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Consumption ethics as practice: towards a pragmatist understanding of values and value

Introduction

The debate around ethical consumption is often characterised by discussion of its numerous failures (Littler, 2011). Indeed, some have suggested that the ethical consumer is a 'myth', as consumer decision-making is entirely context-specific and based on complex individual trade-offs (Devinney *et al.*, 2010). In response, and drawing on evidence from an empirical study, this paper advances a pragmatist understanding of consumption ethics as practice as a response to the many debates which characterise the field. In doing so, it draws on the central roles of values and value in consumption and pluralist philosophical thought, and proposes a critique of the ethical consumer as 'rational maximiser'. In doing so the study aims to bridge the gap between much of the post-structuralist thought evident in emerging studies of ethical consumption (see for example Bartels and Onwezen, 2014; Giesler and Veresiu, 2014; Cherrier, 2007; Cherrier and Murray , 2007) and the 'techno-rational' discourse of individual trade-offs to understand the role of moral evaluation in clothing consumption practices.

This is significant for two reasons. Firstly, as Rorty (1999) notes, consensus is required about the best ways to promote development and reduce suffering which does not reduce ethical debates to arguments around uncertainty. Secondly, few studies have sought to explore the theoretical implications of morality as it relates to consumption (Caruana, 2007), and that this is a requirement if consumer research is to develop in sophistication. As Connolly and Shaw (2006) conclude that there is a great deal of diversity in consumer views and behaviour, and that organisations rarely understand these opinions. Here a case for linking a postmodern, pluralist and pragmatist conception of morality is proposed, which rejects opposing absolutist and relativist moral philosophies.

Indeed, in a (consumer) culture in which ethical consumption is both a part and a consequence (Newholm and Shaw, 2007), consumers are faced with the consequences of their actions, but without the benefit of the guidance of traditional values, 'grand narratives' or regimes of truth' (Cherrier, 2007; Bauman, 1993). Here postmodern and poststructual insights provide

insight into the context in which consumers find themselves and, as Feldman (1998) notes, whilst the postmodern perspective does not necessarily provide *answers*, recognising plurality may offer the ability to understand contrasting points of view, and this discourse and analysis may usefully be employed to reach greater clarity on the underlying reasoning behind consumer decisions.

Background

As the above suggests, there remains a discomfort in the field of ethical consumption which is manifest in, for example, the attitude-behaviour gap (Johnstone and Tan, 2014; Moraes *et al.*, 2012; Carrington et al., 2010; Auger and Devinney, 2007) and the proclaimed 'myth' of the ethical consumer (Devinney *et al.*, 2010, Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). Here, two main areas of literature (broadly classified into psychological and sociological perspectives) will be considered to attempt to understand how ethical consumer decision making and valuation has been approached to gain greater insight into some of the problems and complexities in the field.

Value-Belief / Moral Norm Models

One significant area of literature seeks to understand consumers' ethical decision-making largely from a psychological perspective. These studies tend to fall into one of two broad fields; those utilising expectancy-value models, and those utilising 'moral norm' or value-belief models (De Groot and Thøgersen, 2015; Stern, 2000). Expectancy-value models consider the costs and benefits of particular (ethical) behaviours (expectancy), and weigh them against personal values, with those behaviours resulting in the greatest net benefit or utility being chosen on the basis that societal utility is maximised when individual utility is maximised, but also based on deontological moral norms about the right thing to do (De Groot, Schubert and Thøgersen, 2016). Many studies are characterised by this approach and apply the theory of planned behaviour to the study of ethical consumption (see for example, Carrington *et al.*, 2010; Shaw *et al.*, 2000, Shaw and Clarke, 1999, Sparks and Shepherd, 1992). However, these have been argued to reduce ethical decision making to a purely cognitive process of arriving at utilitarian outcomes which predominantly serve self-interested behaviours, are deficient in explaining ethical or moral motivations, are poor predictors of likely behaviour and assume consumers have full control (De Groot, Schubert and Thøgersen, 2016).

In rejecting consumers as rational individual-optimisers, Thøgersen (1996) argues the case for moral norm theory, which focuses on values and which marketers should attempt to 'awaken' in promoting pro-environmental behaviour (De Groot, Schbert and Thøgersen, 2016). Thus a second set of literature drawing on pyschological perspectives has focused on deontologically-based moral norms (Thøgersen , 1996) and value theory. In an environmental-behaviour setting, Stern (2000) has termed this value-belief norm theory, based on the values-based work of Schwartz (1994) and Rokeach (1973). This recognises that there is an inherent link between an individual's values and both their ethics and their behaviour. Indeed, it is widely accepted in the field of consumer behaviour that values constitute a central influence which determines consumers' consumption behaviours (Gutman, 1982), through the achievement of higher order states (Baudrillard, 1998) and studies in ethical consumption have begun to adopt this perspective (see for example Jägel *et al.*, 2012; de Groot and Steg, 2010; Shaw *et al.*, 2005). As Jägel *et al.* (2012) and Shaw *et al.* (2005) note, values serve as guiding principles and therefore play a significant role in determining (ethical) consumption. Jägel et al. (2012) have applied this approach to ethical clothing consumption in which they find that value for money and style conflict with ethical concerns, also resulting in 'value trade-offs.'

However, such approaches have been criticised from a number of perspectives, including postmodern critique emphasising fragmentation (identity construction) and decentredness (problems with unifying theories in the context of lived experience) (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995), and the numbers of contrasting identities and roles at play (Brown, 2006). Further, Valor (2007), stresses the significance of ambivalence in purchase behaviour, and Devinney *et al.* (2010: 172) argue that the scales on which most values research are based are flawed and lack validity because they work on an assumption that context does not 'interact' with values, and that given values are difficult to change, consumer research focused on behaviour change employing 'traditional' values research relies on a: "…religious conversion of sorts"; values *are* brought into the purchasing context, but they are one only one of many contributors to the consumption decision.

Continental critique and poststructural development: identity and practice
The 'techno-rational' discourses outlined above have further tended to focus on the *practice of* ethical consumption, as opposed to the ontological position of '*being'* an ethical consumer (Shaw and Riach, 2011), or the social processes and meanings that may underpin the notion and nature of ethical consumption (Caruana, 2007). With respect to ontology, Garcia-Ruiz

and Lluesma (2014) argue that deontological and consequentialist thinking foster a clear distinction, and possibly an antagonism, between ethical and non-ethical consumption and cannot account for a more developmental ethics in which, as consumers' understanding of the good life evolves with experience. In line with this approach, consumption is often considered as an act of processual identity construction (Cherrier and Murray, 2007), in which cultural backgrounds, personal histories and the social context are also critical (Cherrier, 2007). This sociological perspective is largely reflected in the canon of work under the 'consumer culture theory' (CCT) banner (Arnould and Thompson , 2005), and two emergent strands of thought have emerged under this perspective (Thompson et al., 2013). The first views consumption as a form of identity work (both personal and collective) and the 'lived world' of consumers (Arnould and Thompson , 2005), the second relates to Caruana's (2007) classification of constructivist perspectives. Here, ethical consumption is viewed as a sociological *practice*, in which there is increased interest for the study of consumption (Halkier *et al.*, 2011; Warde, 2005).

Consumer identity work has gained significant momentum; Cherrier (2007) observes that ethical consumption practices emerge through the 'interplay' between individual and collective identity and a number of studies of morality in consumption have adopted perspectives on identity, both at the level of the individual (see for example Luedicke *et al.*, 2009; Cherrier, 2006) and in terms of social identity (Bartels and Onwezen, 2014). A number of studies have also adopted a 'consumption practice' perspective on consumption (Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Halkier *et al.*, 2011; Shankar *et al.*, 2009; Warde, 2005) and ethical consumption and environmental behaviour change (see for example Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma, 2014; Hargreaves, 2011; Shaw and Riach, 2011; Røpke, 2009; Connolly and Prothero, 2008). Here the relationship between practice and identity is recognised (Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Shankar et al., 2009), the latter being validated and reinforced by the former within the 'social world' of the consumer. Many of these studies employ Bourdieu's (1992) concept of habitus to stress the spontaneous nature of consumption which challenge the 'received wisdom' around consumer intentions, and which lies between the objective and the subjective; it is not produced by 'mechanical' and observable stimuli, but neither is it based on individual conscious cognitive choices; it is a form of 'inconspicuous consumption' (Hargreaves, 2011).

Trade-offs
Whilst each of these approaches and perspectives has its own attractions and pitfalls, a

concept that emerges as a central theme and unites these areas of literature around the practice of ethical consumption is that of the *trade off*, in which consumer choice is characterised as the weighing up of costs and benefits of ethical behaviour and factoring in personal values, with preference given to choices which result in the 'best' net utility; this type of utilitarian thinking is often evident in justifying inconsistent ethical consumption choices (see for example Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010), and they are typically implicitly framed as cognitive, rational and largely utilitarian approaches to (moral) decision making. For example, McGoldrick and Freestone (2008) note the trade-offs inherent in ethical purchasing in terms of a cost-benefit approach, or a 'conflict' approach to decision making.

Despite the prevalence of utilitarian approaches, other studies have also adopted the trade-off as a central tenet. Valor (2007) and Shaw *et al.* (2007) note the 'compromises' consumers have to take in making an ethical stance, and Valor (2007) identifies ambivalence as being a key characterisation of ethical consumer behaviour. In the identity perspective, Arnould and Thompson (2005), amongst others, also note that identity projects are largely goal-driven, but characterised by conflict, internal contradictions and ambivalence. In practice perspectives Røpke (2009) notes conflicts between individuals' core concerns in everyday life, and environmental concerns. Similarly, Littler (2011) argues that ethical consumption is increasingly becoming what might best be describes as 'contradictory consumption' as it often involves a number of different practices which are often in conflict with one another. Further, in linking identity and practice approaches, Shaw and Riach (2011) note that the practice of ethical consumption and the identity of 'ethical consumer' may be characterised by contradictions, which carries a need to understand the tensions created when values and actions may mismatch. Finally, as Devinney *et al.* (2010) argue, behaviour (and especially ethical consumer behaviour, which involves difficult and inconvenient choices) is based upon trade-offs of valuation, and they argue that research should examine the inconsistencies between attitudes and behaviour and consumer choices.

Despite this persistent rhetoric around the notion of a trade-off, there have been few attempts to engage with a meaning of what those trade-offs are and how they are enacted in practice, and the analytic device to understand the trade-off has been the subject of little attention. Devinney *et al.* (2010) have perhaps applied the most focus by applying a 'best-worst' (BW) experiment, but in other studies they are positioned as being negative balances of positive outcomes (Moraes *et al.*, 2010; Schröder and McEachren, 2004; Lim *et al.*, 2014; Shaw *et al.*, 2015). The trade-offs referred to in these studies often imply that the consumer is engaged in

an act of preferential judgement; that multiple factors are compared to arrive at a course of action which balance the relative importance of both the benefits and sacrifices of engaging in an act. This balancing of benefit and sacrifice has been one of the central strands within the work on the concept of value (Ng and Smith, 2012; Sanchez et al., 2009).

Negotiating Trade-Offs: Value

Woodall's (2003) synthesis of the various forms of value reveals its complexity and multidimensionality and provides a more holistic approach to the 'trade-off' perspective as largely cognitive, utilitarian evaluations of benefits versus sacrifices (Sanchez and Iniesta, 2007; Heskett *et al*., 1997), noting that whilst different forms of value can be identified which may exist independently, all forms will 'subordinate' to an overall view which accounts for both benefit and sacrifice across a number of dimensions of values. This concept of 'Net VC' classifies benefits both in terms of attributes and outcomes, and non-monetary as well as monetary sacrifices, and corresponds with much of the work on how customer value is realised.

However, there are two issues with this notion of trade-offs. Firstly, as Painter-Morland (2011) notes, the rationality employed in such utilitarian models is based on a number of spurious principles, including commensurability, aggregation and maximisation. Whilst it is likely that issues such as scaling and measurement are likely to be impossible, these principles also take no account of the personal and contextual factors that may inform how they experience value. Woodall (2003) further notes that the problem with Net VC as an evaluative tool is that consumers are unlikely to make such rational (or cognitive) appraisals. Indeed, such overall valuation processes are likely to be largely unconscious, and, as previously mentioned, the roles of affect and intuition may also be significant. Vargo and Lusch (2012) also note that value is *contextually specific* and contingent on the availability and integration of other resources; that is, that value is determined (or perhaps created) through integrative practices which are not 'simple' cognitive trade-offs, but embedded within the structures within which 'actors' exist, which themselves are both enabling and constraining. Indeed, practice is central to the debate, and it was argued previously that changing behaviours can mean changing ingrained and long-standing habits. Ng and Smith (2012) argue for a view of value which is characterised by a phenomenological practice of value creation for outcomes; that is, it is not 'perceived', but performed, with the object becoming an inherent element of the individual's social and cultural practices. They argue that this phenomenological view relates also to ethical and moral dimensions of value as the

'goodness' of the object is enacted by individuals and their values in their social and cultural practices; it is this perspective, therefore, which renders rational, cognitive approaches unlikely. Instead, Woodall (2003) suggests that an overall aggregate response may be more appropriate in which VC is developed over time through all of the customer's experiences by largely non-rational processes. This intuitive aggregation of factors over time may include incompatible values and may correspond with Dewey's (2008) notion of a unification of value that involves thought and synthesis, and which emerges through experience.

However, whilst many studies have examined *what* is valued by consumers and their values, few studies have sought to understand *how* consumers evaluate value, and this may provide insight into the trade-offs it is claimed exist in ethical consumption and it is therefore proposed that trade-offs may best be explored utilising a form of aggregated value for the customer or personal advantage which recognises the balance of benefits and sacrifices (whether they may be cognitive, affective or intuitive), and which may occur at different levels of action, practice and experience. However, the phenomenological perspective (and particularly for personal experiences) recognises the subjectivity of terms such as 'benefit' and 'sacrifice' and the pluralist view of value and values. These trade-offs should be considered in terms of how consumers *enact* value in their practices. The term enact as used by Ng and Smith (2012) is preferred here as it is an inherent part of the individual's practices, and may include the value the consumer expects to receive *ex ante* or derives *ex post*, although it is recognised that this level of experience may be largely sub-conscious.

Methodology and Methods

In response to criticisms levelled against both normative and relativist ethical positions but viewing the tolerance and contextuality that relativism affords as desirable, Hinman (2003) proposes ethical pluralism which holds that several moral standards may be relevant depending on the specific situation. Indeed, as Bauman (1993) argues, a universal, non-ambivalent and 'objectively founded' morality is a practical impossibility and there are complexities which characterise human and social life to which there are no ready solutions, but which lie in the power of individual and personal moral responsibility which require the 'reawakening' of the individual moral *conscience,* which is largely based on impulse. Pluralism recognises that individuals may have many standards of value, which may not necessarily be consistent with one another; it views a lack of compatibility and disagreement as being positive in helping understanding of how to arrive at a best course of action, without it amounting to a relativist position. A pluralist position therefore rejects a theory of non-

contradiction upon which typical rational logic is based, and may account for the inconsistent ways in which consumers may make trade-offs.

In discounting both absolutist and relativist moral perspectives, this pluralist rejection of the philosophical position of non-contradiction and arriving at common consciousness connects with the philosophical school of pragmatism; as Painter-Morland and ten Bos (2011) argue, pragmatism can provide: "…a generic approach from which 'a reasonable pluralism' may be shown to arise." (p41). Talisse (2012) also acknowledges the consistency between pragmatism and pluralism, as he notes that pragmatism is rooted in the practice of inquiry, and that an epistemological pluralism holds that moral knowledge is incomplete, but remains open to the prospect that it could be complete if further inquiry was to be undertaken. Also, Rorty (1984/1999) emphasises the relational aspect to values; value is assigned to things on the basis of their relationships to other people and things. Thus, studies need to account for the fluid and relational way in which trade-offs are negotiated, and to develop an alternative perspective on agency which goes beyond the subject as rational decision-maker making deliberate trade-offs.

This pluralist and pragmatist ontological position and phenomenological epistemology requires the use of particular methods for capturing the lived experiences of the subjects of research. For example, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) suggest personal narratives; stories of how the consumer consumes products to examine how the consumer interprets their consumption experiences. Likewise, Hobson (2006) notes that pragmatist theories emphasise experience, utilising interactionalist methods which attempt to work with everyday practices as they have occurred. Working at the level of personal narratives naturally leads to qualitative techniques; Kvale (1996) cites Rorty's emphasis on the constitution of knowledge through a conversation between people rather than each person re-presenting an objective world; knowing does not have an 'essence', and conversation is the context in which knowledge is understood. Twenty depth interviews were therefore conducted with ethically-aware and motivated informants, drawn from sustainability research groups in provincial UK universities. The sample was purposive to include relatively committed or 'convinced' ethical consumers; those who 'self-report' that ethics is an important issue in clothing consumption. In particular, the focus on value and the concept of the trade-offs are important, which as previously noted is a recurrent theme in previous research but one which remains underdeveloped. These trade-offs from a moral sense are only likely to exist for those who have some moral motivation. Access was gained through identifying and approaching those

responsible for sustainability research to gain access to lists of members, through the exploitation of personal networks, and through snowballing.

The purpose of the interviews was threefold. Firstly, to explore informants' sense of morality as consumers, and those moral issues which are particularly important for them; to explore how those moral issues are embedded in values, and finally to discover how value is evaluated or experienced from specific purchases and to consider the wider implications for ethical purchasing.

Adopting Alvesson and Sköldberg's (2000) 'reflexive interpretation', two dominant levels of interpretation were employed in analysis. Rejecting dominant 'recipe book' methodological approaches, they synthesise some of the benefits of data-oriented methods (such as grounded theory), hermeneutics, critical theory and postmodernism, noting that postmodern sociology and critical phenomenology are variants of reflective / reflexive research which constantly assesses knowledge and the ways of doing knowledge. This necessitates giving consideration to the way in which different analytic and theoretical elements are woven together in the process of knowledge development, during which empirical material is constructed, interpreted and written. Thus analysis followed an abductive approach broadly consistent with the type identified by Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) consisting of two primary stages as follows: the first phase was an intertextual analysis identified by Thompson (1997), which seeks to determine the factors or dimensions of value highlighted as significant for this group. For this initial stage a coding approach was taken, both inductively and deductively against each of the dimensions of the 'net value for the customer' framework (Woodall, 2003) using QSR Nvivo software. The second phase of analysis sought to place this understanding of value in the wider context of the research, by drawing on Thompson's (1997) hermeneutic model of meaning construction for interpreting consumption stories to develop an interpretation of why the benefits and sacrifices and their balancing are meaningful in the consumers' own perspectives and personal narratives.

Results

Informants

Twenty interviews were conducted in total with transcription and coding being undertaken as interviews were completed. The time expended allowed for time for 'immersion' in the transcripts to develop analysis. Each interview lasted for around one hour.

Each respondent was active in a sustainability-related research group at one of a number of Universities across the East Midlands of the United Kingdom, although the respondents were drawn from a wide variety of academic disciplines (some, perhaps naturally given the nature of sustainability issues, considered themselves to be cross-disciplinary). In line with a strategy of theoretical sampling, a mixture of people across different socio-demographic groups were included in the sample. By the twentieth interview it was apparent that 'theoretical saturation' had occurred; no new codes were emerging, further 'weight' was being given to the central themes, and central categories were becoming saturated (Strauss and Corbin, 1998); consequently an adequate absolute threshold had been reached, certainly in line with many recommendations about minimum sample sizes for qualitative interviewing (Cherrier, 2005, Kvale, 1996, Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Intertextual Analysis: Significant Dimensions of Value

The codes that were developed and their initial relationships can be seen in figures 1 and 2. The first shows the codes developed under the Net VC framework, whilst the second shows the codes related to other dimensions which were inductively developed.

Figure 1: Codes Resulting from A-Priori / Open Coding: Net Value for the Customer

1	Benefits		Sacrifices	
2	Attributes	Outcomes	Monetary	Non-monetary
3	Goods quality	Financial benefits	Price	Time
3	Service quality	Social benefits	Acquisition costs	Effort
4	Returns and repair	Impact	-	Learning new skills
4	Personal service	Projecting self-image	-	Search
4	-	Validation / approval	-	-
3	Core product feats.	Personal benefits	Costs of use	Psychological costs
4	Colour	Belonging	-	Dissatisfaction
4	Durability	Ethical concerns	-	Dissonance
4	Fair Trade	Feeling good	-	-
4	Fit	Health	-	-
4	Function	Satisfaction	-	-
4	Local	-	-	-
4	Location of manufacture	-	-	-
4	Material	-	-	-
4	Organic	-	-	-
4	Recycled	-	-	-
4	Style	-	-	-
3	Added service feats.	Practical benefits	-	Relationship costs
4	-	-	-	Family
4	-	-	-	Subjective norms

The other codes developed through the first stage of open coding can be broadly clustered under five themes; buying practices, context, ethical concerns, power and values. Codes displayed in the header row below were structured as 'parent' codes to those underneath.

Figure 2: Inductive Codes

Buying practices	Context	Ethical concerns	Power	Values
Attitude to clothes shopping	Austerity	Animal rights	Influencing company behaviour	Self-direction
Decision process	Children	Bounded rationality	Influencing others	Stimulation
Cognition	Differentiator	Charity	Lack of power	Hedonism
Habit	Difference	Lack of ethical motivator	Responsibility	Achievement
Availability	Education	Local	-	Power
Awareness	Family	Mainstreaming ethics	-	Security
Knowledge	Friends - peers	Obligation	-	Conformity
Labelling	Life change	Sustainability	-	Tradition
Publicity	Self-identity	Buying less	-	Benevolence
Charity shops	Shared values	Economic sustainability	-	Universalism
Context	Upbringing	Environmental sustainability	-	-
Disposal	Work role	Social sustainability	-	-
Repair	- Work-based motivation	Waste	-	-
Emotion - mood	-	Lack of consideration of ethics	-	-
Retailer examples	-	Scepticism	-	-
Trade-offs	-		-	-

This iterative process of open and axial coding began to immediately raise theoretical directions and insights as natural groupings and linkages started to take shape; certainly there emerged elements in the 'value equation' in relation to key dimensions and how they impact purchasing decisions. Core product features were extremely significant, with style, function, material, durability and goods quality referenced numerous times, along with social benefits (and projecting self-image in particular). Price and psychological costs also appeared to be significant elements of value, along with effort to a slightly lesser degree.

However, issues arose around some wider concerns; especially whether everything should be classified under the Net VC framework. Certainly there were elements of proposed benefit and sacrifice which were emerging under other codes; the issue of 'self-identity', for example, is a key contextual factor, but could be either benefit or sacrifice depending on how this 'played out' with specific purchases. Likewise, ethical concerns could be classified as potential benefit if they were to be realised. Also, it was not always clear whether a factor should be considered a benefit or a sacrifice. For example, something which required effort could be seen as a sacrifice, but similarly respondents talked about convenience as a benefit and whilst a principle of minimisation as benefit and maximisation as sacrifice seems intuitively a sensible state of affairs, it highlights tensions between 'tight' definitions and categorisations.

Other clear themes emerged. The notion of 'context' (related to the notion of personal narratives) including self-identity, upbringing and life changes were oft-recurring themes

which appear to be extremely significant, as did the categories of habit. However, it was at this stage of the open coding where no new codes were emerging and further weight was being given to those which were emerging as being significant. The next stage was therefore to refine these themes, with the aim of producing a hermeneutic model through which a deeper level of analysis could occur. The aim was not to produce a definitive central category and theoretical scheme, but to identify the consumption meanings conveyed by the texts as an aid to an intertextual process of identifying hermeneutic themes to explore patterns and differences across the interviews. Essentially, the codes acted as the 'notes in the margins' of the transcripts, following which the 'part-whole' movement was therefore continued in the analysis by re-reading the texts in light of the emerging issues to identify new insights.

Hermeneutic Analysis of Value Meaning Construction

As previously noted, Thompson's (1997: 440-441) model of consumer meaning construction was used as an initial hermeneutic device. The model (see figure 3) consists of six structural elements which have been adapted for this context based on the coding exercise:

Figure 3: A hermeneutic model of value meaning construction (adapted from Thompson, 1997: 440)
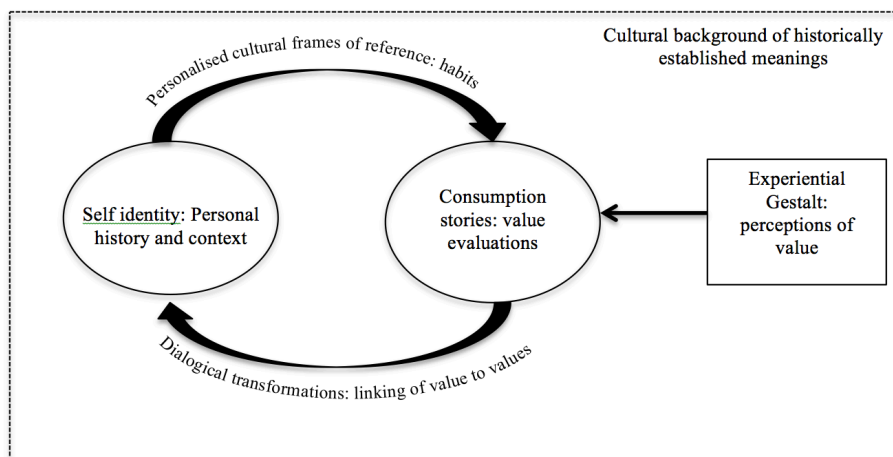
1. *Self-identity: personal history and context*. A broader narrative of self-identity contextualises this perspective to give meaning to life events. The analysis revealed self-identity (and its communication) to be a central thematic category, giving weight to this element of the model. Connected to this, **values, upbringing** and **life changes** were also significant themes.
2. *A cultural background of historically established meanings* provide the context for these personal history narratives. This provides the social categories, folk knowledge and

interpretive frames of reference from which self-identity is constructed. Aspects of **upbringing** were relevant here, along with other cultural and social references, through which an overall desire to consume less as a result of financial prudence inherited from family was the overriding concern.

3. *Personalised cultural frames of reference* include the many relational forms through which a consumer's cultural background and the personal meanings they give rise to are constructed. Here purchasing habits are a salient category of 'cultural capital' which characterise consumer meanings and behaviour in this study. These result in…

4. *Interpreted meanings of value (consumption stories),* which express a dialectical relationship between the social conditions mentioned above and identity issues salient to the consumer. These are played out through the consumption stories described in the interviews, and the value evaluations in which they were manifest.

5. *Experiential Gestalt: perceptions of value* directly influence the interpreted meanings above; with the consumers' perceptions of their experiences framing their sense-making. Again, the language of value characterises much of this framing.

6. *Dialogical transformations*; the model positions consumers as self-narrators who selectively highlight particular dimensions of the consumption events they experience, the stories about which impose a meaningful historical order onto their life events. This is where the concept of value and its linking to higher order values comes into play in terms of the broader life narrative to which these consumption experience contribute. It is here that the lines between benefit and sacrifice and value and values become blurred.

In relation to these final two points the analysis reveals that a complex picture emerges from the informants' consumption practices, relating to a host of identity, knowledge, affective, cognitive and practice-based factors. In attempting to understand the multiple dimensions which constitute value for this group, the Net VC provided a useful framework on which to 'hang' some of the salient issues, but it was also limiting in dealing with the myriad of concerns, habits, and identities rooted in individuals' evaluations as a basis for practice. There is, indeed, limited evidence that informants take an exclusively rational, cognitive approach to value evaluation, although there were isolated incidents of this type of approach. Even where there was some rational, cognitive 'niceness / price' evaluation, the role of affect and hedonism (*'I have to have it'*) was also evident. Similarly, one respondent's 'cost per wear' calculations were also overlain by a hedonistic enjoyment of shopping. However, there are issues revealed by the analysis in relation to the application of the model.

Firstly, the distinction between benefit and sacrifice was not always so clear cut as noted above. Even price, which might be considered to be one of the most immutable sacrifices, could operate as a benefit, either in positive perceptions related to quality, or in terms of making 'donations' where positive purchasing was sometimes seen as a form of charitable giving. Similarly, whilst ethically produced clothes had the potential to provide benefit for the informants engaged in positive purchasing, questions around initiatives such as fair trade or problems with style and identity could be viewed as sacrifices. Similarly, in the same way informants' avoidance of particular brands could be seen as sacrifice, it could also be seen as a personal and/or social benefit in terms of the avoidance of guilt or projecting a particular image to others.

Secondly, there is a question of whether 'personal benefits' adequately account for the complex identities and personal histories at stake. As noted by one respondent in the following passage, despite a key identity issue of normally being a 'careful' shopper and one of the most-sustainability-motivated informants in the sample, sometimes there was not actually much 'trading off' in a rational, utilitarian sense to be done, but an acknowledgement that sometimes identity provided the greatest 'pull'. Thirdly, what emerges is that the behaviours are highly context-specific, and often contradictory. This does not validate the existence of an 'attitude-behaviour' gap *per se*, but a complex series of rationalisations for engaging in particular acts. The respondent went on to say:

> *I would get an organic t-shirt rather than an ordinary one, but then, you know, organic's got its problems as well, so again there's this compromise isn't there... But what I will do is I'll sometimes buy more expensive clothes... so a lot of these things that actually sound like terrible things that women would do, like going to the sales and buying really expensive stuff, are actually, – these kinds of sustainability things in disguise!*

This (stated) behaviour of reducing the amount of consumption but increasing spend is justified as sustainable behaviour; there is no 'gap' between saying or thinking 'x' and doing 'y'. Another informant adopted a similar strategy, again for a hedonic impulse purchase, albeit one which had its roots in a deeper personal history. Another respondent also discussed how she attempted to address some of her ethical concerns in buying clothes for the children, but in this case the dissonance that arises from purchases perceived to be less ethical is justified by the acknowledgement by the boycott of another retailer.

So for example, I buy sweaters for the kids there [Lidl] *because they have some*
from recycled bottles which they turn into sweaters. So I think they have tried a
little bit. But I find it so unpleasant to also shop somehow because I don't feel fully
comfortable with what is on offer. And then I feel like I'm neglecting all my values
because I already have problems to find something which fits me. And then I don't
feel so comfortable I am neglecting all my other values which I really would
normally find important... And I try to really… for example, I boycott Tesco
already since a long time because I don't think they…I think they're exploiting
suppliers and so on.

Fourth, some distinction could be drawn between cognitive and affective aspects of consumers' decision making, with post-purchase rationalisations often lying behind more affective or hedonistic buying decisions. Whilst conative aspects are significant, but within this there are questions around whether purchases were purposive or intuitive. Informants described issues around trade-offs when speaking hypothetically about their attitudes, preferences and behaviours, but examples given of purchases in the consumption stories often carried much less detail. The discussion will draw on some of these consumption stories to illustrate.

Discussion

The role of values in relation to consumer trade-offs: endless ends, prudence and morality
It was suggested earlier, drawing on moral norm theory that values are considered an important determinant of behaviour, both in relation to the achievement of 'end states' of being (Schwartz, 1994) and the value that is correspondingly not only derived from products and services which facilitate achievement of those end states (Gutman, 1982), but also in relation to their contribution to the achievement of identity goals (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) and therefore character and virtues (Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriquez-Lluesma, 2014; Shaw *et al.*, 2000). As with pluralist (Hinman, 2003) and postmodern (Bauman, 1993) perspectives, the interviews revealed that in discussing particular purchases different value orientations appeared to be important (especially values of universalism, benevolence and tradition), but they also interact and sometimes contradict, although the notion of values *conflicts* was infrequently expressed.

Furthermore, the interviews revealed three key dimensions of values as they relate to ethical consumption; the historical establishment of values, the 'ordering' and prioritisation or

'trading off' of values, and thirdly the role of values in achieving various end states. Firstly, it was noted that values were often expressed as having been passed through family. As Grønhøj and Thøgerson (2009) find, there are significant relationships between parents and children across all values domains. They find this is especially true of pro-environmental attitudes. Whilst this study would support the intergenerational influence of values, this was never explicitly expressed in terms of pro-environmental behaviours. Rather, universal values linked to sustainability were more often couched in a broader history of a love of the outdoors and nature, which often invoked 'romanticised' stories of childhood, or even more in security-driven values of having been brought up in households that were careful with money, and the 'avoidance of waste' was a key determinant of behaviour.

Secondly, just as values do not appear to be 'ordered' in hierarchical form as suggested by Jägel *et al.* (2012), they neither appear to be 'traded off' in the sense that one value must be compromised in favour of another as suggested by Devinney *et al.* (2010) and Auger *et al.* (2003). Informants rarely spoke of value conflicts, except in relation to the very contextually-specific utilitarian decision making at the micro-level within narrow areas of concern. Indeed, there persisted a level of ease and comfort generally that each individual's values were 'upheld' through their clothing purchases. In explaining this, it is worth turning to pragmatist philosophy, and in particular two dimensions of values and valuation.

Firstly, in challenging the notion of an 'ordering' of values as espoused in much of the consumption literature (Jägel *et al.*, 2012; Paul *et al.*, 2009; Kahle and Kennedy, 1988), and secondly, their contribution to the achievement of a variety of 'end states', Rorty (1999) advocates the relational view of moral values, and also acknowledges the roles of parentage and relational family ties in developing a moral sense by what comes naturally. He argues that, as Dewey observed the boundaries of the self are 'fuzzy and flexible', and other philosophers deal with that 'fuzziness' by arguing that the boundaries are fixed by viewing the self as being constituted by preference rankings. Moral obligation is then contrasted with preferences. This notion of 'preference ranking' could be likened to the ordering of values discussed previously, whereas the pragmatist view would question the sense in a person acting against their own preferences, and instead recognises that the boundaries of the self are flexible. As Painter-Morland (2011) notes, moral development is a process of constant renegotiation of the self in relation to a changing network of people, relationships and things. Therefore, the concept of 'trading off', 'balancing' (Jagel *et al.*, 2012) or ordering values becomes redundant; values are the result of relationships developed over time, and which

emerge, despite also having a history (Painter-Morland, 2011). Rorty's (1999) analogy is that moral values development resembles the sewing together of a large, complex polychromatic quilt; in the context of this study, this would explain the informants' failure to express complications arising from having to prioritise one moral value over another, or conflicts arising in purchasing from having compromised values; as the pragmatists suggest, values are just not seen in this way.

With regard to the role of values in achieving 'end states' and therefore contributing to value, whilst the values which guide action were expressed in particular ways there was little evidence of their role as consistently guiding individuals to 'absolute' ends. It was suggested previously by Devinney *et al.* (2010) a view of values which sees them as immutable would require in changing consumer behaviour ' a religious conversion of sorts'. However, a pragmatist view of values *would* see them as changing and changeable (Tiles, 1990), and whilst they are connected to 'ends', the ends do not subconsciously guide action; as Painter-Morland (2011) argues, Dewey's pragmatism allows for the construction of ends with individuals' personal and contextual circumstances, similar to the reciprocal determination of ends which are entrenched in habits (Anderson, 2014), which are a more likely representation of the changing and contradictory nature of values. Similar to Schatzki's (1997) conception of teleoaffectivity (the idea that actions are governed by orientations towards ends, with the affective dimension recognising there is no 'single' end), Dewey therefore refers to 'ends in view' rather than 'absolute' end states, but for pragmatists, means and ends are 'reciprocally determined'. That is, the 'end' cannot be completely conceived until one understands what it is that one must do to arrive at it. However, aims can only become ends or aims when the actual conditions for their realisation have been worked out. Both of these factors (ends in view, and the conditions for realisation) are a natural part of an ever-shifting experience of value. Thus, practical judgement is creative and transformative in continuously reshaping new ends. In examining this in the context of some of the consumption stories revealed in the study, it is necessary to consider Rorty's (1999) explanation of Dewey's distinction between prudence and morality.

According to Rorty (1999), 'prudence' is related to concepts such as 'habit' and 'custom'; routine behaviours which require little thought and are for the most part instinctive and action is guided by 'what comes naturally', as identified by many of the practice theorists (such as Hargreaves, 2011, and Warde, 2005). Morality comes into play when one is unable to do what comes naturally; when routine is no longer good enough. As there is no distinction between

what is good (teleological principles) and what is right (deontological principles); the distinction between prudence and morality is a question of the degree of need for conscious deliberation, and when these value judgements are enacted, they are tested in practice and re-evaluated (Anderson, 2014). This appears to be at work in this study in the following ways:

Firstly, purchasing behaviour was entirely driven by habit and custom; informants identified a relatively small 'repertoire' of preferred retailers which were negotiated over the years and engrained in custom and practice. Where the retailer 'set' had changed, this was often in response to some life change. As Appiah (2006) argues, justifications of our acts are typically made after what has been intuitively decided, and that intuition is a product of upbringing and lived experience, and engaging in justifications (or reasoning) only happens in thinking about change. There is convincing evidence in this study that the same is also true in consumption. That is, individuals are engaged in clothing consumption practices that emerge from a lifetime of learning, experience and identity pressures, and which changed in relation to life changes, whether these are 'concrete' (such as moving to a new country or acquiring a new job), or self-perceived (such as an individually-held perception that one is 'maturing' or physically changing). Thus, the retailer set frequented by the respondents was relatively stable, and only changed when new 'styles' or brand identities were required in response to life changes.

These principles can be seen at work in three examples of purchases of coats; Sarah's Barbour jacket, Daphne's (attempted) purchase of a winter coat and Meryl's coat from Marks and Spencer:

> *Well, I knew that I've seen this one in Marks & Spencer so I went back to the Mark*
> *& Spencer in Birmingham. I didn't really look at any other coats. I just liked a*
> *particular coat maybe that I'd seen.* (Meryl)

Here, Meryl's routine (prudence) is clearly at work. Her historical purchasing at Marks and Spencer, desire for quality (based in her own long-standing career in the clothing industry) is instinctive, requiring little conscious deliberation. Her values are embedded in long-standing and routine habit. Indeed, this characterised much of Meryl's purchasing, along with many others in the sample. The act of evaluating the coat here for Meryl cannot really be undertaken until she knows how the coat will function as a means in the future in relation to specific circumstances, at which point the desired 'ends' may have changed and habits may have changed accordingly. Whether the ends sought are intrinsic or instrumental is only a

function of how an individual regards something at the time. (Anderson, 2014). Contrast this with Daphne's search for a coat:

> *I think yeah, it's time to replace my winter jacket but I have been going to stores and trying to find a good winter jacket that could last longer than 5 years actually. I take time to make that decision - two months now… probably about 20 stores but I do go back because you know, especially in some stores like Benetton that I know I could find a good winter jacket, they normally bring more jackets towards December and January… I know it's very difficult to get one that is completely water proof [but] I saw one that was really, really nice in this store called Geox which is I think an Italian store, I don't know but it was like about £300 and I said well, it's very nice, it's a proper winter jacket but it's not really a jacket that in the UK we will be using that often because that winter jacket is for minus 10 degrees. I said I should buy something more for the weather for the UK. What I'm trying to find is something that the material could kind of repel the water, has a hoody, and a kind that I could use for informal and formal events, so something that I could use for everything. The things I have been finding are nice looking and I could use for formal and informal things but the quality is not really good like Zara, several times I always had problems with zippers. I tried to zip it up and the zipper was not good enough or it was already kind of broken and I go with my husband and he started telling me, "You have to buy something with this quality, that is good looking…" blah, blah, so he was just like this constant fighting so I just tend not to buy anything.*

Here there is a clear cognitive dimension to Daphne's (as yet still to be undertaken) purchase. As Anderson (2014) explains, the appraisal of something is to judge it in relation to the means required to attain it, and consequently appraisal is fundamentally about means. However, as Daphne explains here, the cost of *acquiring* the thing she really wants is too high, and her evaluation of the brand she valued previously in relation to its perceived quality problems has led to her valuing it less. She also makes a number of projections about the length of time she expects it to last (important in relation to her stated ethical principles), and the weather conditions under which the coat will be needed. Further, the purchase has led to the causation of arguments with her husband, so her appraisal of the jacket as a means and the relational dimension to this has further influenced her devaluing it as an end to the extent that she decides not to buy it at all. Here the procrastination could be seen as habitual, with the reasons for non-purchase a rationalisation of this habitual prudence, where 'prudence' is a routine way of responding to circumstance (Rorty, 1999). Further, the act of evaluating the coat here for Daphne cannot really be undertaken until she knows *how* the coat will function as a means in

the future in relation to specific circumstances; particular weather conditions, the actual durability of the coat and so on, at which point the desired 'ends' may have changed and her habits may have changed accordingly. Finally, Sarah discussed her purchase of a coat, which was not strictly habitual but also required less conscious deliberation, and reveals another dimension of this view of valuation:

> *I bought a Barbour a couple of years ago, and I thought, 'this makes sense to me on so many levels. This is going to be a garment for life.' It does the job. It's built for rainy days, that's the whole purpose of it. They can repair it. You can re-wax it. I have re-waxed it myself – I didn't do it very well, but... So that appeals to me on several grounds, not just ethical grounds, because they're made in UK, aren't they? I think. I'm fairly sure they are.... Ah! I don't know. I'm fairly sure.... Anyway, that appeals to me - it is made in UK... this is a garment for life. You'd spend a lot of money on it. But it's lovely thinking that's it, and it's a lovely coat. It does the job. And I like the colour, it's dark green. And therefore it's.... It was just this is going to last me a lifetime and that really appealed to me.*

As before, Sarah's evaluation of the coat cannot be undertaken until she enacts its use; she may discover they are not made in the UK, her tastes in colour may change, she may not want it to last forever; the job of rewaxing may become too expensive or time-consuming… at which point the desired 'ends' may have changed and her habits may have changed accordingly. However, the passage above takes on a different meaning when contextualised against something Sarah revealed later in the interview:

> *It's actually an impulse buy (laughter). We were just…my husband and I were in John Lewis one day and I said, 'Oh, look, a Barbour.' And I sort of at the back of my mind always wanted one because I knew someone years ago who had one and we lived in Wales so it was continuously chucking it down with rain. And they had Barbour coats and I remember thinking, 'I really want to have one, they look good.' And I saw a Barbour, 'Oh, they really look nice.' And I tried one on. And my husband says, 'Well, that really suits you.' I said, 'It does. I like this.' (Laughter) And I knew a bit about the brand, anyway, Barbour, the fact that it is meant to be for life; it is a lifetime garment, and it really appealed to me. I just thought, 'Great.'*

This further passage reveals the roles of both routinised behaviour (shopping in John Lewis), the roles of relational others and history in shaping the self ('them' in Wales) and the justification of the stated values to be enacted (made in the UK, last a lifetime, looks good) after the fact.

Thus, as Dewey (In Anderson, 2014) suggests, ethical evaluation is not against the 'end' or some supreme principle as in much of the means-end perpsectives (Jägel *et al.*, 2012; Gutman, 1982), but in identifying a method for improving or explaining value judgements, especially when actions seem 'out of place' or are questioned. Seeing the role of values in driving ethical consumption in this way reveals it to be less of case of having a particular state of being as an end goal or a 'thing' with a set of associated principles which drive behaviour which is then evaluated as 'successful' or 'unsuccessful'. Instead, as Giddens (1991) has argued in relation to identity, it should be seen as a 'life project' which can be seen in the justification of habits and constantly re-evaluated, renegotiated and rehabitualised as individuals engage in practice.

Everything flows: value evaluations and consummatory experience
It was argued earlier that the overall perception of value is more likely to be represented by an aggregation (Woodall, 2003), deriving from and governing practices based on tacit knowledge and lacking in conscious reflection (Helkkula *et al.*, 2012), and delivering phenomenological value (Ng and Smith, 2012). This aggregate perspective of value (suggested as a form of 'personal advantage') takes into account all of the factors relevant at any particular time. In doing so, it draws on the past and sees ahead into the future and recognises the balance of benefits and sacrifices (whether cognitive, affective or intuitive), and which may occur at different levels of action, practice and experience. This perspective recognises the phenomenological and plural perspectives, the subjectivity of the consumer and the fluid nature of value enacted in practice (Dewey, in Gouinlock, 1994).

The analysis supports this plural and fluid nature of value, and it was highlighted that although there is evidence of utilitarian and cognitive decision-making at the micro-level, the notion of a trade-off is perhaps more fluid and ambiguous than a clearly demarcated set of benefits and sacrifices. Additionally, valuation tends to be more subconscious or intuitive ante-post, with justifications made for behaviours ex-post. However, there is no 'absolute truth' in the form of a value to be realised. In searching for an explanation of the factors that are at play in this phenomenon, it is worth revisiting the pragmatist responses discussed earlier in relation to Rorty's (1999) perspectives on truth and justification.

As Rorty (1999) argues there is no connection between justification and truth; any member of a community will be able to provide a justification of his or her beliefs to that community, but it does not mean that the beliefs he or she is best able to justify are those that are 'true', nor

least able to justify those that are false. Justification and inquiry are activities people engage in, but there does not need to be a goal of 'truth'; beliefs are set by subjective phenomenological motivations: "…the *only* point in contrasting the true with the merely justified is to contrast a possible future with the actual present." (Rorty, 1999: 38-39). Likewise, there is no objective standard of a 'good' ethical consumption expressed by these informants, nor, indeed is there any agreement on what this might look like. Even those things which are often treated as 'objective' ethical standards such as organic and fair trade were called into question as part of justifications for their absence in consumption patterns, nor is it likely that any members of a community would be able to agree on what an ideal level of consumption would be, despite the attempts by the majority of the informants to reduce their own. This process of justification may then involve the critical reworking and co-creation of commercial meanings to serve an individual's identity goals (Thompson *et al.*, 2013).

Similarly, there is no best 'value' to which such ethical concerns might contribute. The myriad of identity concerns, values, habits, benefits, sacrifices and the 'fuzziness' between them appears to be aggregated into an overall sense of 'personal advantage' which is developed over time as a result of lived experience and entrenched in habits, for which justification is then offered (to oneself or the community with which one is engaged) after the fact. Indeed, as Luedicke *et al.* (2010: 1030) argue, moral narratives can be employed to justify particular status distinctions, regardless of the perceived 'authenticity' of the moral claim. However, the resulting experience, as with the notion of an *aggregate* value, can also be identified within pragmatist thought. As defined by Dewey, these types of experience are *consummatory*'; they possess a concluding unity which: "…possesses a single quality that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts." (Dewey, in Gouinlock, 1994: 76). This unity is expressed in the name given to experiences, or in this case, purchases: 'that' meal; 'that' coat, and it is not emotional, cognitive or behavioural, for these labels separate distinctions of elements within the experience that do not capture its unity. However: "In going over an experience in mind after its occurrence, we may find that one property rather than another was sufficiently dominant so that it characterises the experience as a whole." (*Ibid*).

Woodall (2003) further asks the question of how, in a hypothetical consumption situation, an individual would reflect ex-post upon the experience, and which aspect of value would dominate; the evidence presented here is in accordance with Woodall's proposal for an aggregate form of value for the customer (expressed rationally or intuitively), which also

takes into account past experiences. Woodall represents this as a Rubik's cube, with the positions of the different colours (forms of value) around the cube representing their importance in different time frames. This corresponds well with Rorty's (1999) conception of the polychrome quilt discussed earlier, and the notion of moral choice being about 'competing goods' (rather than an objective 'right' and 'wrong'). Within this, it is proposed that benefits and sacrifices are seen as not opposing ends of a continuum or equation, but in a way that they cannot be seen as being independent from each other, borrowing from Quantum Theory, they are 'entangled'. That is, the dimension can be seen as both benefit or sacrifice, depending on who is undertaking the evaluation and when.

However, a Rubik's cube can be manipulated in a sequence to arrive at a definite answer, and although a polychrome quilt can be enlarged and continuously added to, once it is sewn it becomes a fixed object. Due to the 'fuzziness', fluidity and pluralistic and overlapping nature of the dimensions that make up the cube or quilt, and the 'entanglement' of benefit and sacrifice, the is best represented as a series of overlapping shapes which in its totality at any particular moment in time represents a form of 'aggregated personal advantage' which exists as a justification of behaviour and which can be called into question in considering change. As Bourdieu (1992) argues, thoughts and actions are governed by a small number of 'generative principles' which are polysemic; both closely interrelated and constituted into a practically-oriented whole which is dichotomously characterised not only by a coherence, but also a 'fuzziness'. To this, the notion of fluidity and constantly shifting priorities and influencing factors could be added. Thus, value would not resemble a static diagram, but a series of constantly shifting and morphing shapes as in a psychedelic animation or a lava lamp. Lava lamps are characterised by a series of rising and sinking 'globules', or shapes, which give an effect of continuously shifting patterns. Each shape in the lava lamp represents the different forms and dimensions of value derived, with the relative size demonstrating their relative importance. There is no distinction between benefit and sacrifice, although both of those notions exist. Likewise, there is no distinction between 'moral' value and overall value; they are inherently morphed together and from each other and synchronous within the overall decision. A price which represents 'good value' should not be seen as a sacrifice, for example. Likewise, if the working conditions of the factory workers who made the garment are important, this would be included as a part of the formation inside the lamp, the size of the 'bubble' conveying its importance if ex-ante, or its evaluation ex-post. The lava inside the lamp would continuously shift, acknowledging the emergence of 'endless ends', and reflecting the myriad of concerns and issues.

This study therefore adds two further dimensions to the debate on ethical consumption. Firstly it is argued that value is an appropriate means to explain the 'trade-offs' that are claimed to exist in ethical consumption. Secondly, rather than conceptualising these trade-offs as much of the literature suggests as rational, cognitive and utilitarian evaluations, it is suggested they emerge in practice as a form of aggregate personal advantage or *consummation* which, significantly, is framed largely as justification after the fact. Value and ethics as a dimension of it cannot be seen in cause and effect relationships or cognitive trade-offs; rather, a pragmatist reading highlights the complexity of the *emergence* of aggregate value, with its influences in personal histories, habituation and, to some degree, peer pressure which push individuals towards ends in view. The notion of an 'emergent moral value for the individual' is perhaps what characterises this best.

Conclusion

This group of consumers are not involved in deliberative rational trade-offs in the pursuit of a limited set of values, nor is ethical consumption a 'myth' as suggested at the beginning of this paper. Rather, constantly morphing practices and life stories are evident, which contain within them complex, but repetitive patterns of preferences, morals, values, desires, identities and relationships which change in response to life changes and 'ends in view'. These can be likened to Rorty's (1999) conception of values as a polychrome quilt, although the 'psychedelic' effect within a lava lamp perhaps better represents Bourdieu's (1992) conception of a number of dimensions evident here which are polysemic; both closely interrelated and constituted into a practically-oriented whole which is characterised by both a coherence and a 'fuzziness', and also overlain by a fluidity.

In terms of the act of valuation, the study finds that perception of value is represented by an overall form of aggregate personal advantage, which lacks conscious reflection and delivers a phenomenological form of value rooted in habits; this characterisation reflects Dewey's representation of unified value as 'consummatory experience'; "…a single quality that pervades entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts." (Dewey, in Gouinlock, 1994: 76). This takes place in the context of ends in view which emerge through experience. These relationships can be seen in figure 4, in which fluid forms of value exist within the 'consummation', which emerge as individuals practice habitual behaviours pulled towards ends in view which are shaped by identity, and as a result of which habits may

change as individuals engage in arriving at value judgements or in response to new ends in view. The cycle is then repeated as individuals engage in practice, call value judgements into question (in response to evaluations of value, in response to life changes or in justifying beliefs to audiences) and reengage in practice.

Figure 4: Consumption as consummatory experience
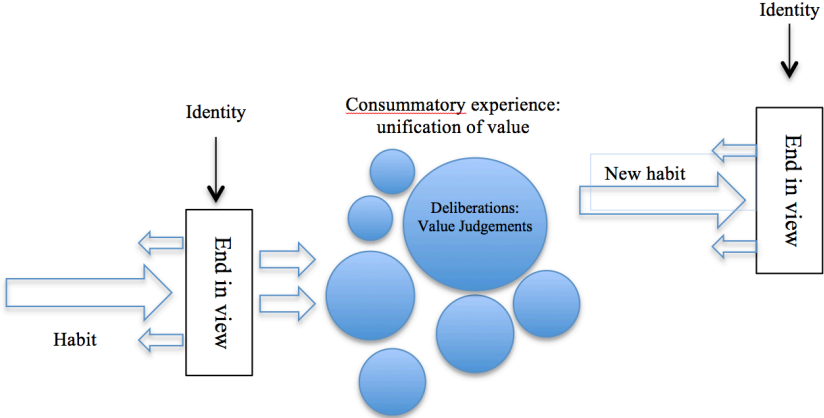
This study therefore employs pragmatist thinking to move the discussion around ethical consumption on from a negatively framed narrative of trading-off, sacrificing and inefficiency which subscribes to a scientific epistemology of non-contradiction, to one of practicing, prioritising competing goods, and justifying behaviours. In doing so, it recognises the postmodern and relativist nature of the moral and consumer context, whilst addressing the problems for action associated with it. Its central contribution is to frame the role of morality in consumption as consummatory experience; a unification of value that takes place in the context of an end in view, and which continuously merges flows of experiences and habituation.

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