

HOW CAN SCOTLAND MOVE BEYOND AWARENESS-RAISING AND HAVE THE FAIR TRADE CONCEPT INSTILLED IN PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND BUYING PRACTICES?

SFTF Group 3

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**Scottish
Fair Trade
Forum**

SCAN ME



In early June, we came together as a group to tackle the challenge 'How can Scotland move beyond awareness-raising and have the fair trade concept instilled in public consciousness and buying practices?' in partnership with Scottish Fair Trade Forum, a forum which contributes to building a just, equitable and sustainable world. Through our extensive research into the issue of Fairtrade and consumer behaviour patterns, we quickly found ourselves interested in the topic of digitalization and how transformational it can be in the experiences of consumers. Equally, community involvement and Fairtrade campaigns and events are key priorities for the Scottish Fair Trade Forum. We have therefore integrated this into our programme. It is through this research that we drew together our challenge statement:

'Increasing public consciousness for the use of fair trade goods, with a focus on bridging the gap between consumers and producers through digitalization.'

The Problem we set out to solve

The most recent survey conducted by the Scottish Fair-Trade Forum in 2020 highlighted a key disconnect between the fair-trade business model and ideology, and the average consumer. We felt most prominently amongst the insights published, the trends seen in public fair trade awareness compared to willingness to pay a premium for fair trade goods, was of the most concern. The general public's knowledge and understanding over the past decade pertaining to fair trade appears to have remained near constant (figure 1), whilst in recent years there has been a recession in the public's willingness to pay a premium for fair trade produce (figure 2 & 3).

Whilst many people's financial circumstances were altered drastically in 2020, as a result of the pandemic, the survey further suggested that the pandemic had had no significant negative impact on people's perspective towards shopping fair trade. Such, we believe that this reduction in fair trade engagement is not solely financially driven but also contributed to by a lack of consumer interest, further evidenced by the continued growth in the organic sector, which parallels fair trade produce in its premium pricing.

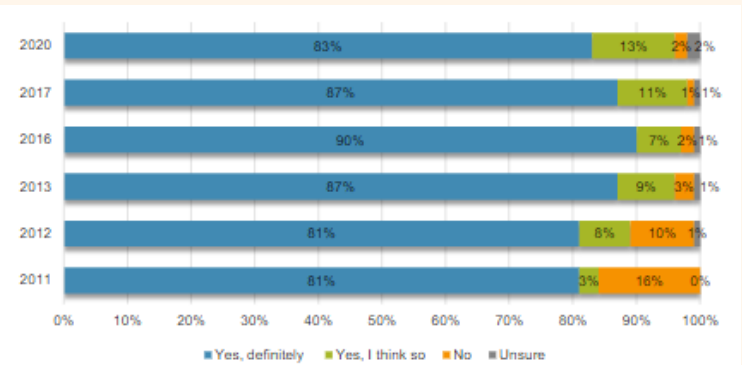


Figure 1 - response to the question "have you heard of fair trade products?" (Scottish Fair Trade Forum, 2020)

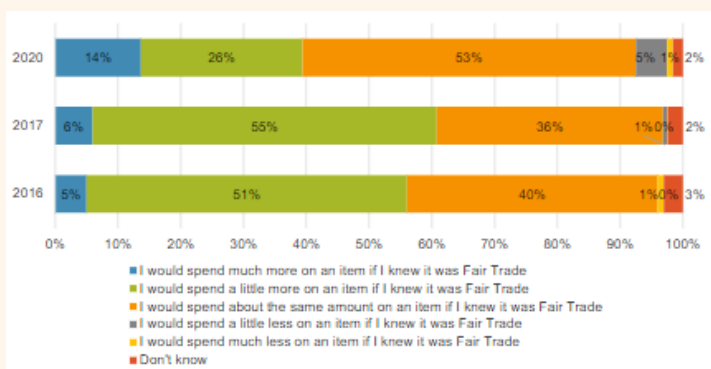


Figure 2 - Public willingness to spend more on an item of equal quality because it was fair trade (Scottish Fair Trade Forum, 2020)

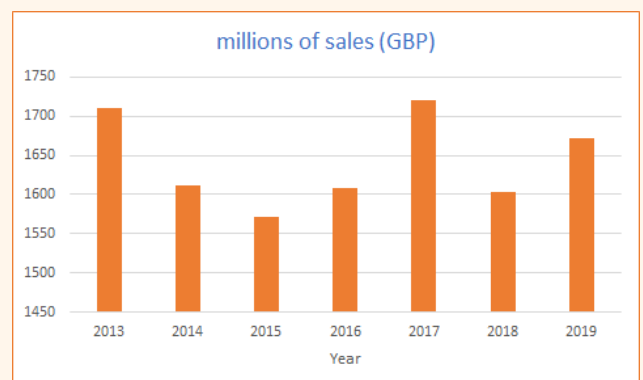


Figure 3 - Sales revenue of Fairtrade food and drink in the United Kingdom from 2013 to 2019

Our Digital solution

We set out to find a solution that would increase consumer engagement in the fair-trade process, with the hope that better understanding would lead to appreciation and support of the cause. It is a well-recognised fact that, in the UK food consumer market, interest in traceability of produce is ever growing. Simultaneously the average consumer is more technologically capable than ever before. As such we targeted our ideas towards digitising the fair-trade user interface, which could connect the consumer to the producer and every supply chain member in between, to inform, educate and assist with buying fair trade products.

There already exists a great wealth of information about many of the fair-trade items sold across the UK, though finding this information is not necessarily that easy, and takes more effort than we expect the average consumer is willing to expend.

Likewise, there also already exists a massive network of producers and retailers involved in the fair-trade cause whose stories are yet to be told. The primary basis of our solution revolves around creating a unified platform for information on fair trade goods, who's primary interface would be a smart phone application.

From the app the customer could scan a QR code next to or under any fair-trade labelling present, to be taken directly to a webpage that explains its origin. From here, with producer involvement, the user could even view updates directly from the region that the product was produced and be informed of the benefits fair trade has brought to that region or cooperative, either through increased standard of living or community investment projects, Showing the customer where the extra money they have spent goes.

Furthermore, the app could be used as an interface to purchase fair trade goods, through links to fair trade products on other retailers' websites, as a means of shopping fair trade exclusive. This solves another key area that we believe hinders consumer engagement, ease of access to fair trade, at the time of writing this, of the Top 10 UK grocery retailers only 2, specifically Sainsburys and Waitrose, give their customers the option to filter for explicitly fair-trade produce, despite organic, budget and vegan produce all being afforded this luxury as common place. We believe it can only be beneficial to make life easier for any consumers that wishes to prioritise purchasing fair trade.



IMPACTS OF OUR IDEA

Better consumer engagement and education with fair trade goods has many positive knock-on effects, primarily it is likely to lead to an increase in sales in the fair trade sector. Coupled with a greater interest in the sector, these growing sales make the space more attractive to currently non-fair trade retailers, encouraging more business to adopt the fair trade business model, expanding the swathe of marginalised and underrepresented consumers that are offered a fair price for the goods they produce and representation for the service they provide. The fair trade platform would also benefit from an influx in sales data, by coupling app installations to individual anonymous datasets the quantity and frequency of fair trade products bought by each consumer can be observed, giving valuable insights into the customer base.

CAPACITY BUILDING

One of the branches to go beyond the promotion of fair trade concept would be the capacity building. This specifically includes:

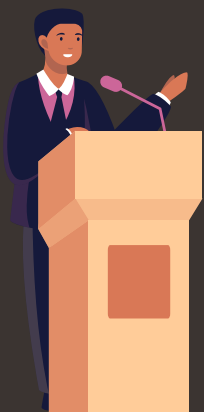
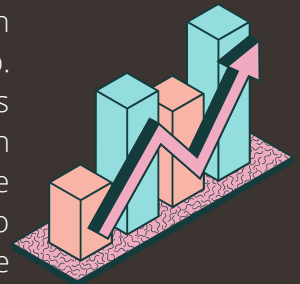
- **Hosting business exhibitions**
- **Establishing fair trade business award and living the award ceremony**
- **Implementing government/large-scale companies funding projects**
- **Outputting the public service advertisements about fair trade topics**

Business exhibitions

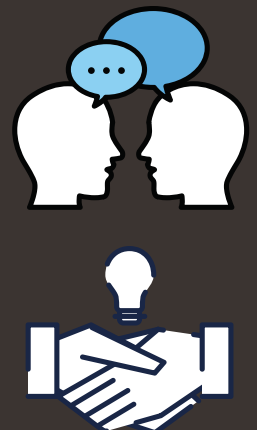


According to the report "Can Scotland still call itself a Fair Trade Nation?" by the Scottish Fair Trade Forum(SFTF), there are many nationwide events ran to encourage citizens' to get involved in local fair trade businesses. Based on this, we would like to focus on holding formal business exhibitions with fair trade themes, aiming to emphasise the fair trade concept and the existence of the SFTF.

The SFTF official site demonstrates some informal photo/artwork exhibitions by youth generations in the communities. However, we would like to take this to a further step. Holding medium-sized business exhibitions would be possible, especially when the host is able to cooperate with fair trade companies and related organisations. This collaboration would strengthen the connection among fair trade companies. Meanwhile, to improve the buying practices, the exhibition can set up a market area with companies organised into stalls, which provides a good opportunity for them to advertise and sell their fair trade products at the scene. Thus, people can better know fair trade products such that the sales of products will start to boost.



Important progress on the fair trade business should be included by the exhibition. It is important to enhance the indirect contact between farmers and citizens. By exhibitions, visitors can clearly recognise the current condition of fair trade farmers and the meaning of buying fair trade products. Entrepreneurs and fair trade farmers' representatives can give a speech about related fair trade topics and their business ideas(e.g. reasons why they start-up fair trade business and improvements to fair trade farmers based on the current buying practices).



We advise that exhibitions take free tickets and cooperate with educational organisations properly, especially the junior and senior high schools, since students at these periods of ages are able to understand the fair trade concept. Compared to activities on promotion purpose, this aims to develop young generation to think about fair trade related problems and be prepared to join fair trade promotion work(e.g. Elderly teenagers in senior high school can join to help with the preparatory work of the exhibition as volunteers). The specific cooperation could be, for example, schools can consider visiting the exhibition as one of the spring out or extracurricular activities.

Fair trade business award

The data and outreach gained by the app could be used to popularise the fair trade concept, remind people to celebrate the world fair trade day and encourage entrepreneurs to enter the fair trade sector. It would be possible to use sales data and customer voting to support a fair trade business award.



The premise is setting up an award for excellent fair trade entrepreneurs and businesses such as "The 10 best fair trade Scottish businesses in 20XX" presented at a broadcasted ceremony, like a smaller comic relief, on world fair trade day. This prize would become a badge of success in the business community. The award ceremony could be streamed on a variety of social media platforms, to reduce cost and increase accessibility. Top Fair Trade businesses would have their most significant pro-fair trade achievements advertised, benefitting them as an incentive to win the award but also to raise awareness.



Fair trade business funding projects

There are several reports explaining that the fair trade companies are not profitable as the non-fair trade companies. Based on this phenomenon, it is wondered if establishing a fair trade business foundation is possible. This solution is supposed to help fair trade entrepreneurs who have great fair trade business ideas but have serious problems continuing their fair trade business. This idea is inspired by the talent development program and angel investment project. This funding project might be distinct from these two approaches but further discussions needed to be carried out. The main challenge of the practice can be financial issues of possible investors and probability of investors and excellent fair trade business ideas coming up.



Public service advertising



It is found that there is no advertisement about fair trade topics on social media, although there are some talks and short videos about the topic. Instead of having specific fair trade products' advertisements (which are expected to be carried out by companies), focusing on public service advertisement about the fair trade concept would be great. Different from commercial advertisement, public service advertisement aims to call on the whole society to pay attention to fair trade activities and inform people the impacts of these actions.

The ideal production would be a 10-15 seconds advertisement video outputting on social media. For instance, when people are watching TV or video websites like Youtube, a fair trade public service advertisement can be adequately inserted. This can strengthen people's awareness of the fair trade concept and corresponding social benefits. What's more, combining the other 3 solutions above, the fair trade concept will slowly infiltrate into people's daily life. and hence, resulting in changes on the actual buying practices of fair trade products.

