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## **GREECE NEEDS AND WANTS TO WELCOME FAIR TRADE.**

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**Abstract.** This paper concerns the global movement of Fair Trade, mainly with reference to the relevant evolutions in Europe. The definitions, the principles and the objectives of Fair Trade are presented. It is argued that the marketing academic community has rather neglected the whole subject of ethical consumption and particularly the fair trade topic. Research is needed to reveal the insights of consumer behaviour towards the fair market. Focusing on Greece, it is acknowledged that we have been left behind in welcoming the fair trade products. The aim of the paper is to analyse the theoretical background and the research directions that should lead future academic marketing research in Greece.

**Keywords:** Fair Trade, Ethical Consumption

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The dominant cultural paradigm of the western societies has been formulated by economic growth, free trade and global expanding of the multi-national business. Consumers' individualism and an increasing tendency to over-consumption are the most obvious effects of this paradigm. On the other hand, there has always been a market segment with scrupulous consumers, who are not focused simply on their own well-being but they are considerably concerned with the society welfare, with the environmental protection, with the future of the following generations. Today, in the era of globalization it does exist a part of the first world citizens, who are not indifferent about the third world [1]. In the margin of the global free trade, another type of trade the - so called - Fair Trade is being emerging. During the last decade the fair market meets considerable evidence of development and success in a number of European countries. However, the mainstream of the marketing academic community has rather neglected the subject and thus further research is needed with reference to the relevant consumer behaviour. Greece, among its other counterparts in the E.U., needs and wants to welcome the Fair Trade products in the market place.

This paper aims to present the outlines of the Fair Trade evolution abroad in order to introduce the framework of the relevant academic marketing research in Greece.

### **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

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Fair Trade is not a particularly new issue, as it has been part of the globalization debate for a long time [2]. In theory, the World Trade Organization - especially after the embedment of GATT - aims at equal opportunities in the field of the world trade activities in order to achieve benefit from the rising competitiveness. In practice though, the USA, which breach regulations, as well as the actions of The World Bank and the International Currency Fund push towards the increasing liberalization of the world trade conditions. The results of these actions are particularly unbearable for small producers of the under-developed countries. Marginalized farmers, small growers and artisans are left out of the trade process as it is impossible for them to compete with the big business and the multi-national enterprises. Large portions of the population of the so-called third world live under the lowest poverty point without any hope for their future or the future of their children.

What happens in practice? For example, a drastic reduction of the global price for coffee may very well lead to the poverty million of farm workers and farmers. Most of the small growers sell their products to half price as they have to sell their next crop in advance, year after year. So, they become the victim of mass exploitation of the middle men. Some of the small growers may die; others harm the environment by cutting tropical trees to sell wood or use the land for other crops or drugs. Most of the cocoa growers and the handwork practitioners work in sweatshops and are so poor that force children to work [3] or to slavery [4]; others might even sell their children.

Fair Trade enables small farmers and producers in Africa, Asia and Latin America to maintain a decent standard of living through their traditional activities. Fair Trade might offer hope for the populations of the developing world to achieve further benefits, as it may provide capital for other needs beyond the basic living standards such as hospitals, schools and care for the elderly; also for infrastructure to improve production conditions. Further, in Renard's [5] words one of the Fair Trade radical goals is to "modify the dominant economy model".

From the viewpoint of the political economics, the Fair Trade is a part of the whole concept of sustainable development. It is noted that the sustainable development concept and principles were established by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 and further elaborated by the Rio Conference in 1992. Sustainable development is usually considered to contain three aspects, namely the economic, the ecological and the social aspect [6]. The economic aspect is related to supply and demand, prices, profits of firms, all national, international and global macro-economics but also to workplace safety and general societal issues such as welfare and prosperity. The ecological dimension is related to regulations and measures towards the environmental protection; also to the development of green markets. The social dimension refers mainly to the socially responsible business and management of stakeholder relations and it is often determined in terms of the corporate social responsibility.

From a marketing point of view Fair Trade might be included in the so-called ethical consumption i.e. consumption that takes into account societal norms and what is good for the society [7]. There are claims that ethical values have come to play a bigger role in our western day life [8].

Today's consumers are more concerned with moral values, pay attention to firms that support them and are more willing to buy a product with an ethical quality [8]. For example, in 2002 the total market for 'ethical consumption' was estimated at £19.9 billion in the UK [9]. The 2001 Ipsos survey is another

evidence of this trend, as 44% of French consumers claimed that they were ready to buy products that respect values like economic fairness and sustainable development [10].

An ethical product may be described as the product that embodies “a whole set of issues and considerations that might affect the purchase decision, such as product safety, environmental impacts, consumer privacy, employees’ welfare, no discrimination, fair pricing, community action, charitable donations, etc” [11]. Fair Trade products may be considered by all means as ethical products.

In recent years, an increasing number of firms have started to signal and promote that their products are produced under ‘fair’ conditions (e.g. no child labour or no exploitation of agricultural workers) [12]. These companies negotiate directly with the growers or producers of products to establish a fair price for the product. In commodities such as coffee, organizations have committed to paying a price and following procedures, which meet the needs of the small growers even when the world market is below that price [13].

Fair Trade allows consumers of the industrialized countries to make an active contribution through their choices towards a fairer change in global production and trade [14]. The rather recent expansion of the Fair Trade sales from marginalized specialized stores to the mainstream supermarkets will hopefully lead to revival of the fair consumption [8].

### **3. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF FAIR TRADE**

Naturally, no formal opening of the Fair Trade movement exists. The roots of Fair Trade are most probably found in church activities, which started informal co-operation with Ten Thousand Villages (formerly Self Help Crafts) in late 1940s. They began delivering needlework and other handwork products from the South to the North America. In Europe, the Oxfam Shops started to sell crafts made by Chinese refugees in late 1950s. The first Fair Trade shop was opened in the USA in 1958.

During the 60s, initiatives have been taken mostly in the Netherlands (first Fair Trade Organization in 1967) and in Denmark (first World Shop in 1969). They would sell handicrafts and cane sugar with the message “by buying cane sugar you give people in poor countries a place in the sun of prosperity”.

During the 60s and the 70s, many Non-Governmental Organizations were established in several countries and public interest and concerns were increasing. All this movement guided the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTSAD), which took place in New Delhi India, in 1968 under the title of ‘Trade not Aid’.

In 1987 the association of 11 large Fair Trade organizations (importers) in 9 European countries set the foundation of the *European Fair Trade Association (EFTA)*, which was formally established in 1990 after 3 years of informal co-operation.

In 1989 the *International Federation of Alternative Trade (IFAT)* was established, which is an alliance of now more than 300 trade organizations from more than 70 South (Asia, Africa, Middle East), European and North America countries.

In 1990 the *Fairtrade Labelling Organization International (FLO)* was established by organizations in 21 European, Asian and Northern American countries.

In 1994 the *Network of European Worldshops (NEWS)* was established, which now counts for 2,800 Worldshops in 15 European countries.

The initials **F.I.N.E.** (Fine) stand for the alliance of the **FLO**, the **IFAT**, the **NEWS** and the **EFTA**.

With regard to the USA, the most well-known association is the *Fair Trade Federation (FTF)*, which started in early 80s as an association of Fair Trade wholesalers, retailers and producers. Later, it was named as the North American Alternative Trade Organization (NAATO) and changed its name to FTF in 1995.

The **TransFair USA** is the most well known member of FLO and the only third-party certifier of Fair Trade products in the United States.

The **1<sup>st</sup> European Worldshop Day** was celebrated in May the 4<sup>th</sup> in 2002, while the **1<sup>st</sup> World Fair Trade Date** was decided to be celebrated in May the 12<sup>th</sup> in 2007.

Also with reference to the international political fora, it is to be noted that the European parliament adopted two resolutions on Fair Trade (in 1994 and 1998); it is also to be noted the declaration of the Global Greens in the Global Societal Forum 2005 in Porto Allegre Brazil.

#### **4. DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES**

There are two well – known definitions of Fair Trade, one American and one European.

According to the **Fair Trade Federation (FTF)**:

*“... Fair Trade means that trading partnerships are based on reciprocal benefits and mutual respect; that prices paid to producers reflect the work they do; that workers have the right to organize; that national health and safety and wage law are enforced; and that producers are environmentally sustainable and conserve natural recourses [15].*

According to the **International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT)**:

*Fair Trade is a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect, which seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of marginalized producers and workers especially in the South [13].*

In line with definitions, two sets of Fair Trade principles and objectives have been published; one by the Fair Trade Federation (FTF) and another by the International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT). In our own understanding there are not many theoretical differences between the two sets; they can easily be joined together in the following cohesive list. Consequently it may be claimed that the global Fair Trade movement aims to:

- Enforce a fair price for the producer of each product, regardless of the market's ups and downs. Fair wages in the local context for the workers involved in the production and distribution of the Fair Trade products. Ensuring of the workers' decent standard of living, rights for organization, health care and education
- Establish Fair Trade relationships based on reciprocal benefit between all participants; develop dialogue, transparency and accountability between the participants and towards the public
- Create participatory workplaces and fair labour conditions. No child labour, no gender discrimination, respect for cultural identity
- Produce and market products of high standards in quality and packaging; use of honest advertising and marketing strategies. Educate and respect consumers
- Create market opportunities for marginalized small producers and growers, offer technical and financial support to them in order to build their own capacity to act independently in due time
- Take measures for environmental protection, contribute to the environmentally sustainable development

## 5. FAIR TRADE IN EUROPE

According to the EFTA [14] study about the Fair Trade 'facts and figures', as Fair Trade continues to develop, the European Union has to demonstrate its commitment to it. The international Fair Trade sales have been growing more than 20% every year since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The relevant survey collected data from national and international Fair Trade organizations in 25 European countries. The study revealed that the net retail value of fair products (labelled and not-labelled) obtained an increase of 154% in 5 years. Thus, it is claimed that the Fair Trade market is one of the fastest growing markets in the world.

The Fair Trade products are delivered from the producers to the market through about **200 Importing Organizations**. The Fair Trade products can be found either in specialized stores, namely the **World Shops** or recently in the conventional market channels, namely the **super-markets chains**.

There are now **2,800** world shops in Europe, which sell almost exclusively Fair Trade products. Their annual sales came up to **€120 million**. Also, there are more than **55,000** super-markets in which Fair Trade products can be found. The Fair Trade products in super-markets are labelled products, particularly coffee and bananas. There are now Fair Trade **Labelling Initiatives** in 15 European countries. The total value of labelled products came up to **€597 million**. In overall the net retail value, estimated for 2004, came up to **€660 million**.

Although successful in Europe, the Fair Trade market is still limited; in overall it reaches the 0.001% of the world trade and the 0.1% of the European trade [8]. On the other hand, there is a visible growing trend, as the number of the Fair Trade product is increasing. In the EU and the USA the Fair Trade organizations reported increases in sales of labelled products for 2003 over 2002 that varied between

42% and 91%. Moreover, similar growth rates have been observed for several years [16, 17]. For example, according to the Fair Trade Federation [18] the sales of the Fair Trade commodities are rising at close to 40% per year in North America and the Pacific Rim combined.

## **6. FAIR TRADE IN GREECE**

In comparison to other European countries the Fair Trade market in Greece is still far less developed. The Non-Governmental Organization 'Fair Trade Hellas' was established in 2004 by a small group of volunteers and the encouragement and co-operation of the Italian Fair Trade organization, CTM Altromercato. Fair Trade Hellas has participated in some festivals and fairs where products imported from the Italian Altromercato were sold. Fair Trade Hellas acts in various ways to promote in the Greek society the ideas of North-South issues, struggle against poverty, equity for the underdeveloped countries. According to EFTA the main priority of the Fair Trade Hellas should be the awareness-raising of the public in Greece [14]. Marina Sarli, who is in charge of the Fair Trade Hellas, claimed that very few Greeks know even what the term Fair Trade means.

In March 2006 the first Fair Trade shop (Altromercato) was opened in Athens in the Syntagma district. Products such as drinks, sweets-snacks, coffee, rice-legumes-pasta, chocolate, tea, sugar-honey-cocoa and juices are now available in the Athens Altromercato. During the October of 2006 citizens had been invited on Wednesday mornings to visit the shop and enjoy a free-fair breakfast made by Fair Trade products. Also, a new Fair Trade shop is scheduled to open in Thessaloniki in 2007.

## **7. REVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE**

Several econometric studies have focused on the 'Willingness to Pay' a premium for a Fair Trade product [19, 20, 21, 22, 2]. However, in terms of the consumer research the Fair Trade consumption might be considered as a rather new and a rather marginal topic. As mentioned above, the Fair Trade consumption is a part of the ethical consumption, only a rather neglected part.

In the last three decades other parts of ethical consumption have been approached either by the concept of the 'socially responsible consumer' [23, 24, 25, 26] or by the concept of the 'ecologically concerned consumer' [27, 28, 29, 30] or the 'ecologically conscious consumer' [31, 32, 33].

Rather recently, a number of field research papers used qualitative or a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology to investigate actual consumers' information about Fair Trade together with other ethical issues, such as slavery [4]; environmental protection [1, 8]; labour standards and discrimination [12].

Most of the studies conclude that there are beliefs and values which might influence purchasing choices for the Fair Trade products, such as environmental concern, respect for human rights [8], concern for working conditions [34], idealism [19], ethical obligation and self-identity [20, 21, 22]. There are also product attributes such as brand, flavour and label which were found able to influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour [19]. Implications have been made that the specialized stores should emphasize

social responsibility and social-oriented values in their communication whereas the super markets should offer quality products and constant availability of Fair Trade products [8].

## 8. FAIR E-COMMERCE

As online shopping is constantly increasing among European and American citizens, businesses seek to develop online retail websites as a profitable channel of distribution [35]. Online shops provide products and services to target the internet users. Even though most consumers still make their purchases from the traditional stores, the research has shown that they start their purchasing process by seeking information about a product via the net [36]. Thus, the information provided by the online store of the fair-products is crucial for the purchase decision making. It is also found that the more hours people work, the more they buy online due to time pressure [37]. Moreover, the scarcity of the fair-trade shops may influence the online shopping as the research has shown that good shop accessibility negatively influence online buying [38]. Another factor that influences the online shopping is the trustworthiness and the credibility of the merchants [39]. The fact that Fair Trade organisations provide links to the retailers' and/or producers' web sites (see Table 1) may increase the retailers' trustworthiness and consequently the online shopping.

Scant academic research has been found with reference to the e-commerce in Fair Trade. Halepete and Park [40] used a coding guide methodology to compare e-tailing strategies between Fair Trade web sites and commercial retailers' web sites, focusing on company information, product information, distribution channels, customer service and web site structure/media service. They also added product categories and type of business to identify the nature of each firm that was included in their sample. They found that the Fair Trade organizations provide limited information online, compared with the commercial retailers. They suggested that the technique of benchmarking (if adopted by any Fair Trade organizations against conventional business leaders) might offer insights about their current online business operations and explore SWOT analysis topics as a basis for improved e-commerce strategies.

*Table 1: Online purchasing via Fair Trade Organisations*

<b><i>Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International</i></b>	Can not order directly from the site
<b><i>International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT)</i></b>	Can order fair trade products from the vendors' sites linked at this site Can order fair trade products from the members' sites linked at this site
<b><i>Network of European Worldshops (NEWS)</i></b>	Can order from the national members linked at this site Can order from two online shops listed , <a href="http://www.onevillage.org">www.onevillage.org</a> <a href="http://www.peoplink.org">www.peoplink.org</a> Can order from the importers' sites linked at this site
<b><i>European Fair Trade Association</i></b>	Can order from the members' sites linked at this site
<b><i>The Fairtrade Foundation</i></b>	Can order promotional materials (t-shirts, ect) directly from the site Can order fair trade products from the salers' sites linked at this site Can order by the online shops linked at this site
<b><i>Transfair USA</i></b>	Can order promotional materials directly from the site Can order from online shops linked at this site Can order from importers' and producers' sites linked at this site

## 9. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

During its history of over 50 years Fair Trade has been developed into a widespread movement with recognition on a political, economic and business level. Fair-trade organisations have accomplished significant outcomes by the diffusion of the Fair Trade principles and objectives. Their efforts have managed to increase people's concerns and behaviour at an important level. However, there are still a lot of challenges ahead which need to be met [14]. Although the increase of the fair-products demand is remarkably high, it has to be noted that this demand mainly appears in some European countries and in the North America. There is a long way ahead with regard to the worldwide acceptance of the Fair Trade principles and the raise of people's awareness, concern and behaviour.

It is also apparent, that the main body of the English written academic research has been limited so far to the intentions of consumers towards fair purchases; there is still much to be further understood with reference to consumer behaviour. This situation is only natural to an extent, as the fair-products market is still small, although fast growing. Moreover, it has to be acknowledged that in fact the whole concept of the 'ethical consumption' remains still out of the main stream of the western marketing academic community. More specifically in Greece, the only part of the 'ethical consumption', which has been examined, is the concept of the 'ecologically conscious consumer behaviour' [33, 41, 42, 43] besides a few studies on specific product categories, i.e. organics [44] and recycled paper products [45].

Future research might incorporate the 'ecological consumer' together with the 'fair consumer' examination; focus on the query whether factors that influence the ecological consumption would be significant for the fair consumption as well. For example, it has been found (among other findings) that the ecologically conscious consumer behaviour is positively correlated to education, income, positive attitudes, anti-materialistic values and locus of control over politics [46]; are these factors able to influence the intentions and/or the actual support of the fair sales?

Furthermore, other aspects of the 'ethical consumption' might be included in a future research agenda. In an effort to overcome the fragmentary investigation of the ecologically concerned, the socially concerned and in the same pattern the fair consumer, research might focus on examining the whole ethical viewpoint (if any) of the contemporary consumption. This effort might incorporate a set of ethical incentives. This suggestion rely on the assumption that a consumer may take moral purchasing decisions based not only on one criterion - such as the contribution to the third world development - but to a group of criteria, for instance social responsibility, environmental protection, elimination of poverty and slavery, equity among races and genders, care for the elderly and the forthcoming generations, employees' fair wages, people's welfare, safety, education and health etc.

Such a set of ethical incentives should hypothetically motivate at least a segment of the consumers to take ethical purchasing decisions and thus make a contribution to the change of the dominant paradigm of development in the era of globalization. The shift from the economic development (that dominated the civilization of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) to the sustainable development (that may lead the civilization of the 21<sup>st</sup> century) might be viewed as the main attribute of the civilization evolution. It may reasonably be claimed that what might be called 'a civilized choice' is the choice based on the present content and insights of the humankind civilization. Our suggestion is that the choice of being an ethical consumer

might be the ‘civilized choice’ of the future civilization. In the ensuing years this direction demands, besides national and international policies, considerable behavioural changes among large enough consumer segments. Within the marketing academic community this is not an easy research path to follow, as it has been many times indicated that behavioural change among western consumer segments is very complex and difficult [47]. However, it is a promising direction, which hopefully lies upon the apprehension that “while too many people live in total poverty or in regions where consumers’ choice is a luxury, there are still several billion who can make a difference through their purchases” [48].

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