

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION IN FOOD SECTOR. CASE STUDY: FAIRTRADE

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Abstract: *This research analyzes the result of the initiative adopted by public and private organizations to improve the Fairtrade consumption and the responsible production linked to seventeen goals of SDGs (Sustainable Development Solution Network Report, 2016). This paper is structured as follows: a) section 1 provides a literature review on sustainable consumption; b) section 2 describes the Tor Vergata's experience: it provides an analysis of the case study of Fairtrade big challenge; c) Finally, section 3 concludes with some consideration of the experience. The public and private partnerships are important because they make possible sustainable development in the environment through the cooperation and the know-how exchange. This exchange leads to economic development, but above all, it adds value in disadvantaged societies; the result is a reduction of the poverty, an increase of the work gender equality and a reduction of inequalities. The case study analysis concerns an initiative suggested by a group of students in collaboration with "Next-Nuova Economia per tutti" (a no profit organization that deals with sustainable territorial development) and the Department of Management and Law (University of Tor Vergata). The initiative has been nominated for the "Prepararsi al Futuro Lazio 2015-2016" award and it won as Best Etic Cash Mob.*

Keywords: *sustainable consumption; business ethics; fair trade; SDGs; CSR.*

Introduction

The economic crisis which has struck the European and international economy has led the EU member states to implement policies based on three growth priorities (Europe 2020): an intelligent (through the development of knowledge and innovation), sustainable (based on a greener, more efficient in resource management and more competitive economy) and inclusive (to promote employment, social and territorial cohesion) growth. The goal of this strategy is to get out of the crisis and lay the foundations for a global economy, providing the basis for a sustainable development

with a high quality of life resulting from the interaction between employment, efficiency and social cohesion (Europe 2020). To reinvigorate the economy, therefore, it is necessary to adopt a new strategy aimed at enhancing the potential of the internal market and new needs by promoting a sustainable global economy, respecting human rights, protecting the environment and by fighting against corruption.

To more fully explain this process, then, it seems necessary to ask the following research questions: 1) What is the role of an Organization to promote a responsible consumption? 2) What would be the impact on the academic community if the University promoted responsible consumer actions? The aim of the research is to understand which stakeholders can engage in a responsible consumer initiative promoted by an organization and to look at the degree of consumer awareness on sustainability issues.

The paper is structured as follows: a) a framework of the role of the Organization in the implementation of sustainable consumption; b) a case study analysis of "World Fairtrade Challenge"; c) some considerations about the experience and the results. The case study has been conducting using a both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Firstly, it provides an overview of the initiative, and then it focuses on the main events at Italian national level, with a particular focus on the "cash mob" which took place at the University of Tor Vergata. The case study is supported by the re-elaboration of data contained in questionnaires given to participants and not participants in the initiative, in order to study the consumer's sensitivity to this initiative and in general of sustainable topics.

Theoretical framework: sustainable consumption

Globalization (Barnett et al., 2011) has stimulated the socio-economic phenomenon of consumerism, typical of industrialized societies, which leads companies to try to reduce their production costs more and more to deliver products at lower prices by encouraging a "reckless purchase" of goods, ignoring the logic of responsible production. The strategy for limiting this phenomenon is to create awareness and social responsibility (Caruana & Crane, 2008) in the consumers, in order to influence their behavior towards responsible consumption. In the 1960s the first environmental movements encouraged people to adopt environmental protection policies, which was followed by the beginning of a multidisciplinary debate. So in 1972 the first formal manifestation on Human Environment- the United Nations Conference on Human Environment, UNCHE-took place in Stockholm. The theme of Corporate Social Responsiveness (Sethi, 1975) has been introduced, according to which companies do not just have to assume responsibility for social obligations deriving from their business, but, according to a proactive approach and thus to a social responsibility behavior, they have to consider the different social partners (Friederick, 1978). The sensibility to the topic has increased so several work-plans have been established and national, European and International organizations have been set up. The strong diffusion of CSR and the new environmental issues lead to a revision of the three dimensions identified by Carroll in 1979, shifting focus from "economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic" to "economic, social and environmental" areas. These three areas are connected to the model of the three P-"people, planet, profit", Triple Bottom Line approach (Elkington, 1995). "Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption

increasingly affect the natural environment, society, the economy and the business world. We need to live more sustainable, that is, to do more with less "(European Union, 2010).

As defined by the Oslo Symposium in 1994, sustainable consumption and production (SCP) regards *"the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of further generations"*. The manifested need for a triple bottom line approach is declared by the action plan defined by Agenda 2030 in September 2015 by the governments of the 193 UN member states. It encompasses 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - in a major action program for a total of 169 targets, where Objective 12 is precise to Ensure sustainable models of production and consumption. To do this, it is necessary to transform the environmental challenges into economic opportunities by expanding the market for sustainable products and services through consumer involvement, which must be helped to make informed choices "(Enea, 2008).

The impact on the economic system of the SCP (OECD, 1997), could be analyzed: A) microeconomic vision is about market structure, production, and distribution; B) a macroeconomic vision is about the daily consumer practices of individuals (Cavallo & Paltrinieri, 2010). Already in 1997, the OECD report on consumption and production stated that a greater awareness of the importance of involving more stakeholders in development policies and a greater public support for private sector initiatives and modify the patterns of consumption and production that are harmful to the environment. The stakeholder theory goes beyond the narrow view that the sole purpose of the company is to maximize the economic value for shareholders (Freeman, 2008). Value maximization for all stakeholders is achieved by overcoming the traditional "economic value" approach with a broader concept where different types of values are generated in a cooperative way, at least to the extent that goods and services that produce a business Social (Argandoña, 2011). As sanctioned in "Globalizing Responsibility: The Political Rationalities of Ethical Consumption" (Barnett et al., 2011), it is possible to change their behavior through the exercise of a responsible choice. They argue that the emergence of ethical consumption can be more appropriately defined as a political phenomenon that merely as a market response to changes in consumer demand? This is because it reflects shared strategies and repertoires of a wide range of governmental and non-governmental actors, and puts the emphasis on the competent, active and creative role of consumers in the face of rising ethical consumption.

The ethical-social dimension has become an increasingly important component in determining buying and consumption behaviors. The importance of ethical considerations in purchasing and consuming behaviors is also due to the greater awareness that consumers have of/about their own rights and contractual strength (Cavallo & Paltineri, 2010). Consumers are more aware of the possibility of acting individually or joining in organized groups, so as to influence the decisions of the productive apparatus. Those who buy do not passively accept the conditions imposed by manufacturers and sellers but can advance the demand for more collateral and protection for the individual and the community. How to say that today, besides the "power of consumption", it is necessary to consider the power of consumers "(Di Nallo

& Paltrinieri, 2006). Several studies, such as Ethos (Socially Responsible Business Services) in 2008, and Antonio Valente, Chairman of Ethos and Lorien consulting- WPP (Consultancy and Market Research), have analyzed consumers by differentiating them according to their consumer attitudes. By using these classifications, we can analyze the evolution of consumer behaviors that from an indifferent consumer, who do not consider ethical aspects and corporate social responsibility in its buying behavior, becomes a consumer who weighs his purchases on the basis of conscious ethics and Aware of his purchasing power.

A market in fair trade (Viganò, 2008) is defined by a partnership between producers and consumers, based on dialogue, transparency, and respect. Citizens use their purchasing power by choosing which activities to sustain, defined by the term "vote with the portfolio" (Becchetti, 2008), which expresses the sovereignty of the consumer who decides to use his purchasing power and savings to reward Companies and/ or countries that are socially and environmentally responsible and to punish those who do not fall within these parameters. This is possible because voting with the portfolio has a comparable political value when it comes to electoral polls. Citizens' choices have a tremendous impact on business choices, citizens are the market demand. It is a vote that is hidden in the portfolio of every citizen because choosing to buy everyday fair trade products or shifting their savings to an ethical bank directly affects the quality of life of millions of people. This instrument represents a pragmatic gesture: the gesture does not take on an ideal value, rather it goes to reward those subjects who prove to be able to reconcile the creation of new economic value with sustainability. Another fundamental aspect is the viral spread that the vote with the portfolio may have (Becchetti, 2008), thus becoming "Consumers". In fact, if adhering to a responsible behavior was not just the individual consumer but an organization made up of individuals, the power of the "portfolio rating" would multiply as well as the impact on the market.

Case study: the World Fairtrade Challenge

Fairtrade is an international organization that through FAIRTRADE's certification ensures better living and working conditions for farmers and workers in developing countries (<http://www.fairtrade.it/>). The certification Fairtrade assures the Fairtrade Minimum Price and Premium. The purpose of Fairtrade Minimum Price is to cover production costs and provide economic support when the market price falls below the level of economic sustainability. Fairtrade Premium is an added bonus to the Fairtrade Minimum Price paid to producers to invest in social, health and business development projects through a participatory and democratic program. In fact, they are the same producers who decide how to use the Fairtrade premium. Eg Fairtrade Premium has been used by some farmers to invest in productive efficiency through technologies that help address soil erosion, water scarcity, and temperature rise. In other cases, farmers have used Premium to plant trees or counteract the rise in temperature, to build water-gathering dams, to invest in water conservation (<http://www.fairtrade.it/area-stampa/fairtrade-lancia-grande-sfida-chi-ama-caffe->).

In 2016, Fairtrade launches the first edition of "The World Fairtrade Challenge" a worldwide campaign to raise consumer awareness of responsible consumption and support coffee makers in developing countries in their fight against the climate change

effects. Following this great success, in 2017 Fairtrade launched a larger second edition. The aim of this initiative is on the one hand to raise awareness among governments and public administrations in applying production criteria that can counter the effects of climate change, on the other hand, to promote to consumers-customers the awareness that they can make a difference through their consumer choices. This is because coffee plantations are one of the most affected crops because of the rising temperatures and rains, floods and droughts. Millions of coffee makers around the world are struggling to defend their crops and ensure the livelihood of their respective households.

The first edition of the worldwide initiative took place from 13 to 15 May 2016 with the purchase of Fairtrade certified coffee. The "provocative coffee break" challenge launched by Fairtrade consist of 100 million Fairtrade coffee cups to buy worldwide. The result of the Challenge was lower than the predetermined target but saw the consumption of 5.7 million Fairtrade coffee cups with 20 countries participating.

Italy has contributed to the biggest Coffee Break launched by Fairtrade against climate change with 48 events (coffee and school breaks organized by schools and universities, in their office together with colleagues, in supermarkets or at the bar) and beyond 8,000 participants. From Turin to Messina, a total of 11,500 Fairtrade coffee cups consumed from Friday 13 to Sunday 15 May 2016 (Sferrazza, 2016) were registered on FairTradechallenge.org. Fairtradechallenge.org was the site where every subject who wanted to participate in an event was to register. This is to allow the monitoring of the number of promoted events, cups purchased and participants. With the sole aim of showing that consumers are attentive to rewarding sustainable products, the actors involved are both public and private stakeholders (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Stakeholder mapping

Four bars in Milan, Turin, Rome, and Naples have been challenged to decree Fairtrade Coffee Maker. During the three days of the Great Challenge they involved their customers with moments of animation and deepening, and at the end of the week was Farmers Sosteria Agricola of Tiburtina Station in Rome to win the competition, totaling the largest number of Fairtrade coffee sold (703 cups) (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. "Sfida Tra Bar"¹ Fairtrade Challenge, Edition 2016
(REPORT "LA GRANDE SFIDA FAIRTRADE", 2016)**

Among the initiatives that are part of the Great Challenge Fairtrade, it should be emphasized the tasting of fair coffee in the cafeteria of the Senate of the Republic.

"On Thursday, May 12, Fairtrade Italia organized a fair coffee tasting at the cafeteria of the Senate of the Republic... From 10 am to 11 pm, all the Senators will be offered coffee from the fair trade circuit, as a chance to raise awareness on a vital issue for millions of small producers who need to adapt their farming practices to new climatic conditions... The role that is recognized by the first national law governing fair trade, endorsed last March 3 at the House and currently being examined by the Senate" (Sferrazza, 2016).

Focusing on the Italian Universities, we note that the event organized in Rome Tor Vergata has contributed more than 300 cups, followed by the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, for a total of 150 cups and the University of Padua with 130 (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The contribution of universities of Italy

The Promoters of the Initiative in the Roman University were a group of students in collaboration with the Government and Civil Society (GCS) research group - Department of Management and Law - with profit and nonprofit organizations (Next, Ecozema, VeioGas, Fairtrade). Hence on April 14, 2016 the first Cash Mob Ethical University took place in the Faculty of Economics of the University of Roma Tor Vergata. To involve a large participation of people, students and faculty members promoted a viral digital marketing campaign using Social Network, such as Facebook and Twitter. A strategic role has had the choice of the partners because that made possible both to expand the event's announcement both to offer 100% Bio coffee in the eco-sustainable cup to participants. In order to study the sensitivity of the participants and non-participants of the initiative, an anonymous questionnaire was provided both during the CashMob and online. The questionnaire has been structured with 17 questions about the acquisition of the degree of interest in the theme of sustainability, knowledge of initiatives and their thoughts. It should be noted that the data analysis was developed by reducing the observed sample to a significant data sample of 215. When analyzing the sample, it was important to emphasize the difference between the internal and external participants in the faculty in order to observe the value of both the marketing campaign and the collaboration with the private partners (table 1).

Table 1. Synthesis of the Ethics Cash Mob at Tor Vergata

Participants at the initiative	159
of which:	
a) Inside the faculty of economics	155
b) External to the faculty of economics	44
Participant at the event (payers)	40
of which:	
a) Inside the faculty of economics	29
b) External to the faculty of economics	11
Participant at the event (payers and not)	175
of which:	
a) Inside the faculty of economics	145
b) External to the faculty of economics	30
Coffee purchased	161
of which:	
a) Inside the faculty of economics	90
Single purchase	66
Group purchase	24
b) External to the faculty of economics	71
Contribution to the project "The World Fairtrade Challenge"	740,6
of which:	
a) Inside the faculty of economics	414

Single purchases	303,6
Group purchases	110,4
b)External to the faculty of economics	326,6

From the sample analysis, we note that 63% of the total is composed of subjects within the Faculty of Economics, so partnerships with private partners and marketing campaigns have been quite effective.

Data analysis allows us to say that the consumer of our sample is a very sensitive subject to the theme of sustainability and we see a real contribution. The feedback obtained is positive; in fact, 68% of the sample reported a high degree of susceptibility to sustainability, the 72% bought coffee and the 94% confirms the merit of the initiative.

Given the voluntary nature of Fairtrade certification, it was considered important to understand the sample's perception of the usefulness of the Fairtrade Standards. In fact, not all fair trade products have the Fairtrade trademark; for example, "botteghe del mondo" whose products come from some of the historic importers of fair trade that have chosen not to rely on external and independent certification for their products. The analysis of the results of the question on the utility of certification has achieved a positive result for the 59% of the total, specifically: 37% believes that the Fairtrade Standards are a form of protection for small coffee makers; 32% believes that the standard is useful for promoting fairer trading conditions, not just related to market trends; 16% supports its usefulness in promoting respect for ethical principles at work; 14% feels in this way safer in the purchase; 1% other.

It was also decided to analyze the awareness that the consumer has about its role as a consumer, able to operate in the market through the portfolio's vote (see part1). Data analysis shows a greater awareness of the female consumer (72% of female subjects recognize the importance of "*consumAttore*") than male (57% of male subjects recognize the importance of the *consumAttore*").

These data are fortified by the feedback of 70% of future affiliations by the subject and 72% who consider the role of the consumer in the initiative an important contribution. Finally, attention should be paid to the fact that the sensitivity towards the material increases with age (Table 2).

Table 2. Relationship between age and degree of sensitivity to the theme of sustainability (1-least sensitivity to the topic of sustainability, 5-highest sensitivity to the topic)

degree of sensitivity	Age			
	< 18	19 - 25	26 - 40	Over 40
1	22,22 %	1,48 %	1,03 %	2,44 %
2	11,11 %	7,35 %	5,16 %	9,75 %
3	55,56 %	36,76 %	16,49 %	7,32 %
4	0 %	22,06 %	41,24 %	29,27 %
5	11,11 %	32,35 %	36,08 %	51,22 %

As said by Francesco G., Director of Fairtrade Italia: "The fantastic response to the Great Challenge launched by Fairtrade shows how all coffee enthusiasts of all ages, nationalities and social extraction want to do everything possible to help those who produce their drink favorite ". The campaign undertaken in 2016 has been so successful that it will be re-launched. The second edition launched from 12 to 14 May 2017, however, broadens its goal of "organizing the world's largest Fairtrade event: an opportunity for consumers to feel part of a global movement, with the awareness that through their own Consumer choices can be supported by producers in developing countries "(Press release Fairtrade Italy). Fairtrade, this time, has invited everyone to eat, at breakfast and beyond, certified trade fair products such as coffee, tea, sugar, biscuits, dried fruit, chocolate and jams to support those who produce them. The World Fairtrade Challenge has been successful with the consumption of more than 2 million people in 20 countries, for a total of 4175 events (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Participants to the great 2017 challenge and the number of organized events.

Sweden is the closest to sustainability with a number of events in net advantage with the second (table 3) and unquestioned as numerous events for each type of organization (table 4). However, it is noteworthy that the largest number of participants are seen in the Netherlands, although they have organized a small number of events and are tenth in the standings.

Table 3. Fairtrade Challenge 2017 ranking for total participants and total events

Participants		N° total participants	Participants		N° total events
1	Netherlands	874858	1	Sweden	2622
2	Sweden	515569	2	Germany	329
3	Norway	124502	3	Belgium	198
4	Germany	119140	4	Finland	162
5	Finland	72102	5	Norway	155
6	Belgium	50501	6	Italy	122
7	Australia	49163	7	Australia	118
8	Denmark	45850	8	New Zealand	117
9	Italy	37589	9	USA	101
10	Canada	29480	10	Netherlands	99
11	USA	21673	11	Spain	89
12	Spain	10550	12	Denmark	66
13	China	10100	13	Luxembourg	50
14	Poland	6302	14	South Korea	37
15	Luxembourg	5573	15	Poland	35
16	New Zealand	5473	16	Canada	31
17	Chile	5000	17	South Africa	19
18	South Korea	4330	18	UK	15
19	UK	1369	19	Ireland	13
20	South Africa	1263	20	Austria	12

Table 4. Fairtrade Challenge 2017 Ranking for Different Organizations and Events

	Number of events					
	1st place		2nd place		3rd place	
Organizations	Sweden	762	Germany	51	Spain	47
School	Sweden	76	Germany	32	Poland	25
University	Sweden	34	Germany	7	Austria	5
Workplace	Sweden	364	Belgium	38	Netherlands	21
Accommodation	Sweden	624	Norway	84	Germany	52
Sale Point	Sweden	380	Germany	116	Finland	112
Association	Sweden	192	Germany	29	Netherlands	16
Private	Sweden	189	Belgium	92	Denmark	42

Conclusion and implication

The objective of FAIRTRADE is greater fairness in international trade, which is achieved by offering better commercial conditions and guaranteeing the rights of producers and workers in areas of higher poverty, especially in developing countries. It can be achieved through the contribution of the citizens of the advanced countries who intend to activate a process of self-development of producers in the poorest areas of the world. The implementation of sustainable consumption, therefore, requires a multidisciplinary and multinational approach, thus requiring the involvement and participation of public and private stakeholders (individuals, government, non-

governmental organizations, trade associations, educators, research institutes, decision-makers, economists, business, industry) to implement a sustainable form of consumption. Establishing innovative ways of partnerships between public and private is crucial: to implement innovative mechanisms to combine flexibility and security; to meet the needs of new types of collaborations and to encourage the mobility of the collaborators; to build the competences of the future together with the public sector and stakeholders, and to foster the exchange of knowledge between the business world and the training system. The responsible company, through interactions with other actors operating in the territory, contributes to increasing the cognitive capital (know-how and knowledge of both employees and the territory), social capital (social cohesion, income, quality of life) and infrastructure (urban redevelopment, development of new services, creation of new networks).

Consumers become more and more aware of their power of influencing the market and their ability to plunge it. This power cumulated with increasing susceptibility to sustainability, CSR, respect for the environment, the willingness to help developing weights make it a responsible consumer and a threat to companies that interfere with knowledge and Plunged to its dependencies.

The agricultural sector is closely related to climate, in long-term prospects, where precipitation and medium temperatures determine productivity and spatial distribution of crops, as well as in the short-term prospects with the onset of drought, flood, waves Heat, frost and other extreme events.

To minimize adverse impacts of climate change and develop solid adaptation strategies, it is crucial to integrate the results of physical and agronomic sciences with local farmers' knowledge. Equally important is to strengthen the capacity of regional institutions to use the appropriate tools to tackle climate change.

Partnerships between national and regional research institutes, consultancy services and social partners in agriculture as well as the creation of regional networks that can provide information to agricultural communities will help to design an appropriate strategic plan. Sales have been the most important development driver by providing producers' organizations with the revenue they need to provide workers with decent salaries and improved living and working conditions (De Peña, 2015).

Clearly, Fairtrade is the son of a movement born to promote greater justice in world trade. In addition, partnerships between public and private institutions are important, making it possible to develop sustainable development towards the land and sub-urban areas through co-management of funding and projects for local growth, but also on global. Through these and the exchange of know-how, not only it brings to economic growth, but also creates added value in disadvantaged societies, helping to reduce poverty, job growth, gender equality, and reducing inequalities. Fairtrade is considered a best practice in its industry as it provides technology support that allows farmers to increase yields and quality by offering the market a safe and sustainable coffee and encouraging the use of sustainable farming practices and conversion to organic through the recognition of an additional margin for this type of product. The welfare of companies participating in the Fairtrade System improves considerably by finding a clear response among many who point out that Fairtrade apologizes for

change and promotes a way of being, which works precisely because it involves people at every level of the decision making system making it an active part.

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