.

Second, the TPB treats the (moral) actor primarily as a psychological entity rather than a social construct (Terry et al., 1999). From this point of view, the conceptualization of subjective norms is limited because the construct does not capture the whole spectrum of socially defined influences (Hagger and Chatzisarantis, 2006). Identity theory suggests that “one’s self concept is organized into a hierarchy of role identities that correspond to one’s positions in the social structure” (Charng et al., 1988, p. 304). When a particular behavior (e.g., driving a hybrid sport-utility vehicle) becomes associated with someone’s role identity (e.g., pro-environment “middle class”), that person is more likely to behave consistently with that identity (e.g., Hagger and Chatzisarantis, 2006). Therefore, he or she may form positive intentions toward a pro-social activity because related issues (e.g., caring for Third-

World producers) have become an important part of his or her self-identity (Shaw et al., 2000). As in the case of ethical obligation, previous TPB research provides extensive support for the utility of the self-identity construct (Charng et al., 1988; Jackson et al., 2003; Sparks and Shepherd, 2002).

Hypothesis 5: Self-identity positively affects intention to support fair trade.

Third, although feelings of “ambivalence” and the conflictive nature of ethical choices in consumption have been widely reported in ethical consumer research (e.g., Devinney et al. 2010), few empirical attempts have examined the role of ambivalent feelings and cognitions alongside traditional TPB constructs. Defining ambivalence as “the simultaneous presence of positive and negative evaluations of the same attitude object”, Costarelli and Colloca (2004, p. 280) found that ambivalence has a strong independent effect on intentions; conversely, Castro et al. (2009) found support for an additional moderating effect of ambivalence on the attitude–intention relationship. Although these studies have focused on pro-ecological behaviors, similar effects could be manifest in the context of fair-trade support. Accordingly, we postulate the following:

Hypothesis 6a: Ambivalence negatively affects intentions to support fair trade.

Hypothesis 6b: Ambivalence moderates (weakens) the relationship between TPB constructs and intention.

Fourth, the TPB falls short in explaining the internal tensions that consumers may face when balancing their own desires with moral behavior that favors societal well-being. For example, Schwartz’s (1977; see also Schwartz and Howard, 1980, 1981) norm-activation model incorporates the concept of “defensive” or

“responsibility denial”, to account for the idea that when the costs of pro-social behavior are high, individuals may redefine the situation as beyond their responsibility and norms will not be activated. This moderator hypothesis has received support in contexts such as helping behavior (Schwartz, 1977; Schwartz and Howard, 1980, 1981) and energy conservation (Tyler et al., 1982). Chatzidakis et al. (2007) conceptualize the role of neutralization techniques (Sykes and Matza, 1957) in the TPB as a taxonomy of typical justifications (i.e., denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of victim, condemning the condemners, and appealing to higher loyalties) that consumers may employ when behaving in ways that contradict their ethical concerns. Drawing on these authors’ work, we postulate that neutralization techniques may negatively affect intentions and can moderate the relationship between TPB antecedents and behavior:

Hypothesis 7a: Neutralization negatively affects intention to support fair trade.

Hypothesis 7b: The higher the acceptance of neutralizing beliefs, the weaker is the relationship between TPB antecedents and intentions.

Fifth, a common criticism of the TPB is its inability to account for habitual or automatic processes (e.g., Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Although past behavior, strictly speaking, cannot serve as a causal antecedent of future behavior (Ajzen, 2011), several authors have used past behavior measures as proxies for habit strength. In addition, past behavior can serve as a proxy for personal experience, a factor that has been identified as a key impediment to ethical consumption (Bray et al. 2011). Accordingly, studies across various behavioral domains—but so far not in ethical consumption—indicate that past behavior has a strong direct effect on intentions over and above traditional TPB antecedents and may attenuate the attitude–intention and

intention–behavior relationships (e.g., Hagger et al., 2001, 2002; Norman and Conner, 2006; Norman et al., 2000). Thus:

Hypothesis 8a: Past behavior positively affects intention to support fair trade.

Hypothesis 8b: Past behavior strengthens the relationship between TPB antecedents and intentions.

Fig. 1 presents the conceptual model that extends the TPB by adding five new variables: personal norms, self-identity, ambivalence, neutralization, and past experience. In addition, the figure postulates a series of moderating effects.

{Insert Figure 1 Here}

Method

Design and Procedure

We used a drop-and-collect survey procedure to collect data from a probability sample of 517 inhabitants of London. The sampling procedure employed a multi-stage cluster sampling design, with respondents from six postcode areas representing average income areas who were moderately to highly knowledgeable about fair trade. Specifically, we qualified respondents by means of screening questions that ensured that they, at least occasionally, bought fair-trade products or supported fair trade in other ways (e.g., signing a petition). For assistance during the screening, and to achieve a priming effect (Sudman et al., 1996), the respondents received the following definition before completing the survey:

Supporting the fair-trade movement may involve buying fair-trade products, that is, products that have been certified by a Fair Trade Labeling Organization for being purchased under equitable trading agreements, involving co-operative rather than competitive trading principles, ensuring a

fair price and fair working conditions for the producers and suppliers. Support also includes backing the fair-trade movement in other ways, for example, by making a donation to a Fair Trade Organization or signing a petition about trade justice.

This process stimulates memory and helps respondents complete the questionnaire in a more focused frame of mind (Podsakoff et al., 2003); in addition, respondents were informed that there were no right or wrong answers, just opinions (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Afterwards, respondents completed the questionnaire; the various indicators were mixed (no scale was filled “as is”) to better conceal the purpose of the study and elicit unbiased answers (Hunt et al., 1982). Finally, respondents answered demographic and control measures.

Of the respondents, 50.7% were men and 49.3% women, ranging in age from 18 to 88 years ($M = 28$). In addition, 14.3% had completed secondary or tertiary education, 61.9% had obtained a Bachelor’s degree, and the rest (23.8%) held a Master’s or doctoral degree.

Drop-and-collect surveys typically produce response rates of 70% to 90% (Lovelock et al., 1976). In total, 800 questionnaires were distributed, at various days of the week, to obtain a broad representation. On weekdays, distribution occurred in the evening to reduce non-response error (when most people are home), and on weekends, distribution took place during the entire day. In total, 517 usable surveys were returned (65% response rate).

Measures

We modeled traditional TPB measures after those of Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), Ajzen (2002a), and Francis et al. (2004a), and we adapted items measuring personal norm, self-identity, and ambivalence from previous research. The items measuring

neutralization were newly constructed, and the common denominator was meant to be “justifiability” of non-supportive behavior toward fair trade, in line with Chatzidakis et al. (2007). A full description of these measures and related portions from the questionnaire are available in the Appendix.

Findings

Common Method Bias

To determine the extent of common method bias in the study, we performed Harman’s one-factor test, following the approach that Podsakoff et al. (2003) outline. We entered all measurement items for intention, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, neutralization, personal norm, and self-identity into principal axis factoring (unrotated). According to this technique, if a single factor emerges from the factor analysis or one “general” factor accounts for the majority of the covariance in the variables, common method variance is present. The results suggest that common method bias is not a problem because the first factor accounted for 30.08% of the variance, much lower than the 50% threshold (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In addition to Harman’s test, we employed the market-variable technique to verify that common method variance is not a problem; research in statistics considers this a reliable technique in testing common method variance (Lindell and Whitney, 2001; Malhotra et al., 2006; Rindfleisch et al., 2008). This technique uses a variable/question in the questionnaire that is theoretically unrelated to the other variables. In the current study, the question was, “I have confidence in the U.K. economy”. We calculated common method bias with the following equation:

$$r_a = r_u - [r_m / (1 - r_m)]$$

$$t_{\alpha/2, n-3} = r_a / [\text{SQRT} ((1 - (r_a^2)) / (n-3))],$$

where r_m is the smallest positive correlation¹, r_u is the uncorrected correlation, r_a is partialled out of r_m from r_u , and n is sample size.

With a sample size of 517 and r_m equal to .004, we calculated this equation and investigated the impact on the degree and significance of the correlations. The level of significance in the original correlations and the adjusted partial correlations remained the same, which suggests that the results cannot be accounted for by common method variance (Lindell and Whitney, 2001).

Validity and Reliability of Measurements

We estimated individual confirmatory factor analysis measurement models for all constructs that contained more than three items, to ensure unidimensionality and internal consistency (e.g., Hair et al., 2009). After we dropped three items that had low loadings or substantial cross-loadings and allowed three correlations between error terms (when based on substantive, theoretical considerations; Byrne, 2001), most variables displayed desirable psychometric properties, apart from perceived behavioral control, personal norms, and self-identity.

Perceived behavioral control exhibited low reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .571$), echoing problems in the measurement of this construct reported in previous studies (e.g., Kraft et al., 2005). Thus, we decided to break down the construct into two dimensions that were conceptual distinct - that is, perceived control versus perceived difficulty (see Trafimow et al., 2002) - comprising one item each. We chose to use single-item measures because they appeared more unidimensional (Rossiter, 2002, 2005, 2008) and their content was highly correlated with prior definitions of perceived behavioral control and perceived difficulty (Alexandrov, 2010; Bergvist and Rossiter, 2007; Rossiter, 2005, 2008).

¹ This correlation, which based on the work of Lindell and Whitney (2001), provides a stringent test.

Subsequent inspection of the correlations between variables indicated a potential problem in the relationship between personal norm and self-identity (.714***). Lack of discriminant validity, in turn, was established through exploratory factor analysis (using principal axis factoring with Varimax rotation), which resulted in a one-factor solution (eigenvalue = 3.568, 1 factor extracted). We aggregated both constructs into a single factor named “internal ethics” in accordance with previous research (Shaw and Shiu, 2002b, 2003). This is conceptually sensible, given that self-identification implies that a consumer who is interested in fair-trade issues likely possesses an ethical consumer orientation in the first place (Sparks and Shepherd, 2002).

Finally, after these adjustments, to ensure good fit of the measurement model, we validated both models (initial TPB and extended TPB) through confirmatory factor analysis. All values indicate that both models had a good fit (TPB model: $CMIN/df = 2.827$, $GFI = .952$, $CFI = .964$, $NFI = .946$, $RMSEA = .060$; extended TPB model: $CMIN/df = 2.727$, $GFI = .909$, $CFI = .942$, $NFI = .912$, $RMSEA = .058$), as all were above the cutoff values recommended in the literature (Hair et al., 2009; Kline, 2005). These values also reflect good convergent validity for each of the sub-scales.

Table 1 summarizes Cronbach’s alpha values, composite reliabilities, and average variance extracted values for the employed multi-item constructs. Table 2 summarizes the respective correlations.

{Insert Tables 1 and 2 Here}

Assessment of Proposed Model and Hypotheses

The hypotheses suggest that the initial model of TPB can be improved in the ethical consumption context by including a more holistic approach that examines the direct

and moderating effects of additional variables. Such relationships can be tested with hierarchical moderated regression analysis (Cohen and Cohen, 1983; Darrow and Kahl, 1982; Mohr et al., 1996; Schoonhoven, 1981). This analysis provides a “straightforward and the most general method for testing contingency hypothesis in which an interaction is implied” (Arnold, 1982, p. 170). To avoid any multicollinearity between the main and interaction terms, we mean-centered all the continuous variables (Aiken and West, 1991). In addition, in line with Cohen and Cohen (1983), in the hierarchical moderated regression model we mean-centered the interaction variables to partial out the main effects from the interactions terms. In the first step, we added the initial predictors of the dependent variable based on the TPB. We added the additional independent variables from the extended TPB in the second step, and in the third step we added the interaction terms between the predictors and the moderators. This process includes the following equation form:

$$\begin{aligned}
 y &= a + bx \\
 y &= a + bx + cz \\
 y &= a + bx + cz + dxz,
 \end{aligned}$$

where y is the dependent variable; a is the intercept term; b , c , and d are the regression coefficients; x is the independent variables; z is the moderator variable; and xz depicts the independent variable–moderator variable interaction.

Hierarchical moderated regression analysis aims to identify any changes in R-square while testing the three regressions equations. Significant changes in R-square from the first to the second equation indicate a significant improvement of the model, and further significance changes of R-square to the third equation indicate that the moderating effects significantly improve the overall model. Aiken and West (1991) suggest that the significance criteria for such analysis should be at the .10 significance level for the moderating effects because the hierarchical moderated regression

analyses are conservative.

When only traditional TPB determinants were included in the equation, adjusted R-square was .47 ($F(3, 303.772) = 153.297, p < .000$). Subjective norms contributed most to predicting intention (standardized $\beta = .423, p < .000$), followed by attitudes and perceived control ($\beta_s = .368, p < .000; = .073, p < .05$, respectively). In the second step, internal ethics, neutralization, ambivalence, past behavior, and perceived difficulty were also included in the equation, resulting in a significant R-square change of .17 ($p < .000$; adjusted $R^2 = .649, F(8, 416.868) = 117.255, p < .000$). Internal ethics was now the most important predictor of intention ($\beta = .409, p < .000$), followed by subjective norms ($\beta = .170, p < .000$), perceived difficulty ($\beta = -.167, p < .000$), attitude ($\beta = .111, p < .01$), neutralization ($\beta = -.101, p < .000$), and past behavior ($\beta = .090, p < .01$); ambivalence and perceived control did not have a significant direct influence on intention. These results provide support for Hypotheses 6a, 7a, and 8a. Hypotheses 4 and 5 are also supported, albeit through the construction of a composite measure labeled internal ethics; in addition, there is a strong negative effect for perceived difficulty, a construct that can be considered either additional or a sub-component of perceived behavioral control (Trafimow et al., 2002).

Finally, we examined moderating effects in an additional step, in which we entered all interaction terms simultaneously. The addition of the product terms showed a significant R-square change of .013 ($p < .000$; adjusted $R^2 = .656, F(23, 431.299) = 43.747, p < .000$). These results provide partial support for Hypotheses 6b, 7b, and 8b, taking into account significance criteria of $p < .10$ (Aiken and West, 1991). Table 3 summarizes these results, and Fig. 2 depicts the final model. Finally, Fig. 3 plots all significant interaction terms, which we discuss in the following section.

{Insert Table 3 and Figures 2 and 3 Here}

Discussion

Sufficiency of TPB

The findings from the linear regression reveal that the original TPB antecedents—that is, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control—explain a substantial amount (47%) of the variance in intention to support fair trade. This is in line with the typical 30%–50% range of explained variance in TPB research (Fife-Schaw et al., 2007) yet is well over the 24% of variance explained in a previous application of the TPB in fair-trade consumption (Shaw and Shiu, 2002a, 2002b, 2003), perhaps due to the use of multi-item measures (e.g., Armitage and Conner, 2001; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Nonetheless, in line with criticisms of the sufficiency of TPB in explaining moral behavior, inclusion of additional measures contributed to an additional 17% of the variance explained. This also resulted in a final model that departs considerably from the original TPB conceptualization.

Most notably, the measure of “internal ethics” was the most important predictor of intention, over and above traditional determinants such as attitude and subjective norms. In this study, this measure combines feelings of personal norm and self-identity, given the lack of discriminant validity between the two constructs. In line with this finding, Sparks and Guthrie (1998, p. 1397; see also Sparks and Shepherd, 2002) note: “Not only may some identities (e.g. Socialist, Christian, vegetarian) be associated with values that may be moral values of one sort or other, certain identity ascriptions (e.g. benevolent, loyal, compassionate) may refer to aspects of character that are seen as being of intrinsic moral value”. Similarly, in their review of relevant TPB literature, Conner and Armitage (1998) suggest that given the often mixed findings, the relationship between personal norm and self-identity may

vary depending on the behavior in question. Regardless, the central role of internal ethics undermines the TPB as a rational choice model of self-interest, insofar as altruistic motives and concerns about other people's welfare are not sufficiently taken into account (Kaiser et al., 1999; Sparks and Shepherd, 2002). As Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p. 178) argue, measures of personal norm and self-identity are likely to carry both a cognitive and an emotional component, which is not "especially salient when respondents rate behaviors on the evaluative scales used to assess attitude toward the act".

The current findings also confirm the importance of additional variables proposed in previous research, such as perceived difficulty, neutralization, and past behavior. We introduce perceived difficulty as an additional dimension that is not adequately captured by conventional measures of perceived behavioral control and which in turn was the third most significant predictor of intention. Indeed, the conceptualization and measurement of perceived behavioral control has been one of the most controversial issues in TPB research, and several authors have suggested that it should be operationalized as a multi-dimensional variable (e.g., perceived behavioral control vs. self-efficacy, perceived behavior control vs. perceived difficulty; see Ajzen, 2002b). Other important predictors included neutralizations or justifications used for (un)ethical behavior (Chatzidakis et al., 2007) and past behavior, a measure that serves as a proxy for both personal experience (Bray et al., 2011) and habitual strength (Verplanken and Aarts, 1999).

Role of Moderating Effects

In addition to various additive effects, the current findings lend support to the role of moderating effects in models of ethical decision making. The addition of interaction terms improved the prediction of intention by 1.3%. Although this may seem a

relatively small amount of improvement, note that detection of moderating effects in field studies is particularly difficult, and non-detection remains the rule rather than the exception (Frazier et al., 2004; McClelland and Judd, 1993). In addition, the general difficulty in detecting moderating effects could be due to the notion that linear models provide good accounts of psychological data even when, conceptually, interaction effects should be present (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188; but see Armitage and Conner, 2001). Regardless, the current findings provide support for four significant interaction effects. Most notably, attitudinal ambivalence, a variable that has no significant direct effect on intention, moderates the perceived difficulty–intention relationship, in that the higher the ambivalence, the weaker is the negative effect of perceived difficulty on intention (Fig. 2). A conceptual explanation for this finding is that ambivalence distorts consumers’ perceptions of difficulty they may experience in performing ethically superior behaviors. Past behavior also significantly weakens the perceived difficulty–intention relationship, perhaps through processes of learning and consolidating past experiences of difficulty into habitual routines. Arguably on the same grounds, past behavior accentuates the positive effect of perceived control on intention. Finally, neutralization also had a moderating effect on the subjective norm–intention relationship. The justifications or excuses for not engaging in socially desirable behaviors seem to weaken the positive effect of subjective norms on intention.

Altogether, the presence of moderating effects suggests an alternative route to understanding the so-called attitude–behavior gap in ethical consumption research (e.g., Bray et al., 2011; Carrington et al., 2010). Beyond the addition of further variables, which has so far been the predominant approach to increasing attitude–behavior correspondence, the current study highlights the need to explore and

effectively operationalize potential impediments to individuals' otherwise positive inclination toward ethical products. In other words, the gap could be effectively narrowed by identifying variables that directly affect the attitude–behavior relationship itself, rather than or alongside their additive effect as independent antecedents.

Implications and Future Research Avenues

The findings suggest that the psychological processes underlying fair-trade consumerism are inherently more complex than assumed in previous research. For example, subjective feelings of internal ethics seem to be more important than rational considerations encapsulated in measures of attitudes and subjective norms.

Furthermore, given the significance of several additive and moderating effects in the traditional TPB framework, this study aligns with Hassan et al.'s (2014) recent call to engage in research “that would allow a more comprehensive assessment of the motivational pathway between words and deeds”. The route to a more comprehensive understanding of consumers' ethical decision making requires that researchers remain both critical and creative in their adoption of such models.

Despite the contribution of this study to the understanding of consumers' ethical decision making, various potential research avenues exist. First, the difficulties noted in the measurement of perceived behavioral control are common in TPB studies (Conner and Armitage, 1998) and underscore the need to operationalize control-related feelings as a multi-dimensional construct in further research (Ajzen, 2002b). Second, the present model of ethical decision making uses measures of intention rather than actual behavior. A recent review of TPB studies in the context of ethical consumption suggests that there can be significant variation in the intention–behavior relationship (Hassan et al., 2014). In addition, measures of actual behavior would

have facilitated the exploration of additional paths and moderating effects in the proposed model. Third, moderating effects could be explored with greater precision in experimental or scenario-based approaches rather than survey-based designs. For example, participants could be introduced to a high cost, pro-social behavior both before and after completing a questionnaire, by being told that they will be asked to donate some money, or part of their reimbursement, to a relevant cause (e.g., Basil et al., 2006). Finally, although the characteristics of the current sample were adequate for the purposes of testing the model, further research could attempt to replicate the model through cross-cultural and longitudinal studies that link, for example, panel data of fair-trade product purchases with survey data.

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Fig. 1 Proposed theoretical model

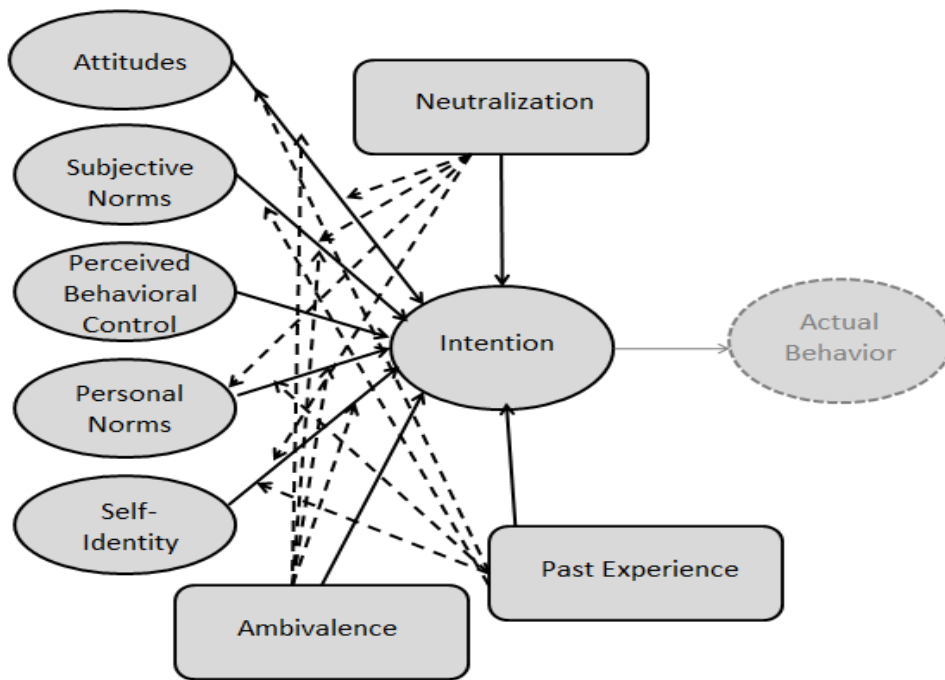


Fig. 2 Final model

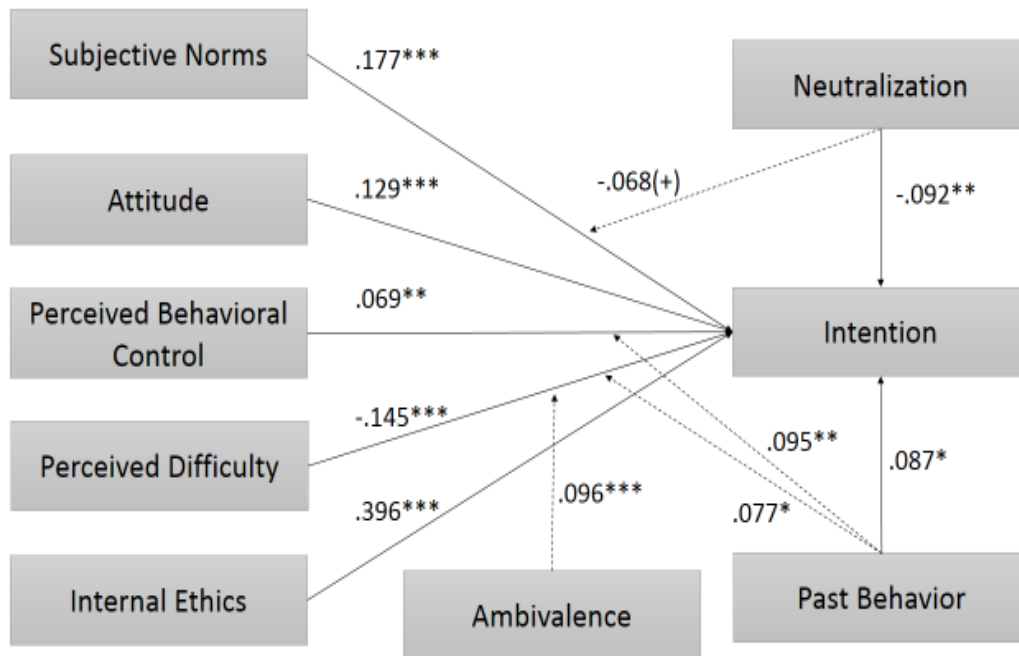
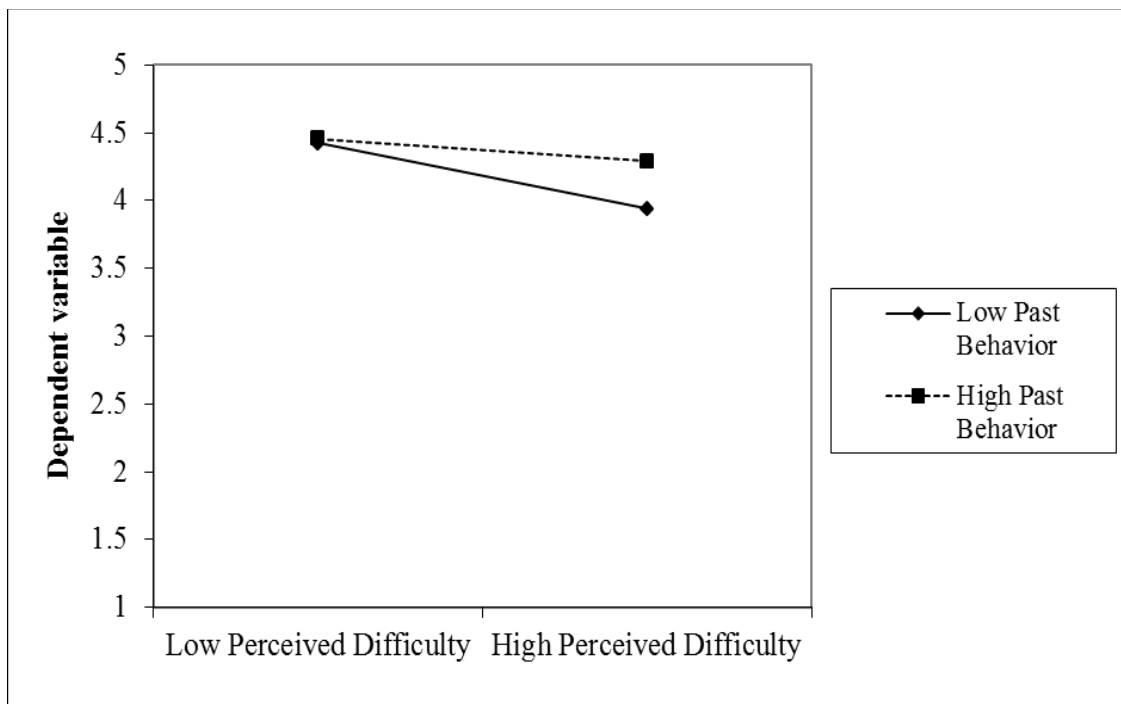
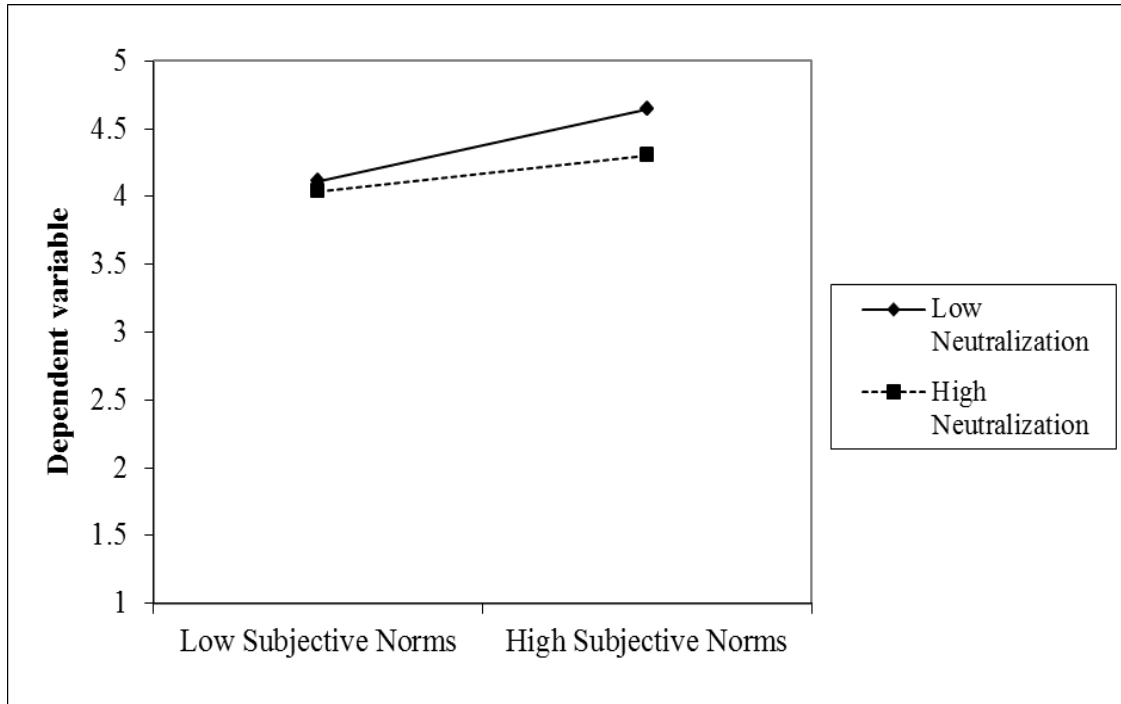


Fig. 3 Plots of significant interaction terms



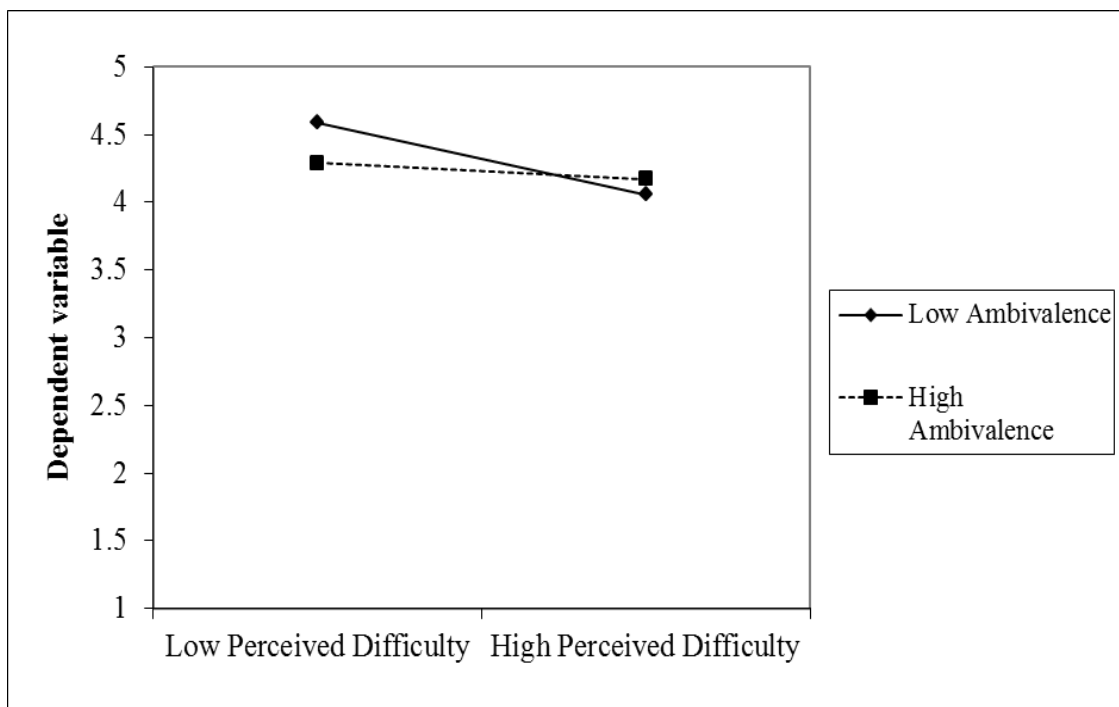
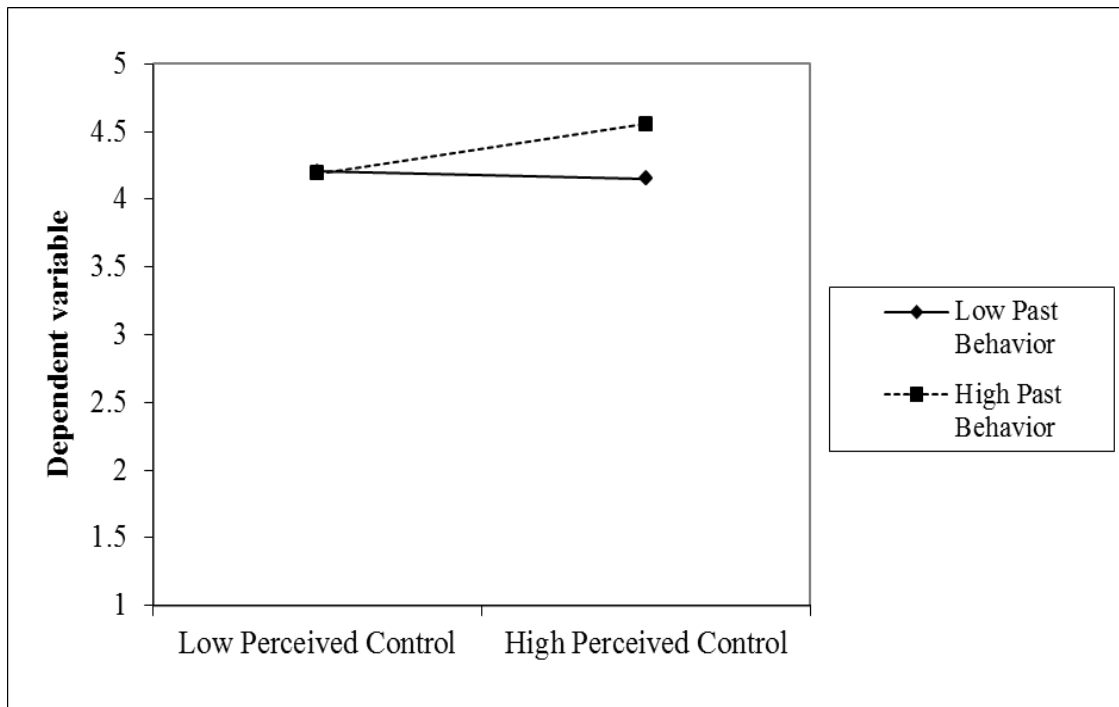


Table 1 Reliability scores

	Factor loadings	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Construct reliability	Average variance extracted
Internal ethics	.812	4	.839	.842	.574
	.854				
	.662				
	.686				
Subjective norms	.765	3	.811	0.812	0.590
	.743				
	.795				
Attitudes	.799	6	.854	0.859	0.554
	.591				
	.849				
	.820				
	.622				
Past behavior	.888	2	.893	0.893	0.806
	.908				
Intentions	.431	4	.812	0.833	0.570
	.841				
	.924				
	.731				
Ambivalence	.877	2	.872	0.872	0.773
	.881				
Neutralization	.687	2	.701	0.710	0.551
	.794				

Table 2 Correlations

Correlations	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) Intention	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(2) Subjective norms	.591**	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
(3) Attitude	.561**	.420**	1	-	-	-	-	-
(4) Perceived control	.224**	.183**	.202**	1	-	-	-	-
(5) Perceived difficulty	-.406**	-.163**	-.259**	-.167**	1	-	-	-
(6) Internal ethics	.776**	.625**	.577**	.165**	-.334**	1	-	-
(7) Past behavior	.564**	.560**	.479**	.272**	-.316**	.550**	1	-
(8) Neutralization	-.346**	-.116**	-.354**	-.053	.252**	-.338**	-.232**	1
(9) Ambivalence	-.392**	-.249**	-.448**	-.038	.168**	-.408**	-.275**	.242**

Table 3 Hierarchical moderated regression results

Models	1	2	3
y	Intention	Intention	Intention
Main effects of traditional TPB			
Subjective norms	.423***	.170***	.177***
Attitude	.368***	.111**	.129***
Perceived control	.073*	.052	.069**
Main effects of extended TPB			
Perceived difficulty		-.167***	-.145***
Internal ethics		.409***	.396***
Past behavior		.090**	.087*
Ambivalence		-.060	-.042
Neutralization		-.101***	-.092**
Interaction effects			
Neutralization × Subjective norms			-.068(+)
Neutralization × Attitude			.052
Neutralization × Perceived control			.031
Neutralization × Perceived difficulty			-.022
Neutralization × Internal ethics			.015
Ambivalence × Subjective norms			.060
Ambivalence × Attitude			-.035
Ambivalence × Perceived control			-.012
Ambivalence × Perceived difficulty			.096***
Ambivalence × Internal ethics			.014
Past Behavior × Subjective norms			-.037
Past Behavior × Attitude			.008
Past Behavior × Perceived control			.095**
Past Behavior × Perceived difficulty			.077*
Past Behavior × Internal ethics			-.028
R²	0.473	0.649	0.671
Adj. R²	0.47	0.643	0.656
F	153.297	117.255	43.747
Sig.	.000	.000	.000
Notes: Unstandardized beta coefficients are presented. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, (+) $p < .10$			

Appendix: Excerpts from the survey instrument and explanation of the items

Intention: Following Francis et al.'s (2004a) suggested format, we assessed general intention to support fair trade using three items:

- I expect to support the fair trade movement in the near future” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “I want to support the fair trade movement in the near future” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “I intend to support the fair trade movement in the near future” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”).

We used three additional items to measure intentions for specific behaviors:

- “I would support the fair trade movement in the near future, by buying fair trade products” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “I would support the fair trade movement in the near future, by signing a petition for fair trade” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “I would support the fair trade movement in the near future, by donating to the fair trade organization” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”).

Attitudes: We assessed attitudes by employing a semantic differential scale, as suggested by Ajzen (2002a). Respondents were presented with the statement “Supporting the fair trade movement is ...”, followed by seven pairs of adjectives: harmful/beneficial, good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant, worthless/valuable, enjoyable/unenjoyable, rewarding/not rewarding, and the right thing to do/the wrong thing to do. An additional question, “In general, my attitude towards fair trade is ...” was followed by two pairs of adjectives, unfavorable/favorable (Ajzen and Fisbein,

1980) and negative/positive (e.g. Sparks and Shepherd, 2002) and was intended to capture overall evaluation (Sparks and Shepherd, 2002).

Subjective norms: We measured subjective norms with five sentences following the recommendations of Ajzen (2002a):

- “Most people who are important to me support fair trade” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “Most people who are important to me think that I should support fair trade” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “The people in my life whose opinions I value would not approve of my supporting for fair trade” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “The people in my life whose opinions I value support fair trade” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “It is expected of me that I support fair trade in the near future” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”).

Perceived behavioral control: We measured perceived behavioral control with four statements (Ajzen, 2002a):

- “For me to support the fair trade movement in the near future would be difficult” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “If I wanted to I could support the fair trade movement in the near future” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “It is mostly up to me whether or not I support fair trade in the near future” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “How much control do you believe you have over supporting fair trade in the

near future?” (“no control/complete control”).

Personal norms: We measured personal norms with three questions:

- “I feel that I have an ethical/moral obligation to support fair trade” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “I personally feel I should support fair trade” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “Supporting the fair trade movement would be the right thing for me to do” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”).

The first question retained the suggested format of Sparks et al. (1995) and Shaw (2000), while the second and third were of similar format to measures employed Sparks and Guthrie (1998) and Davies et al. (2002).

Self-identity: We constructed three questions to assess self-identification with fair-trade issues:

- “To support fair trade is an important part of who I am” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “I think of myself as someone who is concerned about ethical issues in consumption” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “I am not the type of person oriented to support fair trade” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)

The first two questions retained the suggested format of Terry et al. (1999), and the third was based on the wording used by Sparks and Shepherd (2002) and Shaw (2000).

Neutralisation: We measured neutralization with three questions that were meant to capture “justifiability” of not supporting fair trade, following Chatzidakis et al.

(2007):

- “For me, not supporting fair trade is justifiable” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “I have many arguments against supporting fair trade” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”)
- “I’ve got reasons for not supporting fair trade” (“strongly disagree/strongly agree”).

Past behavior: We assessed past behavior with a variety of differently worded questions, as recommended by Ajzen (2002a):

- In the course of the past three months, how many times have you decided to support the Fair Trade movement (*please tick one statement*)

Every time that I had the opportunity _____
 Almost every time that I had the opportunity _____
 Most of the time that I had the opportunity _____
 About half of the times that I had the opportunity _____
 Sometimes, but less than half of the times I had the opportunity _____
 Few times that I had the opportunity _____
 Not at all when I had the opportunity _____
 I have not had the opportunity _____

- How often do you support the Fair Trade Movement? (“never/always”)
- How often do you purchase Fair Trade products? (“never/always”)
- Have you ever bought Fair Trade products (please tick one)
 Yes ___ No, but I have had the opportunity ___ No, I have not had the opportunity ___
- Have you ever signed a petition for Fair Trade (please tick one)

Yes ___ No, but I have had the opportunity ___ No, I have not had the opportunity___

- Have you ever donated to the Fair Trade Organization (please tick one)

Yes ___ No, but I have had the opportunity ___ No, I have not had the opportunity___

- Have you ever supported Fair Trade through other ways (please tick one)

Yes ___ No ___ If yes, please specify: ___

Ambivalence: We measured ambivalence with five questions

- Regarding supporting the Fair Trade movement I feel that my attitude is... (“not at all contradictory/very contradictory”)
- Considering only the unfavorable qualities of Fair Trade and ignoring the favorable characteristics, how unfavorable is your evaluation of supporting the Fair Trade movement? (“not at all unfavorable/extremely unfavorable”)
- Considering only the negative qualities of Fair Trade and ignoring the positive characteristics, how negative is your evaluation of supporting the Fair Trade movement? (“not at all negative/extremely negative”)
- Considering only the favorable qualities of Fair Trade and ignoring the unfavorable characteristics, how favorable is your evaluation of supporting the Fair Trade movement? (“not at all favorable/extremely favorable”)
- Considering only the positive qualities of Fair Trade and ignoring the negative characteristics, how positive is your evaluation of supporting the Fair Trade movement? (“not at all positive/extremely positive”)

The first question retained the format used in Castro et al. (2009), while the rest of the questions were adapted from Conner et al. (2002).