

## Fair Trade Attitudes and Consumer Behavior in Italy: a Comparative Analysis of two Attitudinal Scales

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### **Abstract:**

This paper aims to provide insights into consumer motivational systems and their relations with fair trade product purchasing behavior. In order to pursue this goal, the effectiveness of two alternative approaches, proposed in the literature and tested in Belgium and Germany, were formally assessed in Italy. The two sets of scales were tested for predicting purchasing behavior by using a sample of Italian consumers. Although both sets of scales showed good internal reliability and statistical evidence of behavioral predictive validity, one of the two sets under assessment is able to depict actual behavior in much greater depth than the other.

**Keywords:** Fair trade, Attitudes, Italy, Scale validation, Consumer behavior.

### **1. Introduction**

In recent decades, academic interest in ethical consumerism has progressively increased. From a general point of view ethical consumerism can be defined as “the conscious and deliberate choice to make certain consumption choices due to personal and moral beliefs” (Crane and Matten, 2004). According to Cherrier (2007) and Newholm and Shaw (2007), the two most important activities which define ethical consumption are positive choice behaviors on the one hand, and boycotting certain goods or companies on the other. Moreover, ethical consumerism covers two distinct aspects: ecologically friendly and socially conscious consumption patterns. In this study we specifically focus on the second aspect. Within the sphere of ethical consumerism and socially conscious consumption, fair trade products (FT) represent an important segment.

The main goal of the present paper is to add new empirical evidence so as to shed light on motivational systems and their relations with buying behavior of FT products in the Italian case. To pursue this goal two sets of attitudinal scales were formally assessed and used to predict stated buying behavior of FT products on a sample of Italian consumers.

In this context, the objectives of the present paper are: (i) to validate, in the Italian case, both the sets of two attitudinal scales, the first one was conceptualized by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) and the second one, CFC scale, was proposed by Balderjahn et al. (2013); (ii) to compare the predictive validity of the two sets of scales mentioned above in explaining purchase behavior of fair-traded products by means of an ordered probit model.

### **2. Consumers and ethical issues**

In the context of food consumption, several issues have been widely discussed in reference to a large array of attributes and product types used as evidence of growing consumer feeling toward ethical issues linked to moral and social consciousness. Animal welfare, fair prices for farmers, social aspects of production, and preservation of cultural features, are some of the product attributes for which consumer behavior has been analyzed in the context of ethical consumerism.



Several authors have focused on farm animal welfare concerns (see Lagerkvist and Hess, 2009, for a meta-analysis of the literature on consumers' WTP for farm animal welfare). Moore (2006) examined trusting relations between consumers and vendors in farmers' markets, underlining that consumers in the alternative agri-food network share ethical and moral values that include supporting the local area. Willingness to pay more for food products that guarantee a living wage and safe working conditions for farmworkers were also researched in the context of ethical consumption (Howard, 2006). Moreover, Zander and Hamm (2012) analyzed ethical attributes of organic food using among the different ethical attributes, fair prices for farmers, protection of biodiversity and preservation of cultural features.

Within the sphere of ethical consumerism and socially conscious consumption, fair trade (FT) products have been extensively analyzed by the literature in the last 20 years. Andorfer and Liebe (2012) in their overview on the current state of research on individual consumption of FT products analyze 51 papers and, even if some articles deal with consumer preferences and WTP, most examine FT product consumption in terms of consumer attitudes and motivations, extending or modifying Ajzen's (1991) basic model on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Chatzidakis et al., 2007; Nicholls and Lee, 2006; De Pelsmacker and Janssens, 2007).

Other studies focus on general aspects of consumer attitudes toward FT: Nijssen and Douglas (2008) analyzed the impact of world-mindedness and social-mindedness on FT store image; Goig (2007) focused on the effect of consumers' global cognitive orientation on FT product consumption. Hertel et al. (2009) highlighted the influence of attitudes toward human rights on FT purchasing intentions. Finally, several authors consider the linkages between personal values and consumer behavior (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1990; Rohan, 2000; Doran 2008; Roccas and Sagiv, 2010; Verneau et al., 2014).

De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) proposed and tested a complex theoretical model in which buying behavior is determined by the level of knowledge, quality and quantity of information, general attitude toward FT and specific attitude toward FT products. The factors used to collect information on general attitude were skepticism and level of concern, while specific attitude was measured by product interest, product likeability, price acceptability and convenience. The estimated behavioral model for buying fair trade products highlights the direct effects of specific attitude indicators, the direct and indirect effect of general attitudes, and the indirect effects on behavior of knowledge and information.

More recently, Balderjahn et al. (2013) conceptualized and tested a model in which intention and buying behavior are determined by a synthetic indicator of action tendency, called Consciousness for Fair Consumption (CFC), resulting from personal experiences, norms, values and attitudes. The same authors define CFC as "a consumer's disposition to prefer products that have been manufactured and traded in compliance with fair labor conditions" (Balderjahn et al. 2013)

Therefore, the two main approaches to dealing with individual consumption of FT products lie in consumer preferences and WTP on the one hand, and consumption in terms of attitudes and motivations on the other (Andorfer and Liebe, 2012). In both cases fair trade labels have been widely researched in order to analyze their role in addressing consumer preferences and affecting WTP (De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Didier and Seirux, 2008). Nevertheless, recent research (Chatzidakis et al., 2007; Bray et al., 2011; Dutra de Barcellos et al., 2011; Grunert, 2014) showed that labels on ethical attributes do not currently play a major role in consumer food choices, and suggested that the future use of such labels could depend on the extent to which consumers' general concern about ethical issues can be turned into actual purchase. This well-known gap between consumer attitudes and behavior is still considerable in countries where



consumers are already quite aware and familiar with FT products, like France, and the gap is even greater in the countries of the Mediterranean basin, like Italy, where ethical attributes seem to be less important in affecting buying behavior (MORI, 2000). Indeed, most of the studies on FT have been conducted in the USA, UK and other Northern European countries where consumption of FT products is a well-consolidated practice. On the contrary, very few studies have been conducted in Mediterranean countries, like Italy, where FT is a growing phenomenon but still very restricted (MORI, 2000, Maietta, 2005; Becchetti and Rosati, 2007).

### 3. Material and methods

In order to shed light on consumer motivational systems and their relations with buying behavior of fair trade products, an ad-hoc analysis was conducted in Italy, where the most important fair trade organization is the General Assembly of Italian Fair Trade (AGICES). In 2013, this network included 87 member organizations, 30,496 individual members, and 257 so-called world shops, representing at least 80% of the whole fair trade and solidarity network in Italy. The most important member organizations, namely Altra Qualità, CTM-Altromercato, Equo Mercato, and Libero Mondo, are also importers, and include several world shops. FT organizations are not evenly distributed in Italy: many are located in the north where five regions (Lombardy, Veneto, Trentino Alto Adige, Emilia Romagna and Piedmont) account for about 80% of the total revenue, followed by those of the Center (Umbria, Lazio and Tuscany) and the South. In the period 2007-11 the value of the production of AGICES members rose by 9%, reaching more than €88m in 2011. Unlike northern European countries, where FT products are marketed especially in modern retail channels, in Italy FT products are still primarily distributed by specialized stores (world shops). Moreover, in this context, the per capita consumption of FT products is still low: €1.50 compared to €11 in the United Kingdom and up to €21 in Switzerland (AGICES, 2013). Like elsewhere in Europe where 47% of Europeans are willing to pay more for their daily shopping if they know that this would benefit developing countries (Eurobarometer, 2011), in Italy there is great potential to expand this market segment supported by a growing willingness to pay more for fair trade products (Annunziata et al., 2011, Maietta, 2005; MORI, 2000).

The main objective of this paper is to validate, with regard to Italy, both the attitudinal scales conceptualized by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) and the CFC scale proposed by Balderjahn et al. (2013). De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) built a model for fair trade buying behavior to investigate the impact of fair trade knowledge and attitudes to the fair trade issue, the importance of attitudes to fair trade products and the overall perception of the information about fair trade. The approach of the model is the traditional Knowledge-Attitudes-Behaviour logic. Buying behaviour depends by the general attitude towards the fair trade issue (representing a positive and a negative component). Attitude is influenced and determined by the level of knowledge about this issue. They concluded that knowledge of fair trade, overall concern and skepticism toward fair trade, and perceived fair trade information influence buying behavior directly and indirectly through specific attitudes to FT products. The authors developed valid and reliable scales for each construct. Information about FT was investigated through two constructs: perception of the quantity and quality of FT information. Similarly, for general attitude toward FT they used two constructs: concern/interest and skepticism/lack of belief in FT. Finally, they used four constructs for specific attitudes toward FT products: product interest, product likeability, shopping convenience, and price acceptability.

By contrast, Balderjahn et al. (2013) emphasized the need to conceptualize sustainable consumption as a multidimensional construct according to which consumers differentiate between different aspects of sustainable consumption, such as environmentally and socially conscious consumption. They therefore studied a particularly important aspect of social consumption: the



consumer's consciousness for fair consumption (CFC). Following the studies of other authors (Hustvedt and Bernard, 2010; Sunderer and Rössel, 2012), they investigated CFC as a determinant of demand for FT products. Authors define consumers consciousness as a disposition, influenced by personal experiences, norms, values and attitudes, to prefer products that have been manufactured and traded in compliance with fair labor conditions.

To operationalize CFC, they applied the adequacy-importance approach (Cohen et al., 1972; Mazis et al., 1975) which combines a consumer's belief about the adherence to a specific labor standard with the importance the consumer attaches to adhering to this standard (Creyer and Ross, 1997; Auger and Devinney, 2007; Srivastava and Huddleston, 2007; Auger et al., 2010). They considered six items to measure CFC: compliance with workers' rights; freedom from forced labor; abolition of illegal child labor; non-discrimination in the workplace; compliance with international statutory labor standards; fair wages for workers. De Pelsmacker and Janssens tested their model on a sample of Belgian consumers while Balderjahn et al. used a sample of European university students and employees. While the former model is well documented in the literature (Carrington et al., 2010; Bartels and Onwezen, 2014) the latter, to the best of our knowledge, is still underexplored.

We tested both models through a web-based survey using a three-section questionnaire. The first section collected information about buying behavior, both considering annual average expenditure in FT products and purchasing frequency concerning four FT product types (fruit, textiles, beverages and candy). In the second section the most important demographic and socio-economic characteristics were collected (see tables 1 and 2). Finally, the third section contained the attitudinal scales. While all questionnaires shared the first and second sections, they differ in the third. In the questionnaire called Questionnaire A, the third section was devoted to the De Pelsmacker and Janssens scales. In Questionnaire B, the third section was devoted to the Balderjahn scale on CFC.

The two questionnaires for the survey were web administered using the website of the General Assembly of Italian Fair Trade (AGICES) which promoted the questionnaire in the period September – November 2013. Therefore, the population is likely to be characterized by a good level of knowledge and information about the FT concept and FT products. Questionnaire A or Questionnaire B were randomly administered to the respondents. During the period 668 questionnaires were collected 334 for each survey. Demographics and socio-economic characteristics of the two samples are shown in tables 1 and 2.

*Table 1 – Demographic characteristics \**

Demographics	Classification	Percentage	
		Sample A	Sample B
Gender	Male	46.0	38.6
	Female	54.0	61.4
Age	18 – 25	17.5	12.3
	26 – 35	16.1	26.6
	36 -45	24.4	30.7
	46 -55	17.1	16.4
	56 +	24.9	14.0
Household members	1	10.0	12.0
	2	21.2	19.5
	3	21.8	25.4
	4	36.2	31.7
	5+	10.8	11.4
Families with children	< 12 y.o.	23.3	25.4
Geographic area	Central and Northern Italy	55.3	54.9
	Southern Italy	44.7	45.1

*Table 2 – Socio-economic characteristics\**

Demographics	Classification	Percentage	
		Sample A	Sample B
Occupation	Students	19.0	17.4
	Housekeepers	5.0	8.1
	Self-employed	19.0	16.2
	Employee	37.1	38.3
	Retired workers	7.0	6.3
	Temporary workers	13.0	13.8
Education	Low level	5.0	4.8
	Secondary school	49.0	49.1
	Degree	46.0	46.1
Monthly income	< €1,000	16.0	14.7
	€1,000 - 2,000	43.0	43.7
	€2,000 – 3,000	25.5	26.6
	> €3,000	15.6	15.0

\*Sample A refers to Questionnaire A; sample B refers to Questionnaire B

The relationship of the two sets of scales with actual behavior was originally assessed using annual expenditure on FT products as a behavioral response. In this paper we follow the same

procedure since the measure in question could be considered a specific and real index for actual buying patterns.

The functional relationship between the two sets of scales and actual behavior is thus analyzed using ordered probit regressions based on random utility theory (McFadden, 2001). Ordered probit regression represents a generalization of probit regression and is specifically applied to analyze ordinal data as in this case since annual expenditure on FT products consists of a set (three in our analysis) of cases which can be ordinally measured (Winkelmann and Boes, 2009; Hinote *et al.*, 2009).

The ordered probit model assumes a latent unobserved continuous process (1):

$$y_i^* = \mathbf{X}'_i \boldsymbol{\beta} + e_i, \quad E[e_i | \mathbf{X}_i] = 0, \quad e_i \text{ i.i.d. } N(0,1) \text{ with } i = 1, \dots, n. \quad (1)$$

It underlies the ordinal observed outcome  $y_i$  (2):

$$y_i = \begin{cases} 1 & (\text{annual exp. in FT products less than } 10\text{€}) & \text{if } k_0 < y_i^* \leq k_1 \\ 2 & (\text{annual exp. in FT products between } 10\text{€ and } 100\text{€}) & \text{if } k_1 < y_i^* \leq k_2 \\ 3 & (\text{annual exp. in FT products more than } 100\text{€}) & \text{if } k_2 < y_i^* \leq k_3 \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

where  $k_0 = -\infty$  and  $k_3 = \infty$ ;  $k_1, k_2$  are unknown threshold parameters to be estimated in order to indicate the range of the normal distribution associated with specific values of the stated response variable  $y_i^*$ .  $\mathbf{X}_i$  is a  $1 \times m$  vector of explanatory variables and  $\boldsymbol{\beta}$  is a  $m \times 1$  vector of unknown parameters expressing the existing relationship between the behavioral response of consumers and the predictors.

Two different models were estimated using the two samples from the same population, and then compared to ascertain which fitted the observed data more accurately. The first model includes, among the factors influencing the behavioral response, traditional socio-demographic variables and the scales provided by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007), to measure both specific and general attitudes toward FT products. The second model includes among the predictors, traditional socio-demographic variables and the measure of the consciousness for fair consumption – CFC, (Balderjahn *et al.*, 2013).

Estimated coefficients ( $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ ) will show the direction and magnitude of the statistical associations between the explanatory variables ( $\mathbf{x}$ ) and the probability of observing a higher classification of the consumption frequency,  $P(y_i=j)$ .

### 3. Results

The two samples used in the analysis show statistically equivalent values for ages, educational levels, and other socio-demographic variables. By means of Hotelling's T-squared test we cannot refute the hypothesis that the vectors of means are equal for the two samples (Table 3). Thus the two samples might be considered sampled by the same population.



Table 3 - Hotelling's T-squared on equality of means across the two samples.

Variable	Description	Sample A		Sample B	
		Mean	Std.Dev	Mean	Std.Dev
HH members	HH members	3.132	1.240	3.174	1.353
Children	Number of children	0.386	0.738	0.368	0.755
Education	Education level (classes)	3.401	0.625	3.404	0.601
Income	Income (classes)	2.419	0.916	2.398	0.949
Expenditure	Expenditure in FT (classes)	2.320	1.515	2.108	1.581
Age	Age	40.099	12.863	39.713	13.160
Sex	1 = female; 0 = male	0.614	0.488	0.536	0.499

H0: Vectors of means are equal for the two groups; Prob > F(7660) = 0.37

### 3.1 Scale validation

The first aim of the present research was to validate the De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) scales on FT attitudes and the CFC scale proposed by Balderjahn et al. (2013). For all the items of both sets of scales, translation and back translation implemented by an English mother tongue and an Italian mother tongue respectively, were compared. To assess the validity and reliability of the scales proposed by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) and Balderjahn et al. (2013) in the Italian context, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed, using Mplus 5.5 (Muthén and Muthén, 2007).

As regards the scales proposed by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007), the shopping convenience construct was ignored because it was not validated by the authors. Moreover, we did not consider the knowledge and information constructs, since we submitted the questionnaire through the AGICES website. Furthermore, a filter question was introduced about knowledge of FT products, allowing or preventing questionnaire completion. Thus, it may be hypothesized that the respondents had a good knowledge of FT and FT products.

Regarding **Attitude to fair trade in general**, the final solution shows two negatively correlated factors, in line with the results of De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) with satisfactory fit indices:  $\chi^2$  (df); 40.984 (18),  $p < 0.0001$ , CFI = 98, TLI = 96, RMSEA = 0.063 (0.037 - 0.088), SRMR = 0.03. As regards the standardized coefficients of saturation they range from 0.55 to 0.73 for the Skepticism scale and from 0.68 to 0.80 for the Concern scale. As regards validation of **Attitude to fair trade products**, the sub scale on price acceptability consisting of four items in the De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) version, showed standardized coefficients of saturation ranging from 0.02 to 0.80. Moreover, the Cronbach  $\alpha$  was too low (0.54). The item "it is a pity that a fair price appears to be a higher price" was dropped and a three-item scale was adopted. The final solution shows three positively correlated factors, in line with the results of De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) with satisfactory fit indices:  $\chi^2$  (df); 28.105 (24),  $p < 0.256$ , CFI = 99, TLI = 99, RMSEA = 0.0023 (.000 - 0.052), SRMR = 0.029. Standardized coefficients of saturation range from 0.74 to 0.82 for the Product Interest scale, from 0.80 to 0.92 for product likeability and from 0.49 to 0.81 for the Price acceptability scale.

Finally also the **Consciousness for fair consumption (CFC)** scale was validated. The CFC scale presents good fit indices:  $\chi^2$  (df); 5.16 (3),  $p < 0.159$ , CFI = 99, TLI = 98, RMSEA = 0.047, SRMR = .014. Standardized coefficients of saturation range from 0.84 to 0.93. The main results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 - Attitude to fair trade Model Fit\*

Dimension	$\chi^2$ (df); $p$	RMSEA	90 Percent C.I	Probability RMSEA <= .05	SRMR	CFI	Construct name	TLI	Expected sign	Mean	Std. dev	$\alpha$	
Attitude to FT in general	40.984 (18); $p =$ 0.0001	0.063	0.037 0.088	0.189	0.033	98		96					
							Skepticism		-	2.522	1.303	.82	
							Concern		+	5.722	1.279	.79	
Attitude to FT products	28.105 (24); $p =$ 0.256	0.023	0.000 0.052	0.930	0.029	99		99					
							Product likeability			+	4.479	1.403	.89
							Product interest (r)			+	6.008	1.341	.83
							Price acceptability (r)			+	3.484	1.467	.67
Consciousness for fair consumption (CFC)	5.176 (3); $p =$ 0.159	0.047	-	-	0.014	99	Consciousness for fair consumption (CFC)	98	+			.94	

\*Five indices are presented for each confirmatory factor analysis model:  $c^2$  (chi-square), RMSEA (Root mean square error of approximation), SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), TLI (Tucker-Lewis index).  $c^2$  values with a probability greater than .05 are indicative of adequate fit values. This index, however, tends to be strongly affected by sample size (Barbaranelli, 2007). For this reason, we have to consider other indices too. An RMSEA of less than 0.05 is a good fit and less than 0.08 is an acceptable fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1993); CFI and TLI values are considered satisfactory when equal to or greater than .90 (Bentler, 1995); SRMR values equal to or below 0.09 are considered satisfactory (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The last two columns show how the sign for each construct should be interpreted and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for each construct.

### 3.2 Predictive power

The second objective of the research was to compare the predictive validity of the scales proposed in the two studies in question. We therefore assessed the effectiveness of attitudinal scales, demographic and socio-economic characteristics in predicting Italian consumer behavior.

In line with De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) and Balderjahn et al. (2013), annual expenditure on FT product was chosen as the dependent variable. We split annual expenditure in three classes (see table 5). Because all respondents buy fair trade products, we don't introduce a expenditure class equal to 0 euro. The functional relationship between the independent variables and self-reported behavior is analyzed using ordered probit regressions based on random utility theory (McFadden, 2001).

Table 5 - Fair trade consumer spending

Consumption in €	Sample A		Sample B	
	#	%	#	%
1- less than 10	114	34.13	93	27.84
2- from 10 to 100	152	45.51	156	46.71
3- more than 100	68	20.36	85	25.45



Table 6 shows the maximum likelihood estimates of the two ordered probit models. Socio-demographic variables not significant at the  $p < .05$  were eliminated from the models, starting with the least significant variable. The first model aims to measure the relations between FT consumption and both specific and general attitudes toward FT products, as provided by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007), while the second model aims to assess the significance of the information provided by Consciousness for Fair Consumption – CFC (Balderjahn et al., 2013). As regards the socio-demographic variables, among a large set of predictor variables tested in the empirical analysis, including gender, age and educational level of respondents, our results provide statistical evidence that FT consumption depends only on the income of the respondents (*positive relation*), the number of household members (*negative relation*) and the area of residence (respondents from southern Italy show a lower propensity to consume FT products). With regard to the two sets of scales employed in the analysis, regardless of the magnitude of the coefficients, the estimated signs are consistent with the hypotheses formulated in table 5. Specifically, model 1 results show that four out five constructs provided by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) are able to predict the consumption pattern of FT products: only “Skepticism” does not significantly affect consumption behavior. A Higher level of Concern and Product likeability vis-à-vis fair trade influence the consumption of FT products positively. “Product interest” and “Price acceptability” affect consumption positively, too. Results from model 2 provide statistical evidence of the value of CFC (Balderjahn et al., 2013) in understanding FT product consumption. Specifically, the higher the consciousness for fair consumption, the higher the probability of observing FT product consumption. Having estimated both the models, the predictive contribution and statistical significance of the information provided by the two sets of scales were assessed by comparing McFadden’s pseudo  $R^2$  across the two estimates: the scales provided by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) (pseudo  $R^2 = 0.19$ ) are assessed to explain the variance much better than the CFC construct does alone (pseudo  $R^2 = 0.10$ ). This result seems to provide further evidence of the multidimensional nature of the attitude to FT: the five scales from De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) are able to depict behavior better than the CFC as a single predictor, as formulated by Balderjahn et al. (2013).

Table 6 - Ordered probit estimates

Sample A	Coef.	Std. Err.	P>z	Sample B	Coef.	Std. Err.	P>z
<b>Concern</b>	0.136	0.073	0.064	<b>CFC</b>	0.050	0.007	0
<b>Product interest</b>	0.263	0.061	0				
<b>Product likeability</b>	0.231	0.059	0				
<b>Price acceptability</b>	0.118	0.047	0.012				
Southern Italy	-0.335	0.149	0.025	Southern Italy	-0.246	0.148	0.095
HH members	-0.094	0.051	0.067	HH members	-0.075	0.055	0.175
Income	0.121	0.071	0.087	Income	0.144	0.070	0.040
$/k_1$	0.016	0.53		$/k_1$	1.342	0.368	
$/k_2$	1.59	0.536		$/k_2$	2.763	0.384	
Log likelihood = -283.95				Log likelihood = -319.22			
Pseudo $R^2=0.1897$				Pseudo $R^2 = 0.0982$			

#### 4. Discussion

Even though the use of De Pelsmacker and Janssens' model is well documented in the literature (Carrington et al., 2010; Bartels and Onwezen, 2014) their model has not been adopted to evaluate scale reliability and predictive power in other countries or cultural and socio-economic contexts. The same can also be said for the more recent model developed by Balderjahn et al. (2013). Moreover, as mentioned above, attitudes toward FT and FT products have been little researched in Italy. Becchetti and Costantini (2010) analyzed the effect of FT in Italy. Becchetti and Rosati (2007) conducted a survey to identify the determinants of expenditure in FT products and the relationship with traditional factors, like income and intrinsic motivation-related factors. Annunziata et al. (2011) performed market segmentation on a sample of 300 consumers in Campania using, amongst other variables, also general attitude toward fair trade. Cicia et al. (2010) analyzed consumer preferences for FT coffee in a district of Lombardy, while D'Alessio et al. (2007) discussed the role of social capital *à la* Putnam in order to explain different consumer behavior in three different regions of southern and northern Italy. They found that, in regions with higher values of social capital indexes, ethical motivations tend to prevail.

Unlike the studies cited above, we adopted a sample that included consumers from all Italian regions. Our results confirm the different behavior of FT consumers in northern and southern Italy, with a lower consumption in southern Italy.

All the scales on general and product attitude tested in the De Pelsmacker and Janssens model confirmed their impact on consumer behavior, showing significant coefficients with the expected sign, with the only exception of the variable on skepticism which relates to attitude to FT in general. On this specific point, it could be argued that in the present study the sample was chosen among consumers already informed about the meaning of FT and FT products. Moreover, the survey was web-administered and promoted by the AGICES website. It is therefore very likely that respondents share a high degree of information and knowledge about fair trade, while in the De Pelsmacker and Janssens sample the respondents were not necessarily fair trade or ethical buyers. Since skepticism is highly correlated with information and knowledge (De Pelsmacker and Janssens, 2007) and our sample is highly homogeneous with reference to information and knowledge, the skepticism variable may not work.

Also CFC scale was confirmed through its impact on intentions to purchase of fair trade products. Another aspect that differentiates our investigation is the use of socio-demographic variables that we included to capture the effects of income and family composition but also to highlight the differences in consumer behavior in northern and southern Italy: our findings confirm the higher propensity to participate in the FT market in northern Italy, besides highlighting the positive effect of income on FT product expenditure and the role of household size. Smaller families show higher expenditure in fair trade products, probably due to lower constraints when allocating family income.

Unlike the two original studies of De Pelsmacker and Janssens and Balderjahn et al., where the two sets of scales were mainly used for inferential purposes, in this paper the predictive power was formally investigated. For this purpose, we adopted the empirical framework proposed by Verneau *et al.* (2014). The authors used discrete choice models with different specifications in order to compare the predictive power of an attitudinal scale with classic socio-demographic variables. In our case, two different but statistically equivalent samples were used to compare the two attitudinal scales. Since the data generating process was the same for the two groups of samples, we assumed that the difference in predicting behavior between the two models depends on the predictive power of the two set of scales. The estimation outcome revealed the superiority of the De Pelsmacker and Janssens approach in predicting actual behavior in comparison with that of Balderjahn et al., at least in our experimental framework.

#### *4.1 Limitation and further application*

A possible shortcoming of the two surveys is the potential vulnerability to response effects. Indeed, the dependent variable is obtained from a self-report measure that appears more similar to the intention than the behavior itself, and in such a variable there may be biases that affect the current results. Moreover, this problem seems to be particularly relevant to the case of ethical consumption behavior (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; McEachern and Carrigan, 2012). Even if other research has observed similar measurement results whether based on actual behavior or on self-reports (Morwitz et al., 1993), we took account of Social Desirability as a control factor. However, the Social Desirability scale is not significant in either model and this seemingly unexpected result could be due to the fact that our survey adopted a web-based questionnaire. Indeed, it is not yet clear what experimental condition could be associated with the most valid self-report data (i.e. web administered versus pencil-and-paper conditions). Nevertheless, there is growing evidence that both Self Deception and Impression Management are affected by experimental instructions (Paulhus, 1984; Paulhus and John, 1998; Booth-Kewley et al., 2007). Therefore it is not possible to exclude that the lack of significance in both models of Social Desirability may depend on the type of administration.

Future applications could use data on actual purchase behavior in order to avoid any possible bias due to self-report measures. Even if it is well established a significant interaction between personal values and fair trade consumption, a further area for more detailed research would also be the use of Schwartz values as an antecedent of attitudes toward Fair Trade consumption (Doran, 2009). Finally, it seems useful to explore in greater depth the different behavior, which, at least in the Italian case, has been observed in different parts of the country. To do so, the use of social capital indicators and macroeconomics indexes could help explain the differences emerging among consumer groups by geographical area.

#### **5. Conclusions**

The main goal of the present paper was to add new empirical evidence in order to gain insights into consumer motivational systems and their relations with buying behavior in Italy. To pursue this goal two different sets of attitudinal scales were assessed and used to predict stated buying behavior on a sample of Italian consumers.

Three main conclusions stem from the results. First, in terms of the validation of both the attitudinal scales conceptualized by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) and the CFC scale proposed by Balderjahn et al. (2013), all the indices confirm the validity of the dimensions and constructs. Only in the case of the dimension Attitude toward FT products was it necessary to drop one of the four items of construct price acceptability.

The second conclusion is related to the comparison of De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) and the CFC scales in predicting purchase behavior by means of an ordered probit model. The De Pelsmacker and Janssens scales seem to perform better in predicting behavior. Moreover, in both models, demographic and socio-economic variables play the same role, confirming the approximate equivalence of the two samples. Finally, the negative coefficient of southern Italy highlights the need for more detailed analysis on the Italian case using regional macroeconomic and social capital indicators.

The third and final conclusion refers concerns the possibility of using the results of our research to implement market segmentation strategies to target specific communication policies toward consumer segments most likely to purchase FT products.

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