

An examination of the engagement of UK universities with Fairtrade and the Fairtrade University Award.

Danielle Megan Foster

I certify that this dissertation is entirely my own work and no part of it has been submitted for a degree or other qualification in this or another institution. I also certify that I have not collected data nor shared data with another candidate at Exeter University or elsewhere without specific authorization.

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Fairtrade Foundation (2017) – who we are
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Abstract

Over one hundred and seventy universities in the United Kingdom (UK) have signed up to the Fairtrade University Award. This Award entails universities instating a formal Fairtrade policy, using Fairtrade products, and running campaigns and events to promote Fairtrade. As of yet, no academic insights into how engagement with Fairtrade plays out in the context of universities have been published. This dissertation aims to address this by exploring the value of Fairtrade to university students in the UK and the relationship between Fairtrade and universities, through and apart from the Award. A mixed method approach was employed combining one hundred and fifty-two online questionnaire responses with data gathered during five telephone interviews. The study found that students value Fairtrade positively, with understandings akin to its key goals, but perceive of cost, inaccessibility of products, and lack of information as hindering their engagement.

Disengagement with Fairtrade's political core appears to be prevalent. This is mimicked in the Fairtrade University Award structure whereby Fairtrade is framed in terms of sustainability objectives. A number of recommendations are made to enhance the impact of Fairtrade within universities. Since these are based on evidence from limited universities, further research in this area is recommended.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Fair trade and Fairtrade

The term 'fair trade' refers to a range of efforts focused on creating "a more sustainable and socially just future" (Murray and Reynolds, 2007, pp. 4), as well as those with alternative ideological perspectives (Marshall, 2016). Most frequently, however, the fair trade movement is understood in the former sense, and subsequently constitutes one attempt to address the inequalities wrought by globalization (Jaffee, 2014) by promoting trade that seeks to ensure "social justice and poverty reduction" (Marshall, 2016, pp. 15). Fairtrade certification, as distinct from the use of the term 'fair trade', has emerged from this movement (Bennett, 2012). In the United Kingdom (UK) the Fairtrade label is licensed by the Fairtrade Foundation (McEachern, 2014) which describes the vision of the Fairtrade system as:

"A world in which all small producers and workers can enjoy secure and sustainable livelihoods, fulfil their potential and decide on their future."

The Fairtrade Foundation, 2009, pp. 8

This vision is pursued through three long-term goals that involve (1) making trade fairer, (2) empowering small producers and workers, and (3) fostering sustainable livelihoods (Fairtrade Foundation, 2009). The Fairtrade Foundation has traditionally promoted Fairtrade with a market orientation, through the production and distribution of Fairtrade labeled products, and also as a political movement, established on the principles of demanding trade practices that are more beneficial, or less harmful, to developing country farmers (Murlebach, 2016).

1.2 'Fairtrade Universities'

More recently, the Fairtrade Foundation has expanded its national campaigning scope to include Fairtrade accredited initiatives such as Fairtrade towns, cities, schools, and universities (Barnett et al., 2005; Fairtrade Schools, 2017 and Samuel, 2013). Fairtrade universities are those that have made a public declaration to support Fairtrade through signing up to

the Fairtrade University Award. They commit to Fairtrade through awareness-raising, events, political campaigning and their procurement practices, with universities setting internal goals to build upon their efforts over time (Fairtrade Foundation, 2017). The ongoing commitment involves university staff, academic staff, and students; and, despite the differences in universities' individual goals, is based on the premise of maximising the popularity of Fairtrade and its impact on the lives of farmers in the developing world.

Despite the popularity of the Award, with over 170 universities in the UK having now acquired 'Fairtrade status' (Fairtrade Foundation, 2017), the broad implications of this structure have yet to be researched. This corresponds with little academic research which explores the relationship between the fair trade movement and universities in the UK, and an underdeveloped understanding of the role of ethical and political consumption more broadly within universities. Through understanding how students engage with Fairtrade, and the implications of the Fairtrade University Award, there is the potential to adapt and seek to improve the structure that exists between universities and the Fairtrade Foundation, enhancing the impact of Fairtrade.

This research attempts to contribute to this end, bridging an understanding of the relationship between fair trade/Fairtrade and universities in the UK. It will do so by analysing information gathered through a mixed-methods approach with university students and staff. In the data collection stage "Fairtrade" as the trademark will be referred to, entailing the preference of symbolising the registered and recognisable certification label. However, respondents within the data collection may not necessarily distinguish between "Fairtrade" as a brand and "fair trade" as a movement. Throughout the discussion of findings both concepts will be employed due to prevalence of the term 'fair trade' in the literature.

1.3 Specific Research Questions

This study aims to understand the value of the fair trade movement and the role of the Fairtrade University Award within the Higher Education sector in

the UK. To achieve this overarching aim, three questions will be asked:

- 1- What is the value of Fairtrade and the fair trade movement to University students in the UK?
- 2- What is the relevance of Fairtrade to and the role of Fairtrade University Award within universities?
- 3- How can the relationship between Fairtrade and universities evolve?

1.3 Anticipated Outcomes

In answering these research questions, this study contributes to the academic literature regarding an understanding of UK students' engagement with Fairtrade in the context of debates surrounding the wider movement.

Focusing on Fairtrade also aids an analysis of the role of ethical and political consumption and political activism within universities. Practical implications involve revealing the perceived scope to drive social change through support for Fairtrade within universities, highlighting to practitioners the opportunities that exist for the promotion of, or campaigning for, Fairtrade in universities, and understanding how the relationship between Fairtrade and universities can develop. All of these will be valuable to the Fairtrade Foundation, to whom the study's findings will be sent.

1.4 Overview of Research

Five chapters succeed this introduction. Chapter two reviews the dominant themes in the literature regarding the fair trade movement relevant to universities, and vice versa. Chapter three describes the methods used to collect and analyse data, before the data is presented and discussed in chapter four. The conclusions are then outlined in chapter five.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The following section will explore the literature regarding the value of fair trade (a) from the perspective of the public (section 3.1) and (b) in the growing field of research exploring political activism (section 3.2), ethical and political consumption (section 3.3), and the impacts of the mainstreaming of fair trade (section 3.4). It will then consider the relevance of the fair trade movement to universities by exploring the role of political activism within universities (section 4.1) and the context of universities in the 21st century (section 4.2). Throughout this review of the literature the research gaps which direct the objectives of this study will be demonstrated.

3.1 The Value of Fair Trade

A plethora of research has sought to identify the values held by those reported as purchasing fair trade products (fair trade consumers) (Doran, 2009; Doran, 2010; Grankvist et al., 2007; Long and Murray, 2013 and Ma and Lee, 2012), however, comparatively little academic work explores the public's perception of fair trade. As such, there is a lack of understanding of the value of fair trade to the public. Where research has analysed this, it has been shown that the majority of consumers within the studied population positively value fair trade (Almeida's (2011) study with Portuguese consumers; Benson and Hiller Connell's (2014, pp. 364) investigation into United States (US) "Baby Boomers"; de Pelsmacker et al.'s (2006) research with Belgian consumers and Lyon et al.'s (2014) analysis of US university students). De Pelsmacker et al.'s (2006) work additionally reveals that respondents favour fair trade for the benefits to developing country farmers in terms of price, dignity, autonomy, and safe and honest production processes.

These four studies also find consistency regarding the greatest restraints to purchasing fair trade; identified as the lack of information on fair trade and the price of fair trade products. The inaccessibility and limited availability of products is also highlighted as a great concern among the public (Almeida, 2011 and Benson and Hiller Connell, 2014). Further, the issue of complexity

within the movement has been emphasised (Benson and Hiller Connell, 2014), with students in Lyon et al. 2014's study in particular being inspired by fair trade but lacking clarity about what it is "precisely trying to accomplish" (Lyon et al., 2014, pp. 5).

Some degree of similarity between countries appears to exist within these studies, however, the similarities clearly cannot be generalised beyond the samples, which themselves reflect limited social groups and the over-representation of certain characteristics. Importantly, there is a lack of academic research which extends to the UK public's value of Fairtrade (UK brand) or the fair trade movement, moreover from the purchasing decisions surrounding these. This is surprising given that the UK has been the largest market outlet for Fairtrade over time (Stefanska and Nestorowicz, 2015) and recent figures suggest that 9 out of 10 UK consumers recognise the Fairtrade label (Peattie and Samuel, 2016). Surveys into attitudes towards Fairtrade in the UK are mainly confined to the realms of marketing and often focus on demand for ethical products and intentions to purchase Fairtrade products, disregarding an assessment of the role that consumers perceive of Fairtrade as demonstrating (see, for instance, GlobeScan's (2014) survey with UK teenagers).

3.2 Fair Trade as Political Activism

Scholars have been divided regarding the greatest drivers behind the growth of fair trade. While Nicholls and Opal (2005) claim that "fair trade is entirely a consumer choice model", Barnett et al. (2005) argue against considering fair trade's development in the framework of "spontaneous changes in consumer demand", consequently highlighting "a broadly political, rather than narrowly economic approach to fair trade" (Anderson, 2009, pp. 16). Fair trade has established through a "history of consumer-oriented campaigning" and protest, pressure and awareness-raising activity related to the causes that fair trade seeks to promote – including labour, human rights, and globalisation (Newhouse, 2011). This has involved campaigners and organisations, who together make claims on "states, corporations, and international institutions" (Clarke et al., 2007, pp. 7). To this extent, fair trade is understood as a

“political phenomenon” (Clarke et al., 2007, pp. 5). Anderson (2009, pp. 9,16) supports this idea by suggesting that the development of fair trade cannot be considered apart from the influences of “historically specific” political issues and the role of “mobilisation, activism, lobbying and campaigning”.

3.3 Fair Trade as Ethical and Political Consumption

Fair trade’s links to political activism are two-fold since the growing body of literature that positions fair trade with ethical and political consumption (also referred to as ‘political consumerism’ (Micheletti et al., 2004)) recognises this as akin to activism (Lekakis, 2013). The concepts of ethical and political consumption are frequently used interchangeably to refer to “consumer choice of producers and products based on political or ethical considerations, or both” (Foden, 2012 and Micheletti et al., 2003, cited in Stolle et al., 2005, pp. 246). Through purchasing certain products, the market allows individuals to communicate their civic and political values (Atkinson, 2015), by either promoting or rejecting specific institutional or market practices (Micheletti et al., 2007), transcending beyond being driven by self-interest (Raynolds, 2017).

Fairtrade has been seen as “the poster child” of ethical consumption (Lekakis, 2013, pp. 28), and a “key arena of political consumption” (Raynolds, 2017, part III, ch. 15, pp. 14). Therefore, moreover from more traditional examples of political activism (Beck, 1996), the act of supporting fair trade through “consumption behaviours and decisions” (Peattie and Samuel, 2016, pp. 3) is exemplary of consumer or “grocery-line” activism (Goodman, 2004, pp. 908; Jacobsen and Dulsrud, 2007 and Lekakis, 2014). Other researchers have shown interest in fair trade specifically in the framework of political consumption, ‘boycotting’ (which occurs when the purchase of fair trade products “in support of a cause or practice” are encouraged (Winchester et al., 2015, pp. 553), and boycotting – with targeted actions such as pressure groups highlighted (Barnett et al., 2011; Hainmueller, 2011; Micheletti and Stolle, 2007; Peattie and Samuel, 2016; Sundberg, 2016 and Wheeler, 2012).

3.4 The Loss of Political Action Within the Movement?

As ethical consumption increasingly becomes “the most common type of action in fair trade activism”, scholars have shown concern for the loss of the political action within the movement, among, and from the perspective of, consumers (Lekakis, 2015, pp. 157). This is closely related to the mainstreaming of fair trade, which has been regarded as contributing to a diminution of the politicised nature of the movement (Lekakis, 2015; Low and Davenport, 2005a; 2005b and 2007).

Goff (2016, pp. 2) suggests that many scholars that evaluate fair trade as a political movement are viewing it as “in crisis”, emphasising an undermining of its political messages as it becomes increasingly “mainstream”. Murlebach (2016) goes as far as to claim that Fairtrade can be considered “postpolitical” in embedding the neoliberal market logic into its agenda. Qualitative evidence, albeit now somewhat outdated, is cited as indicating consumers’ perceptions that fair trade may be favoured by corporations for purposes of business strategy, rather than “out of any true sense of corporate social responsibility” (Botterill and Kline, 2007; Hamilton, 2008, cited in Pharr, 2011, pp. 63). More recent findings with a small sample of 14 participants noted a tendency to “depoliticize the fair trade model” (Marshall, 2016, pp. 114). The inclusion of these studies is not to imply that the mainstreaming of fair trade is regarded as wholly negative (see, for instance, Barnett et al., 2011 and Doherty and Tranchell, 2007). Rather, it demonstrates perceptions of the shift away from the political objectives of fair trade as the movement becomes increasingly mainstream.

4.1 Political Activism within Universities

The higher education sector has long been associated with political engagement and activism. Students are seen as important actors in contributing to a range of efforts to progress society (Boren, 2001 and DeGroot, 1998), and activism has been framed as a significant component of the “examination of social justice and the university” (East and Webster, 2014). Academic analyses have largely focused on the enabling environment of university institutions and exposure to political ideas and opportunities to

engage in a range of civic activities (Loader et al., 2015). Crossley (2008, pp. 18) refers to “popular representations” of the university as having a “politicising effect upon students”, noting global examples of student activism. Later work by Crossley and Ibrahim (2012, pp. 596) proposes the importance of a “critical mass’ and social networks” in achieving this effect. Their argument implies that the higher education sector shows significant engagement with political activism and campaigning because the university population and environment offers the means to turn “political aspiration into collective action” (Crossley and Ibrahim, 2012, pp. 609).

Brewis (2014) highlights UK students’ participation in social action and campaigning from the establishment of missions in the eighteenth century to the increasing uptake of campaigning and activism post-WWII. However, the most significant body of work on student activism has shown interest in the 1960s period of student-led protests around the world. In spite of the lack of analyses relative to other countries, UK students are documented as enacting various sit-ins and leading a series of protests in response to their resentment of nuclear weapons, racism, and predominately, the Vietnam War (Blackstone and Hadley, 1971, cited in Smith, 2007; Thomas, 2002 and Thomas, 2014).

Thomas (2002, pp. 279) suggests that these protests were unique in that “they were about issues which did not have an immediate relevance for the everyday lives of those who protested”. Others have agreed on the international influences on these demonstrations, citing a sense of solidarity with events and other movements occurring elsewhere (Burkett, 2014; Ellis, 1998; Fraser, 1988; Hanna, 2013; Hoefflerle, 2013 and Webster, 2015). “Justice and truth” have been proposed as the key concerns among students, implying that these prompted students to participate (Pinner, 1969, cited in Rootes, 1980; Feuer, 1969). Further, common among scholars is the reference to a minority group of students in advancing the campaigning (Barker, 2008 and Smith, 2007). According to Smith (2007, pp. 4), a small group of “politically extreme students” initiated the protests, who then attracted the majority to become involved through the mutual “moral

preoccupations of youth” (Rootes, 1980, pp. 486).

Students continue to show involvement in political activism and engagement, for instance with the anti-water movement (2003), the anti-capitalist movement with the formation of groups such as ‘People & Planet’ (Bourne, 2009), the 2009 occupation of UK universities in response to the Israeli invasion of Gaza and the 2010 student protests (Ibrahim, 2011). While researchers have demonstrated interest in the latter (Hensby, 2015; Rheingans and Hollands, 2013 and Solomon and Palmieri, 2011) there is an absence of research exploring how contemporary students engage with political activism, rather, much information is restricted to news articles and blogs. Where students’ political *engagement* has been analysed, scholars have focused on the extent to which students may be becoming less engaged with political agendas (Henn et al., 2002; Norris, 2004; Olcese and Saunders, 2014 and Sloam, 2007). This indicates the relevance of the fair trade movement, with a potentially threatened political core, in this context.

4.2 Ethical and Political Consumption within Universities

While scholars have shown significant interest in the rise of ethical and political consumption from a broad perspective (Jacobsen, 2017), and the role of political action in universities in the UK, there is a lack of academic literature concerning ethical and political consumption within universities. A review of the literature surrounding the key terms of ‘universities’, ‘Fairtrade’, ‘awareness raising’, and ‘campaigning’ within the UK yields a lack of relevant research. Considering the efforts made by numerous universities (see Fairtrade Foundation, 2017) to encourage students to consume Fairtrade products, it appears useful to explore how students perceive of Fairtrade, and its role within universities as one form of ethical/political consumption.

4.3 Current Opportunities and Obligations within Universities

In line with the rise of globalisation, universities’ links to social, economic and political change are being increasingly acknowledged (Amador and Oliveira, 2013). This interest has focussed, predominately, on either the opportunities that universities yield to promote change and sustainability (Rieckmann,

2012), or the responsibility of universities to drive this (Giuffre and Ratto, 2014). Both can be realised through “societal visioning”, tactical practices, and the provision of education related to sustainability and sustainable development, poverty reduction, peace and human rights (Giuffre and Ratto, 2014 and Stephens et al., 2008, pp. 320). Thus, universities are seen as possessing the “knowledge capacities to advance social life and to better the human condition”, and the obligation to use these (Rhoads and Szelenyi, 2011, pp. 8).

Some scholars have linked these understandings to calls, for instance by the UK’s Higher Education Academy (2007), for universities to embed ‘global citizenship’ in their practices and curriculum, in line with strategies on sustainable development (Bourne, 2009). Thus, the notion of global citizenship has become a prominent feature in the development of sustainability agendas in universities. The term ‘global citizen’ has been used variously by universities (Killick and Simpson, 2016), but is understood as representing individuals “who are aware of world issues and are empowered to bring about change towards a more just, sustainable society” (Caruana, 2010, cited in McKinnon, 2012, pp. 6). As a result of this emphasis on driving change, global citizenship relates to students’ “activism and campaigning” for global social change, for example through campaigning groups such as People and Planet, Development in Action (DiA) and Student Action for Refugees (STAR) (Bourne, 2009, pp. 26).

5 Summary

Little academic research identifies the public’s value of the fair trade movement, with a lack of understanding concerning the UK and the Fairtrade label. Fair trade is understood as one of, if not the, most recognised forms of ethical and political consumption (Lekakis, 2013 and Reynolds, 2017). While UK universities have committed to support Fairtrade, through the Fairtrade University Award, the role of ethical and political consumption within universities remains unexplored. There is also an ongoing debate as to the extent to which the fair trade movement embodies consumer activism (Goff, 2016; Newhouse, 2011 and Peattie and Samuel, 2016). The literature reveals

the role that activism has had in universities over time, with a particular focus on the 1960s. However, it is not clear how consumer activism plays out within universities at present in the context of a range of responsibilities surrounding progressive social change and sustainability, which fair trade is linked to, increasingly associated with universities. These gaps as identified direct the focus of the remainder of this study.

Chapter 3. Research Methods

3.1 Introduction

In order to address the research objectives outlined in section 1.2, primary research was collected with UK university students and staff. Since solely employing a quantitative or qualitative approach was seen as insufficient to answer the research aims (Creswell et al., 2011), a mixed-method approach was utilised to address the exploratory (to uncover understanding) and conclusive (to make recommendations) elements of the research. Both patterns in the research and in-depth insight could be revealed (Kendall, 2008), together enriching the findings (Creswell et al., 2011). An overview of the research methods is presented in Table 1, and they are then discussed throughout the remainder of the chapter.

3.2.1 Research Methods Overview

Table 1: Overview of the study's research methods

	Online questionnaire	Telephone interviews
Methodological Approach	Quantitative, with the option to comment (qualitative element)	Qualitative
Purpose	To inform an understanding of student perspectives towards Fairtrade, awareness of the Fairtrade University Award, and opinions on the role of universities related to Fairtrade and social action	To support or challenge the quantitative data and further insight into the role of Fairtrade within universities, implications of the Fairtrade University Award, and future engagement of universities with Fairtrade.
Structure	Nine closed questions, comprising a combination of dichotomous and multiple choice questions as well as questions based on the Likert scale. An opportunity to comment on the topic was also	Semi-structured, with questions providing a framework for discussion which could then evolve.

	presented at the end of the survey.	
Sampling	A self-selection convenience sample is represented in the questionnaire. Course representatives or contacts at Students' Unions at universities around the UK, contacted by means of accessibility, shared the questionnaire within their universities. Students' response to this invitation was voluntary.	Four respondents recruited through a convenience sample based on availability and willingness, and one respondent electing their self. All were recruited from the population of university staff/students involved in the Fairtrade University Award.
Survey delivery	The questionnaire was administered through an online survey tool (Survey Monkey) for reasons of being easy to manage remotely and quick for respondents to access. A cover page (Appendix 1) was shared with respondents before commencing the survey to ensure their informed consent.	Interviews were conducted via telephone interviews as this allowed data to be collected in a cost-effective manner (Adler and Clark, 2014). Briefings (Appendix 2) were sent to interviewees prior to interviews, to ensure the ethical practice of the research method.
Responses	152 students	4 university staff and 1 student
Time frame	Between early November 2016 – early January 2017	Between early January 2017 – early February 2017

3.2.2 The Questionnaire

To achieve the research objectives a questionnaire was designed and distributed to university students across the UK. Course representatives or contacts at Students' Unions at different universities recruited respondents through the sharing of the invitation to the questionnaire. The respondents constitute a self-selected convenience sample as completion was voluntary and contact was made based on accessibility. Contacts at fifteen different universities shared the invitation, although it is not clear how many universities were ultimately represented in the responses, directly and

indirectly, due to the anonymity.

Self-completion questionnaires were designed for reasons of cost-effectiveness and suitability for the geographical distribution of respondents. As self-completion presents a limitation regarding the inability of the researcher to help the respondent with questions (Meadows, 2003), ensuring the clarity of the questions was of utmost importance to the questionnaire design. It was anticipated that running a pilot study would aid this. Therefore, the design of the survey was tested with ten individuals in October 2016. The final questionnaire included nine closed questions, chosen to allow respondents to answer the survey with minimal time commitment from them (Bryman, 2015), and an optional comment at the end of the survey.

3.2.3 Responses

In total, 152 students answered the survey between early November – early January 2017, with the survey being closed when the target of 150 students had been met.

3.2.4 Quantitative Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data collected from the online questionnaire and understand the views, beliefs and experiences among students, descriptive statistics and graphical representations were primarily used. To explore the results, it was decided that each question should be categorized according to the four key research questions of the study.

3.2.5 Limitations

Since participation in the study was voluntary, it can be expected that those who already had an interest in Fairtrade, either positive or critical, may have been more likely to take part, creating a non-response bias. To seek to reduce this free Fairtrade chocolate was offered as incentive to take part. This incentive to participate was communicated with transparency.

Another bias that could implicate the validity of the research concerns the sampling techniques. A total of twenty-nine different universities were initially

approached, but only fifteen of those contacted were eventually able to share the questionnaire with students. However, since there was no measure of how many students at each university participated in the questionnaire, over-representation of certain universities remains an issue.

Furthermore self-completion questionnaires rely on respondents interpreting all questions as the researcher intended, which may not always be the case. Therefore, this could undermine the accuracy of findings.

3.2.6 Interviews

The use of interviews was employed to gain more “detailed and multi-layered” material related to the research objectives (Burgess, 1984, cited in Valentine, 2005, pp. 111). Interviews were designed in a semi-structured format to ensure that the research aims were met whilst also facilitating an open discussion and flexibility to discuss questions (Clifford et al., 2016).

Opportunities to improve the interview design and process were realised through a pilot interview conducted in December 2016.

Five interviewees from four different universities constituted the sample. Respondents were recruited through convenience sampling, excluding one respondent who elected their self to contribute to the research (self-selection). Respondents were required to be university staff or students who were evidently involved in the Fairtrade University Award at their universities.

3.2.7 Responses

Four interviews took place in early January and one in early February 2017. This number of interviews was seen as providing valuable insight without presenting issues related to having too much data to analyse in the time frame of the study.

3.2.8 Qualitative Data Analysis

Interview data was transcribed and then analysed through a process of theme development and revision (Braun and Clarke, 2006), whereby only data that contributed directly to the research aims, or that raised a new interest/concern

of relevance to the topic, was incorporated (similar to the suggestions set out by Cassell and Symon, 2004). This thematic analysis sought to draw out common themes and contrasts in the data, highlighting key quotes that reflect these. Due to the small number of interviews conducted, Microsoft Office was seen as appropriate for carrying out this stage of analysis.

3.2.9 Limitations

England (1994, cited in Bourke, 2014, pp. 1) suggests that “research represents a shared space, shaped by both researcher and participants”, drawing attention to the influence of both on the collection of data. As such, it is clear that the process of gathering, analysing and presenting data analysis will be mediated by a complex dynamic of values, opinions, experiences and factors related to socio-cultural background (Vanner, 2015). All of these implicate the representativeness of findings, in the same way that these same dynamics will guide the voice(s) reflected in the research findings (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014).

Additionally, despite offering the advantage of ensuring “mutual understanding” between interviewees and researchers (Dornyei, 2007, pp. 143, cited in Alshenqeeti, 2014, pp. 42), interview findings may simultaneously be undermined by the presence of social desirability bias (Grimm, 2010), because, as Brown (2001) points out, they can never be 100% anonymous. The result is that interviewees can withhold information, or say what they feel the researcher wishes to hear, with the consequence that the validity of the research findings will be reduced.

3.4 Ethical Guidelines

The responsibility to ensure the ethical treatment of respondents and to pursue transparency with the research aims was prioritised throughout the research process. Respondents were made aware of the ethical guidelines by means of the questionnaire and interview briefings (Appendices 1 and 2).

Chapter 4. Results and Discussion

The following three sections will combine, present and analyse the findings from the data collection in the structure of the three main research questions. Section 4.1 explores the engagement of university students with Fairtrade in terms of their understandings of Fairtrade and perceived limitations to engaging. Section 4.2 then considers the relationship between Fairtrade and universities by looking at the influence that universities can/should have on Fairtrade from the perspective of students and the role that Fairtrade can have within universities, through the Fairtrade University Award. Finally, recommendations for the future directions of Fairtrade and the Higher Education sector are presented based on interview data.

4.1 Objective 1: What is the value of Fairtrade and the fair trade movement to university students in the UK?

4.1.1 Value of Fairtrade

In order to explore the value of Fairtrade to UK university students, questionnaire respondents were initially asked a set of questions related to their engagement with Fairtrade. 65.13% of students either agreed or strongly agreed that they would 'choose to purchase Fairtrade products over conventional products', compared to just 11.19% of students either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (Table 2). Thus, students' intentions to purchase Fairtrade products are far more positive than negative. Since it has been observed that attitudes towards ethical consumption do not always translate into purchase behaviour (Campbell et al., 2015), these findings should not be taken as indicative of the likelihood that students' will actually purchase Fairtrade products. Social desirability bias (Auger and Devinney, 2007) as well as practical constraints or "competing demands" (Carrington et al., 2010, pp. 140) can all interfere with the realisation of intentions into behaviour. Nonetheless, that many students chose to state positive intentions towards Fairtrade suggests that they regard it favourably. This indication is supported by 85.52% of students (collectively) reporting that Fairtrade is 'important to producers globally', in contrast to just 1.98% suggesting that it is

'not important', (Table 2), mirroring the largely positive attitudes towards fair trade found in studies conducted elsewhere (Almeida, 2011; Benson and Hiller Connell 2014; de Pelsmacker et al., 2006 and Lyon et al., 2014).

The questionnaire sought to gather insight into the positive impacts that students perceived Fairtrade as eliciting. To this end, students' reasons for engaging with Fairtrade were explored, in which students were able to select as many reasons as they wished. 'A fair price for producers', 'care for environmental sustainability', and 'concern for global supply chains' were the most frequently cited motivations for engaging with Fairtrade (67.11%, 60.53%, and 61.18%, respectively). Since these align with the core principles of the fair trade movement set out by Fairtrade International (2009), a high degree of support for Fairtrade is apparent. Additionally, 21.71% of students believed that engaging with Fairtrade enabled them to invest their money effectively. These findings together suggest that many students understand Fairtrade as a form of ethical and political consumption in believing that their purchasing decisions can drive social change (Hainmueller et al., 2011 and Lekakis, 2015), and that in buying Fairtrade goods they can invest in social justice (Davies and Gutsche, 2016). A significant percentage of students (31.58%) referred to the positive feelings that emerged from purchasing Fairtrade products as motivating engagement. However, Davies and Gutsche's (2016) study with 'mainstream' (as opposed to 'radical') fair trade consumers found that the aim of self-satisfaction was the "strongest motivational aspect of fair trade consumption", reported by every respondent. As this was not the case among the student respondents in this study it may be that individualistic perspectives of the benefits of Fairtrade drive the student body comparatively less.

4.1.2 Barriers to Engagement

Where students did not report positively regarding the value of Fairtrade, the majority of this group represented feelings of neutrality or uncertainty, as opposed to adversary (Table 2; Table 3). This implies that a significant proportion of students lack clear knowledge and judgment of Fairtrade (Table 2). Indeed, when students were asked to report their perceived barriers to

engagement with Fairtrade, 32.90% (together) emphasised a need for greater information or clarity on the impacts of Fairtrade (Table 2). Again, this is consistent with previous studies (Almeida, 2011; Benson and Hiller Connell 2014; de Pelsmacker et al., 2006 and Lyon et al., 2014). One student depicted the nature of this uncertainty and the role that information, in the university context, could yield in engaging students with Fairtrade:

I believe that Fairtrade is something which most people including myself are not completely aware of. It would be useful if there was more information and promotion of those products, with given information about what our money will support and what would be improved if we chose to buy those products... As social institutions, Universities could contribute a lot to this cause, giving information to the students through leaflets, events and any other ways to create awareness.

Interviews also echoed this confusion among students over the precise meaning and impacts of Fairtrade and the fair trade movement. All interviews believed that greater communication on the work and relevance of Fairtrade would be beneficial to the engagement students have with it. One interviewee also highlighted the need to communicate on the complexities of Fairtrade/fair trade, in order to address students' uncertainty around the force it exerts:

...it's not as if there is a lack of interest in workers rights and workers conditions and fairness in terms of how people are treated in supply chains... it's just the fair trade term (the trademark and movement as there's still a lack of understanding about the differentiation) is causing students to wonder about its actual impact... They hear a lot, various reports and research and wonder if it's the right way to do things.

This emphasis on the role of research was highlighted by other interviewees, in which it was argued that the interpretation of research into fair trade in the media had contributed to a suspicion or questioning over whether 'farmers are advantaged or disadvantaged by the accreditation'. However, interviewees' differed largely in their recognition of this within their respective universities,

suggesting that many other socio-cultural and student demographic influences determine how research into and criticism of fair trade is received.

Nonetheless, a general uncertainty over the fulfilment of the aims of the fair trade movement may be widespread (Castaldo et al., 2009), resulting from the impacts of information that lacks credibility (Almeida, 2011) and an insufficiency of the quality, *rather than* quantity, of information (De Pelsmacker and Janssens, 2006). Consumers require high quality information to not only make informed purchasing decisions but to establish trust in the cause and impact of the movement, thus motivating support (Accenture, 2011 and De Pelsmacker and Janssens, 2006). Moreover from, but closely linked to the criticisms giving rise to, students' uncertainty, the corporatization of Fairtrade was seen by some interviewees as a concern to students. It was stated:

There's also a concern over the growing corporatisation of Fairtrade in big business. Is this what genuine Fairtrade is about? There's an increasing interest in finding out what is going on. Fairtrade has become a complex issue.

A students' comment on the questionnaire highlighted the belief that 'fair trade has been corrupted so much by MNCs' (multinational corporations). These statements suggest that academic analyses of the challenges posed by, and critiques of, the mainstreaming of fair trade are recognised by the student body and influence how they value Fairtrade (Doherty et al., 2013). According to some scholars, the expansion of the movement threatens the legitimacy of the movement's ideals, standards and "conventional trade practices" (Campbell, 2001; Guthman, 1998; Jaffee and Howard, 2009; Moore, 2004 and Reynolds, 2000, cited in Child, 2014, pp. 602). This could undermine the perceived impact of Fairtrade, thus linking to students' uncertainty.

How this mainstreaming of fair trade affects students' understanding of the role of political action within the movement (Low and Davenport, 2005a; 2005b and 2007) did not become entirely clear, but could relate to the lack of involvement in campaigning and awareness-raising among students noted in interviews. When asked whether interviewees thought that students'

considered support for fair trade as a political movement, it was agreed that students did not recognise their own or fellow students' participation in the fair trade movement as particularly political. This provided insight into the complexity of the situation, as it was suggested that fair trade was frequently seen as a political issue, given the concerns surrounding the movement, but not a political movement itself. In this way, it seems that the very demise of the "political messages" within the movement are contributing to the reconceptualization of it as a political issue (Goff, 2016, pp. 2). Thus, the findings appear to support arguments that the political objectives of fair trade are becoming increasingly less recognisable to individuals as it mainstreams (Marshall, 2016 and Murlebach, 2016).

Cost was by far the most significant restraint to supporting Fairtrade, reported by 61.84% of students (Table 2). Students' emphasis on cost (once again similar to previous studies in the field) indicates that the premium on Fairtrade products is perceived as excluding them from engagement with Fairtrade. This perception may also be particularly nuanced among the student population with a lower than average disposable income (Natwest, 2016). However, a fifth of students (20.89%) also report difficulties in accessing Fairtrade products. This is somewhat surprising given that all but one of the universities where the questionnaire was shared were Fairtrade Universities, thus committed to stock Fairtrade products (Fairtrade Foundation, 2017). A need to assess either the pertinence of the Fairtrade products stocked by universities to students, or to evaluate the effectiveness of how products are promoted, may therefore exist.

Students could also indicate other limitations to their engagement with Fairtrade. Here, some students illustrated an important consideration regarding the choice to support small/local producers over larger companies. Although few students elected this response at this opportunity, 20.39% suggested that their engagement with other initiatives such as local and Organic foods hindered their support for Fairtrade; constituting one of the greatest barriers to engagement with Fairtrade as identified by students. This

links to concerns over the mainstreaming of the fair trade movement, but also indicates that there may be a “substitutional relationship” between Fairtrade labelled products and other ethical consumption choices (Langen, 2012, pp. 6). However, as pointed out in the interviews, “item for item, Fairtrade and local shouldn’t compete for demand as they usually cannot be substituted”. In terms of food purchases on campus, it was also suggested that due to the “presence of so many Fairtrade products on campus” as a result of Fairtrade policies, there was often little overlap between products with other food accreditation, like Organic. This implies that limited ability to pay the premium for multiple different ethical foods may instead be the greatest causal factor underlying a perceived need to prioritise between them (Macovei, 2015). That cost was the greatest limitation to engagement with Fairtrade (Table 2) provides support for this suggestion.

4.1.3 Fairtrade as Political Activism in Universities?

Campaigning, promotion and other demonstrations of interest in Fairtrade by students were seen as limited by interviewees, in line with the perception that Fairtrade/fair trade was not a priority issue among students. However, this contrasted the interest with which students had campaigned for initial Fairtrade University status in some universities. It was highlighted that because universities were now supporting fair trade the need to campaign for Fairtrade status was clearly no longer relevant. An interviewee claimed:

I don't think students would know what to ask of the University if they got involved in campaigning because the University has responded to student demand and has a clear and committed Fairtrade policy but also interest in fairer trade and workers rights more generally. Students don't have a pressing need to campaign for fair trade, but then again they don't have much to ask the University to change in terms of fair trade.

On the other hand, some interviewees recalled no student campaigning for the initial commitment to Fairtrade status and demand instead stemming from staff. This highlights the varied landscape between universities in terms of the drive for activism surrounding Fairtrade status. As for the on-going demand

for campaigning activities such as Fairtrade events and awareness-raising within universities and local communities, the trend was that a small minority of students were consistently involved in 'pushing for these'. In comparison to students' demand for their universities to 'act upon other issues', interviewees associated these initiatives as more 'subtle' forms of activism. This provides further insight into the role of political activism within the fair trade movement. In spite of the growing recognition of the fair trade movement as a form of ethical and political consumption (Lekakis, 2013 and Reynolds, 2017) and the links to activism that researchers have proposed (Peattie and Samuel, 2016), students do not see a present need to campaign for Fairtrade. This could be so for several reasons. Firstly, as Fairtrade becomes increasingly seen as an everyday act of consuming ethically and politically, this may be the main way that students feel that they can express support for Fairtrade (Lekakis, 2015). In a similar way, students may be resonating with the "gradual moving away from the radical culture of the [fair trade] movement" as it becomes increasingly commercialised (Hariman and Cintron, 2015, pp. 162). Third, given the awareness of Fairtrade that generally exists students may not perceive a need to generate further awareness of the trade injustices that it seeks to alleviate, in the same way that students may feel that their university's support for Fairtrade indicates that it is being sufficiently addressed.

Table 2. Questionnaire responses exploring the value of Fairtrade among UK university students

Statement	Number of respondents	Percentage response (%)
I would choose to purchase Fairtrade products over conventional products		
- Strongly agree	23	15.13
- Agree	76	50
- Neutral	36	23.68
- Disagree	15	9.87
- Strongly disagree	2	1.32
Fairtrade is important to producers globally		
- Strongly agree	74	48.68
- Agree	56	36.84
- Neutral	19	12.50
- Disagree	1	0.66
- Strongly disagree	2	1.32
I engage with Fairtrade because:		
- It offers a fair price for producers	102	67.11
- It increases environmental sustainability	92	60.53
- It improves global supply chains	93	61.18
- It makes me feel food	48	31.58
- Products are better quality than conventional products	20	13.16
- I want to invest my money as best as I can	33	21.71
- I do not support Fairtrade	4	2.63
I do not engage with Fairtrade because:		
- Its too expensive	94	61.84
- Its hard to access products	31	20.39
- There is a lack of information about the benefits of Fairtrade	24	15.79
- I'm unsure about the impacts/criticisms of Fairtrade	26	17.11
- I do not believe that it would make a difference to the global supply chain	2	1.32
- Products are poorer quality than conventional products	2	1.32
- I prioritise support for other initiatives, e.g. locally produced products, Organic	31	20.39
- No barriers prevent my engagement with Fairtrade	17	11.18

4.2 Objective 2: What is the relevance of Fairtrade to and the role of Fairtrade University Award within universities?

A review of the literature revealed that student campaigning has been an important component of universities' relations to politics and social justice over time (Brewis, 2014 and East and Webster, 2014). Students have shown concern for a range of issues of a global nature, although the literature documenting this has arguably tailed off more recently. However, the success of student initiatives to promote social justice exemplifies the continuing significance of global issues within the institutions and social networks of universities (Bourne, 2009). Further, universities are associated with various opportunities and obligations regarding the improvement of society (Giuffre and Ratto, 2014 and Rieckmann, 2012). As a result, the question of how Fairtrade fits into this context is very interesting.

Students in this study saw Fairtrade as relevant to universities and universities as being able to contribute significantly to the promotion and impact of Fairtrade (Table 3). Responses to the questionnaire revealed a belief among 77.63% of students that through committing to Fairtrade, universities can significantly impact developing country farmers (Table 3). The interpretation of the term 'significantly' is ambiguous, and thus in hindsight this term should perhaps not have been clarified. This may explain why a significant 19.74% of respondents felt neutral about this (Table 3), or this could also be due to a lack of knowledge of what universities' commitment to Fairtrade could entail and therefore the benefits to farmers that this could yield, which may be the case given the relatively low awareness of the Fairtrade University Award at just 28.95% (Table 4). Despite this, it is clear that many students perceive of universities' ability to exert a positive influence on farmers. Similarly, the large majority of students expressed the belief that universities committing to Fairtrade can raise awareness of Fairtrade among students and staff (90.13% collectively) (Table 3).

4.2.1 Universities and 'Knowledge'

These findings illustrate the opportunities that students perceive of

universities as possessing regarding the promotion of Fairtrade, suggesting that ethical and political consumption has an important role to play within universities in spite of a lack of previous academic attention. As centres of knowledge “production, management, and application”, the ability of universities to communicate ways to act more environmentally, socially and economically sustainability is recognised (Rhoads and Szelenyi, 2011, pp. 278). In particular, universities’ “third mission” to transfer knowledge to society, in addition to (1) disseminating knowledge and (2) extending the horizons of knowledge, has become increasingly important (Veugelers, 2016, pp. 615). Ethical and political consumption yields relevance to the ways in which universities can communicate sustainable behaviour as a knowledge transfer, since these are typically based on practices that intend to promote more socially, environmentally or economically sustainable consumption (Pottinger, 2017). However, in keeping with the understanding of universities’ potential to “enhance the application of knowledge to social change” (Stephens et al., 2008, pp. 320), it is also important to highlight the generation of knowledge through critical evaluation. Thereby, universities can contribute to the uncertainties around the fair trade movement and Fairtrade accreditation, as revealed in this study, by employing such a focus.

4.2.2 Universities and Social Change

Students also demonstrated an expectation of universities to exert a positive societal force, supporting the argument that: “just as we have used our sharpest university minds to advance science and technology, we must do the same in terms of advancing global social relations” (Rhoads and Szelenyi, 2011, pp. 8). 89.47% of student respondents felt that universities should encourage students to participate in progressive social action, compared to 4.61% who did not believe this. Students’ additional comments expanded on these understandings, whereby students’ highlighted the role of universities in ‘producing the next generation of leaders and role models’ and as ‘a catalyst for students to become aware of socio-political issues globally’, both reflecting the influence that universities’ involvement in global issues can exert. Students reiterated their beliefs that universities should encourage positive social change, whilst it also appeared important to students that universities

“remain politically neutral”, in accordance with the view that “universities are an important space of freedom in society” (Boni and Walker, 2016, pp. 6). This led some students to clarify that universities should therefore seek to make accessible the many dimensions, stances and debates on various political issues, indicating that the criticisms associated with the fair trade movement and Fairtrade brand should be recognised by universities. One student summed up this general contention:

Universities and Unions should have a stance on social action, whilst also allowing students to be educated to decide for themselves, their own stance.

4.2.3 Developing Awareness of ‘Fairtrade Status’

The lack of awareness of the Fairtrade University Award among students (Table 4) was reinforced in interviews, in which it was felt that many students were not aware of their universities’ own commitment to Fairtrade. This acted as reasoning for the lack of drive among the majority of students to assist with the Award’s development within their universities. Interviewees were ‘not surprised’ when informed of the finding that students were unaware of what a Fairtrade University was. They recognised the need for universities to communicate their Fairtrade status more boldly, and two also referred to the importance of the relationship between Fairtrade and students’ unions. Since students’ unions are highly engaged with students, it was seen that their promotion of Fairtrade status would greatly help to develop understanding among students.

Brooks et al. (2015, pp. 472) suggest that while little scholarly research has focussed on UK students’ unions they “assume an increasingly important place within the higher education (HE) landscape”. Their importance in delivering “the student experience” is highlighted, as well as their role in articulating students’ views and concerns at different organisational and societal levels (Brooks et al., 2015, pp. 472). Crossley and Ibrahim (2012, pp. 597) also emphasise student unions’ ability to augment the “politicizing effect” of university attendance more generally, by supporting and advancing the growth of social networks. Therefore, students’ unions appear to yield

substantial influence on the degree to which students can participate in engagement with Fairtrade, both individually and in the formation of groups. Hence it seems important to recognise the students' union in analysis of the role of Fairtrade within universities, and vice versa, and to highlight the means through which they can contribute towards an effective relationship between Fairtrade and universities (section 4.3)

4.2.4 Universities and Sustainability

Predominately, the relevance of Fairtrade and the Fairtrade University Award to universities was conceptualised through the lens of social and environmental sustainability. The meaning of 'Fairtrade status' was explored among interviewees in which it became clear that it was a valuable tool for connecting to universities' institutional values, and the social obligation attributed to universities. One interviewee suggested:

We have progressive values and mission statements in our student framework, and the framework for sustainability... Sustainability is interwoven into all of these frameworks. Fairtrade allows us to be able to measure how far we are going in our commitments in that regard as it combines social and environmental justice.

Other interviewees also highlighted that Fairtrade status could provide support for the social responsibility of universities and demonstrate 'positive social action' and 'proactivity on big global issues'. It became clear that Fairtrade status was not seen as essential to ensure the promotion of and support for Fairtrade at universities; some claimed that the role of the Fairtrade policy would be 'just as important' without Fairtrade status. In the same way, little emphasis was given to the opportunities to instil greater engagement with Fairtrade among the university community through the Award. Most significantly, as reflected in the quote above, Fairtrade status was seen as a mechanism to validate and progress commitments to sustainability more holistically within the University. In this sense, it was often seen as furthering sustainability reporting, such as through the 'People and Planet University

League', and complementing other sustainability objectives and initiatives.

Understandings of Fairtrade through concepts of sustainability and social responsibility draw attention to the growing prominence of these commitments within the literature on the Higher Education sector. The conceptualisation of universities' responsibilities and opportunities to promote sustainability – social, environmental and economic – through their practices, education, and focus on nurturing global citizenship in their graduates appears to hold the greatest relevance to the role of Fairtrade within universities (Bourne, 2009; Giuffre and Ratto, 2014 and Killick and Simpson, 2016). Ideas surrounding global citizenship are becoming increasingly important to the university learning environment as global issues become more deeply entwined with learning (Lamb et al., 2007). Fairtrade status exhibits one of the ways in which global citizenship can be reflected in the “ethos” of the Higher Education institution given its emphasis on universities enacting their social obligation through support for Fairtrade (Lamb et al., 2007, pp. 19).

Seemingly, the importance of sustainability within higher education institutions offers a fitting opportunity to embed support for Fairtrade within universities, but, it can be asked whether the driving focus on Fairtrade within a framework of sustainability measures neglects the undermining of Fairtrade's campaigning roots (Marshall, 2016). Marshall (2016, pp. 112) argues that “without a campaigning political core, fair trade may simply become an alternative supply chain model”. Interpreted, on the one hand, as a deviation from the very character of the movement that has been expressed (Barnett et al., 2011) have fought to express, this can be seen as evidence of what Goff (2016, pp. 2) refers to as the political movement “in crisis”. Understood in this way it may be apt to propose that a refocus on a radical social justice agenda is sought, by leading fair trade organisations such as the Fairtrade Foundation, in representations of Fairtrade and the wider fair trade movement (Marshall, 2016). The importance of social justice issues as demonstrated through interviews in this study, students' expectations for universities to accommodate interest in these (as reported in questionnaires), and the role of “campus-based social networks” and the “critical mass” in furthering such

interests mean that this refocus may then gain momentum within universities (Crossley, 2008, pp. 17 and Crossley and Ibrahim, 2012, pp. 602).

Interpreted on the other hand, however, the question could be proposed: is it time to embrace more recent conceptualisations of fair trade as a measure of sustainability if this entails its greater emphasis and inclusion in universities, as well as other organisations and companies? In line with the increasing focus on sustainability with universities (Young et al., 2015), enhanced profits for Fairtrade through procurement and the sale of Fairtrade products should, in theory, maximise support for developing country farmers. Thus, this may be a favourable way to reconceptualise the fair trade movement. Indeed, support for Fairtrade within university practices and policy may be a prerequisite for students' engagement, due to the function played by the "hidden curriculum" - the institutional and disciplinary values signalled by the University about "what and who is valued" (Leask, 2009, cited in Killick, 2016, pp. 20) which then impact students' framing of "behavioural and attitudinal norms" (Killick and Simpson, 2016, pp. 4).

Table 3. Questionnaire responses exploring students' perceptions of the engagement of universities with Fairtrade

Statement	Number of respondents	Percentage response (%)
Universities making a commitment to Fairtrade can have a significant impact on developing country farmers		
- Strongly agree	58	38.16
- Agree	60	39.47
- Neutral	30	19.74
- Disagree	1	1.97
- Strongly disagree	3	0.66
Universities making a commitment to Fairtrade can raise awareness of Fairtrade with students and staff		
- Strongly agree	93	61.18
- Agree	44	28.95
- Neutral	11	7.24
- Disagree	3	1.97
- Strongly disagree	1	0.66
Universities should encourage students to participate in progressive social action		
- Yes	136	89.47
- Unsure	9	5.92
- No	7	4.61

Table 4. Questionnaire responses exploring students' awareness of what a 'Fairtrade University' is

Statement	Number of respondents	Percentage response (%)
I am aware of what a Fairtrade University is		
- Yes	44	28.95
- No	108	71.05

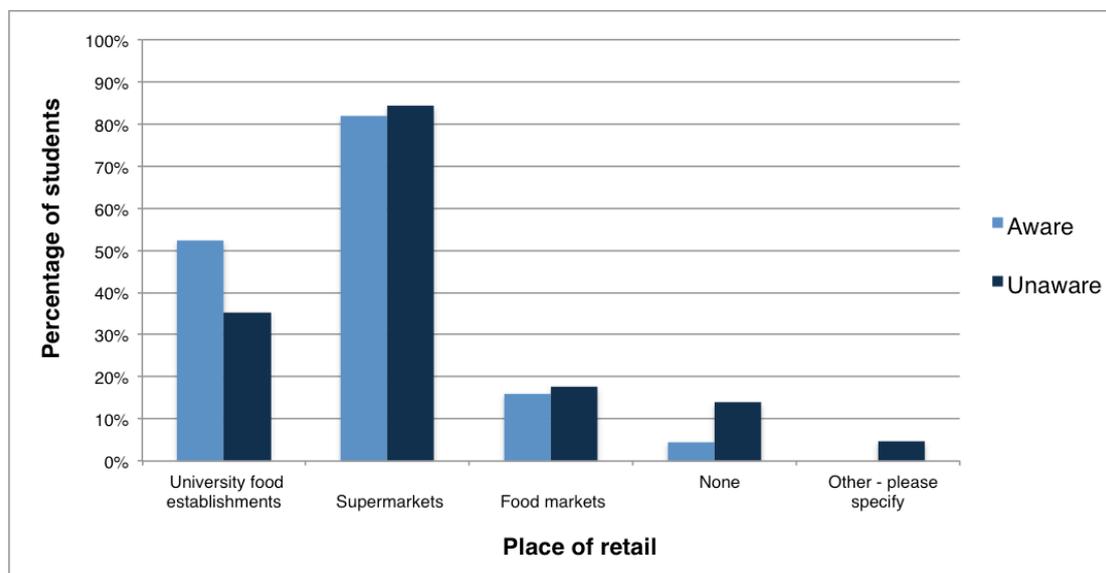
4.3: Objective 3: How can the relationship between Fairtrade and universities evolve?

Those involved in the operation of the Fairtrade University Award at universities in the UK were seen as possessing an understanding of the effectiveness and complexities, and subsequent areas of improvement, of the Award. For this reason, a series of interview questions focussed on these considerations. The key themes that emerged from the answers to these have generated an insight into ways in which the relationship between Fairtrade and universities, both through and apart from the Award, could develop. These themes are presented and discussed throughout this section.

4.3.1 Information Provision

Interviewees highlighted the scope to increase information within universities on Fairtrade *and* Fairtrade status in multiple regards. A need for universities to communicate their Fairtrade status was identified by interviewees, while the results of student questionnaires also suggested that this could yield a positive effect on the growth of Fairtrade products consumed on campus, perhaps due to an improved understanding of the availability of Fairtrade products, or desire to support Fairtrade in line with students' own universities' support for Fairtrade. Figure 1 shows that students who were 'aware' of Fairtrade status were slightly less likely to not buy Fairtrade products generally, and slightly more likely to purchase Fairtrade products at university food establishments, demonstrating the potential implications of Fairtrade status in encouraging students to purchase Fairtrade products, particularly on-campus.

Figure 1. Cross-tabulated data of students' awareness of Fairtrade Universities and purchasing of Fairtrade products in the past 12 months



Providing accessibility to clear and unbiased research was also seen as important to encouraging students to explore fair trade. This should aim to promote long-term understanding of fair trade as opposed to seeking to drive sales at the 'point-of-purchase' (Hudson et al., 2013, pp. 1032). A network of research into Fairtrade/fair trade that has been carried out made available students could supplement this. Furthermore, it was emphasised that 'its important that people (students and staff) see the effects of their impact'. Where 'impact stories' had been promoted these were extremely successful in embedding messages within students but there was a need for greater provision of these. In another way, as it was felt that those purchasing Fairtrade food and drink on campus were not always aware that it was Fairtrade, it was suggested that easily identifiable advertising be sought.

Refining the nature of information provision, especially from the Fairtrade Foundation, was also mentioned. Seeking to resonate with students through more direct, sophisticated messaging that address their 'questions' or 'concerns' could benefit students who fail to engage with the broader, more general communication. An 'honest recognition' of and 'visible response' to the criticisms of Fairtrade was suggested, addressing the "big questions". One

interviewee also pointed out the importance of “inclusivity and empowerment” in communication – ensuring students feel that supporting Fairtrade, as frequently or infrequently as they can with their purchasing, is both accessible and impactful. Communicating with transparency where the cost of Fairtrade products yields support for producers could also aid understanding of the Fairtrade system.

4.3.2 Events

Prompt and support from the Fairtrade Foundation to pursue more Fairtrade events was important to all interviewees. Financial and administrative practicalities could implicate the organization of such events, thus the need to secure greater support for these from different tiers within universities was also an internal matter. Nonetheless, organizing more Fairtrade events was seen as a key way to facilitate the greater share of information aforementioned.

4.3.3 Students’ Unions

Developing the relationship between students’ unions and Fairtrade/the Fairtrade University Award was seen as an important agenda within some of the universities, whilst others suggested that the relationship was already well established (indicative of the different stages of Universities’ relationships to Fairtrade). For the former, greater information sharing by the Fairtrade Foundation with students’ unions, that could then be communicated with students, was stressed.

4.3.4 Procurement

The lack of engagement of the Fairtrade Foundation with consortiums was highlighted as a ‘drawback’ of the Fairtrade University Award by one interviewee. Liaison between Fairtrade and the consortiums which determine the products that universities are able to stock would simplify the process of Fairtrade procurement. Additionally, another interviewee suggested that ‘guidance’ to Fairtrade Universities on how to influence the products within agreements would be beneficial, in the situation whereby other universities in the consortium aren’t demanding the same Fairtrade products.

4.3.5 Accessibility of Fairtrade Products

As already mentioned (section 4.1.2), one fifth of students' perceive of Fairtrade products as 'hard to access'. Increasing the availability of Fairtrade products on-campus (through procurement (section 4.3.4)), evaluating their relevance to students' shopping habits, or improving how they are promoted at university retail outlets, may target this limitation.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and Implications

A growing number of UK universities have committed to show support for Fairtrade, the UK certification for the fair trade movement, through the Fairtrade University Award. In spite of the Award's popularity (Fairtrade Foundation, 2017), little is known about how it operates within different universities, in line with a lack of understanding related to students' perceptions of Fairtrade and the relationship between Fairtrade and universities. This study explored some of the key discourses surrounding the fair trade movement, including those of ethical and political consumption and political activism, through the lens of the Fairtrade brand. The context of universities, historically associated with political activism and more recently envisaged in terms of their potential or duty to promote positive social change, was included in this framework of exploration, since both are seen as relevant to the Fairtrade agenda.

This research contributes to this area of knowledge by revealing the engagement between Fairtrade and both students and universities more widely. Students are largely favourable towards Fairtrade's purpose in spite of some key barriers to engagement (research objective one). Students identify the relationship between universities and Fairtrade with great potential, providing theoretical insight into the role of ethical and political consumption within universities. Arguments of the increasing lack of recognition of the political messages within the fair trade movement appear to take shape within the student body, in which Fairtrade is seldom framed in terms of political activism, at least explicitly. In fact, universities' sustainability agendas appear to align most closely with Fairtrade, and 'Fairtrade Status', within universities (research objective two).

Understanding of this relationship also yields practical implications for the Fairtrade Foundation's management of the Fairtrade University Award, in addition to the set of recommendations that have been formulated through interview data (research objective three), revolving around information provision, events, students' unions, procurement and accessibility.

Significantly, however, since this data was gathered from the experiences at a limited number of universities in the UK, the narrow scope of these recommendations is emphasised. In this sense, to improve the practical application of this study it would be constructive to conduct an assessment into this with a wider range of UK universities. Greater representation of students could also be sought in order to increase the generalisability of findings regarding students' value of Fairtrade. This could be achieved through including questions related to respondents' demographics in the student questionnaire, to test representation in a way that this study did not.

The theoretical contributions of this study could also be enhanced through a more explicit or specific focus on one of the key discourses, i.e. ethical/political consumption or political activism, with respondents. Thus, this constitutes another valuable area of further research. In particular, this research may benefit from focus group or participation observation research methods, and the multiple views, experiences and decision-making processes that they can uncover (Litosseliti, 2003).

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Appendix 1

Thank you very much for taking part in this survey. Below is some information of interest to participants.

What is the purpose of the survey?

This survey seeks to inform research into the role of Fairtrade in Universities in the UK.

What will happen with the responses?

The responses will be used to constitute a report for the Fairtrade Foundation as well as an undergraduate dissertation. All responses are **completely anonymous**. The survey aims to give you, as a student, the ability to shape the future directions of the Fairtrade Foundation, the major Fairtrade organisation in the UK.

What will the survey involve?

The questionnaire is comprised of **9 short questions** which require you to check the box/es that apply to you. It should take around **5-10 minutes** to complete. If you wish to receive a **free Fairtrade chocolate bar** as appreciation for taking part in the survey, you will be able to enter your mailing address after the questionnaire.

Further comments

Please contact me on the email address provided at the end of the survey if you have any further comments on this topic/if you wish to find out more about any aspect of the study.

Ethics

This research has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Geography Department at the University of Exeter. However, please contact me regarding any concerns about your involvement.

Thank you again. Press next to start the questionnaire.

Appendix 2

Geography
College of Life and Environmental Sciences
University of Exeter
Peter Lanyon Building
Penryn
Cornwall
UK
TR10 9EZ

10th January 2017

Dear interviewee,

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this informal interview. Before our discussion, I would like to draw your attention to a few points of interest regarding the research that I am undertaking and your contribution to it. I would also like to outline my aims once more. I am a student of the University of Exeter, department of geography, undertaking research on the topic "An examination of the engagement of UK universities with the Fairtrade University Award and fair trade movement – past, present and future". In conducting an interview with you, I invite you to share your thoughts around Fairtrade and the Fairtrade University Award, including motivations for and challenges around receiving Fairtrade status, largely from the perspective of University staff and students.

Below is some information for reference.

What is the purpose of the survey?

This survey seeks to inform research into the role and value of Fairtrade in Universities in the UK, including that of the Fairtrade University Award.

What will this discussion involve?

This discussion will comprise a semi-structured interview style, whereby, as

the researcher, I will follow a series of key questions, whilst also supplementing the discussion in a more informal way as it evolves. It is hoped that the discussion will take around 20-30 minutes.

The discussion will be taped and transcribed with the intent to draw out information to assist with the research. This information will be analysed alongside questionnaire data acquired from students across the UK, and secondary data based on Universities' Fairtrade status application and renewal forms. The research will ultimately constitute an undergraduate dissertation, and a more condensed report for the Fairtrade Foundation.

In the process of transcribing the discussion, all responses will be treated strictly as anonymous. If at any point you wish not to answer a question or to end the survey, please feel comfortable in doing so. If, at a date after the interview, you wish to withdraw your contribution to the research being undertaken, you can do this by contacting me on the email address provided. Please also contact me if you have any further comments on this topic/discussion, or if you wish to find out more about any aspect of the study, following the interview.

Ethics

This research has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Geography Department at the University of Exeter. As mentioned, anonymity is ensured, and your right to withdraw is emphasized.

Once again, thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Danielle Megan Foster

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