An approach to increase Perceived Consumer Effectiveness

Investigating the effect of Just-World Belief and empowering statements on PCE

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Abstract

Consumers demand for sustainable and ethical products; products that protect the environment as well protect the well-being of workers in every way. Ethical products are a part of sustainability development where companies are obliged to follow guidelines and provide workers with good daily wages and various possibilities to enhance their life. The thesis focuses on ethical consumption and specifically takes a closer look at fair-trade tea. Fair-trade products are produced in a fair way and follow strict guidelines to make sure every worker is cared and provided a respectful life. Due to increase of sustainable products in the market, consumers have become largely aware of the consequences caused by products to the environment. However, when it comes to ethical products, consumers have a disbelief towards unfair situations workers experience. Some consumers believe labor malpractices are often exaggerated and some consumers believe that the victim actually deserves the situation. Even though some consumers would like to contribute, others tend to turn away with a thought that their purchase would not make any significant difference which leads them to not purchase fair-trade products. The thesis explores how and what factors influence such consumers’ minds, with the focus to increase PCE - Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (consumer’s belief that their purchase contributes to a positive outcome). The thesis further examines if PCE directly influences purchase intentions if Belief in Just World and empowering statements influence PCE. Results show that high belief in Just World negatively influences Perceived Consumer Effectiveness. Empowering statements increase awareness on ethical issues and decreases skepticism towards ethical products. The thesis contributes to the theory of PCE and in-store marketing techniques. Triggering PCE at the stores during the point of purchase influences consumers intentions to buy a certain product.

Keywords

perceived consumer effectiveness, purchase intentions, belief in just-world, empowering statements, ethical consumption, fair-trade, in-store marketing
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Table of Definitions

Belief in Just World, referred to as BJW, is said to be the belief of an individual that everything that happens is a consequence of one’s doing. For example, good happens to good people, and unfortunate happens to bad people. On the other hand, belief that innocent victims exist, and they deserve justice to overcome the unfair consequence.

Empowering statements are built on an idea to increase the self-determination aspect in individuals and to make decisions that contribute to a betterment of society and self.

In-store marketing, a marketing practice to attract and influence consumers at the point of purchase.

Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, referred to as PCE, is said to be the belief of an individual that they can bring about any change or any outcome with their purchasing behavior.

Purchase Intentions, referred to as PI, is said to be the likelihood of an individual intending to buy a specific product.

Theory of Planned Behavior, referred to as TPB, states that subjective norms, beliefs and perceived behavioral control shape and trigger certain behavior intentions leading to a planned behavior.
1. Introduction

“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”

– Alice Walker, American Novelist & Poet

Consumers are often overwhelmed with many food choices available at the supermarkets or grocery stores. With increasing awareness in sustainability development all around the world, one can assume that consumers’ food choices reflect this on-going global trend. However, as much as everyone wishes that’s the truth, reality shows that it is not entirely the truth. It is indeed true that consumer demands have been transforming the food industry to produce better and highly sustainable products. It is also true that consumers have the chance to make the right choices about improving their health as well as reform the health of the society and the environment. Unfortunately, a bitter side of the reality is that many brands acknowledge that consumers seem to have a broken connection between their purchase attitude - choosing the right product; and their behavior - purchasing the product. This broken connection is a consequence of lack of motivation that disrupts purchase intention. Most importantly, the perception in consumers’ minds that their purchase is valuable and essential is misplaced and to a certain extent explains why consumers are less motivated to translate their purchase intention into actual behavior.

To understand the scenario, it is worth looking at the current state of a country. Sweden for instance, is known to be the leader in sustainability issues according to a comprehensive comparison of over 50 countries (Schieler, 2018). Despite its reputation, the statistics reveal that there is still a need for improvement towards a more sustainable behavior among consumers. Only 9.6% of all food items sold are ecological in 2018, a slight increase compared to 2017 (9.3%) but still an almost insignificant amount in a country that carries the title “most sustainable country” (Ekoweb, 2019). Sustainability issues are not only of a concern on an individual level, it is a widely discussed issue even on political level. The EU Sustainability Development Goals tackle sustainable issues to achieve a common goal of eradicating poverty, inequality and promote overall development in the world by 2030 (European Commission, 2016). Sustainable development includes strategies to achieve economic (profit), social
(people) and environmental (planet) goals that are the three pillars of sustainability (World Bank, 2003).

### 1.1 Background

The thesis focuses on ethical consumption. Ethical consumption is a part of sustainability development, and refers to an unprejudiced behavior in consumers, prioritizing ethics and morality when choosing products. For example, choosing fairly produced products, choosing products that provide unimpaired working conditions and protect the labor. Consumers’ actively participating in ethical consumption are regarded as individuals who principally care about others well-being along with their. Sustainability goals encourage consumers to make the right choice for creating a better world and future together. Furthermore, sustainability concerns addressed on a political level potentially put pressure on companies concerning production and other ethical practices.

A large number of articles published about ethical consumption focus on the environment by promoting green products, but only a few articles tackle the social part of consumption in particular in the food industry. Food production does not only affect by exploiting natural resources and animals, but also by exploiting labor during the production process. Modern slavery is defined as the exploitation of labor through force and violence, such practice is widely spread in the agricultural sector and especially in emerging markets (McGregor and Vickery, 2017). Agricultural commodities such as coffee, bananas, sugar, cocoa, seafood, tea and other products that are imported in large numbers to Europe. Those commodities are also at a high risk of labor abuse (ibid). The increasing awareness of consumers about sustainability issues leads to higher consumption of sustainable products but remains only a marginal part of the overall consumption. Daily consumption of products is still heavily driven by habit, convenience, individual concerns and value for money (Meulenberg, 2003).

### 1.2 The context

Fair trade production is robust, active and a global movement that aims to change the life of workers through business and consumers. According to the World Fair Trade Organization, the campaign has begun in Puerto
Rico in 1946 (WFTO, 2019). It later spread to Europe in the United Kingdom in the 1950s. Since then the awareness of the fair-trade movement has been forcing the change to promote “policies to favor equitable trade” (ibid). According to the fair-trade foundation in the UK: “Fairtrade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. By requiring companies to pay sustainable prices (which must never fall lower than the market price), Fairtrade addresses the injustices of conventional trade, which traditionally discriminates against the poorest, weakest producers. It enables them to improve their position and have more control over their lives” (Fair-trade org, 2019).

Fair trade is identified by different labels, and two labels are widely recognized (see Figure 2). The European Parliament presents two of these recognizable labels initiated by international organizations. Products certified with either label ensure to respect environment, labor and development standards and to support a “living wage” for producers (Davies, 2014).

In Sweden, the number of fair-trade products that are produced under labor-friendly and fair conditions is marginal compared to ecological products. Approximately 10% of ecological products sold are fairly produced. Swedish consumers spend only 375 SEK on fairly produced products per year (Fairtrade, 2018) when the overall consumption of food amounts to almost 30 000 SEK annually (“Food sales per capita,” 2018).

1.2.1 Tea and tea plantations
Tea, being a commonly consumed beverage and hardly chosen for any earlier study, make it appealing to choose Tea as the object for our study. Most people can relate as consumers of tea which also makes an excellent basis to choose tea as the context of the study. As mentioned earlier, tea is the most consumed beverage after water (Euromonitor Fairtrade, 2019) and is majorly produced in regions in developing countries. Largest tea-producing countries are India, China, Sri Lanka and Kenya. 74% of global tea grows in those countries where more than 50 million people are employed for tea production. Fair-trade UK estimates that at least 70,000 cups of tea are consumer every second. Despite of high consumption, working conditions on tea plantations have often been reported as very poor, exploiting seasonal workers and minors...
with a little opportunity to assert their interest in their employer (ibid). Fair-trade certification pushes forward a set of standards for every organization that works with tea production. Fair-trade in all countries promotes development of farmers and a sustainable livelihood of their families. The context appeals to every ethical and conscious consumer employing better purchasing behavior for the sake of the society’s well-being. However, there is always two sides to the coin. There are also consumers who are not convinced to contributing to restoring justice in workers lives and also are skeptic if news about labor malpractices is true or if it is exaggerated. To test what factors can positively influence consumers intentions, this context is chosen to add to existing theories and mainly promote ethical consumption.

It is important to note that this study does not aim to provide exclusive findings on tea but on the impact of “empowering statements” in general on consumer’s purchase intention and the findings are therefore compatible with every ethical product. Empowering statements are meant to deliver a strong message and influence the receiver of the message. Our study uses empowering statements to increase consumers’ confidence and awareness on their efficiency and also influence their purchase decisions towards ethical consumption.

1.3 Relevance
Low wages, child labor, lousy working conditions and exploitation of workers in developing countries is common practices in today’s world. Despite consumers awareness and willingness to purchase ethical products, individuals often fail to translate their attitude into actions (Sheeran, 2002). People tend to say and agree to purchase ethical products, however, when facing the situation, they do the opposite. Approximately 75% of consumers would call themselves environmentally friendly but only 10-12% actually purchase ethically (Devinney et al., 2010, p. 39).

Companies like Clipper Tea, the UK’s first fair trade tea company and the world’s largest buyer of fair-trade tea is one of the brands that promotes fair trade tea and aims to increase ethical consumption. The company has also assisted in setting fair trade standards and supporting more than 114,000 tea producers across the globe (Clipper-teas.com, 2019). The brand’s tagline says “Natural, fair and delicious” which majorly supports and guides the company’s decision-making. Many brands like Clipper Tea contribute to raising awareness of fair trade and ethical consumption. Just like rumors spread quicker than actual news; negative perceptions of ethical issues spreads quicker than the positive attitude on ethical consumption. Consumers announce
their concerns and disbelief in Clipper’s reputation for example on trustpilot.com, where one user states “Not so ETHICAL company anymore… dishonest marketing” (trustpilot.com, 2016). Such type of consequence can be due to the skepticism of fair-trade certification among consumers and can also be due to a lack of awareness on existing brands supporting the cause as well as the actual benefit and impact of fair-trade certified products.

The thesis aims to provide consumer insights on ethical consumption and awareness of ethical issues. The research context is fair-trade tea which helps to gather ideas and insights on consumers’ perception and knowledge on labor issues on tea plantations. These insights will assist brands, marketing and branding departments in emphasizing on the empowering statements as a strategy to promote Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE) in consumers. On the other hand, these insights will motivate supermarkets in shelving and advertising the fair-trade products accordingly, which will further help in increasing consumers awareness and making their ethical purchases easier.

1.4 Purpose and Research Question
A brief overview of the theory of Just-World theory/Belief in Just world termed by Lerner (1980) explains different mindsets and how peoples´ belief influences their sense making of the world. The theory assumes that an individual has a common understanding of why good and bad happens in the world. The proverb “what goes around, comes around” summarizes the central concept of the theory in a way that people tend to believe that good thing happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people, and hence, every individual is responsible for whatever happens in their life (ibid). The other theoretical concept, PCE, is a trigger that influences an individual’s extent of willingness to act in the interest of others. Only if consumers feel that their actions make a difference, they are eager to act accordingly. The way they see the world therefore has an impact on their perceived effectiveness.

Furthermore, based on previous studies it is known that attitude correlates with intention, and that intention translates into action. Therefore, measuring consumers´ intention serves as a predictor for consumers´ later behavior. Reasons for consumers not to follow their initial attitude are tackled with the help of theory of planned behavior. When certain pre-conditions are fulfilled, attitudes are more likely to be translated into behavior, such as actually purchasing ethically. Besides the aspects described in the theory of planned behavior, the theory of just-world belief helps to explain people´s view of the world and their attitude towards fair trade...
products. So far, no previous study has been conducted with the combination of the two theories: PCE and BJW. Hence, a research gap has been discovered in this field of ethical consumption. Through the study design it will be possible to find out in what way peoples’ belief does have an impact on PCE and under which circumstances PCE successfully leads to purchase intention towards fair trade tea in today’s context. We would like to investigate this topic further and contribute to the theory of PCE. Testing a theoretical model empirically will give a better understanding and insight into consumers that will assist us to contribute to in-store marketing techniques to influence consumers’ minds at the point of purchase.

To trigger PCE in consumers, we use empowering statement. Empowering statements are meant to motivate and promote self-determination in any individual and bring a positive intention to act. Empowering statements act like affirmations and are commonly stated by influential leaders to make a change. For example, one of the thought-provoking empowering statement by a famous leader “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?” (Martin Luther King Jr., Voice of the America civil rights movement).

Using the same strategy that leaders use, in our study, we implement the empowering statement to see if they have effect on PCE. The statement can be seen in the poster (see Appendix 8.2).

The research question is hence formulated: **How to increase Perceived Consumer Effectiveness and purchase intentions?**

As mentioned earlier, the research question will be tackled with the theory of Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (hereafter referred to as PCE) as the backbone of our study, and we further test if the belief in Just-World Theory (hereafter referred to as BJW) influences a consumers’ ability to recognize their power of contribution. Most importantly, we use “empowering statements” that contain facts and figures about the impact of purchasing a certain product to investigate and influence the respondents.

The thesis is structured as follows: relevant theories and theoretical framework will be described in chapter 2 showing how the interconnection of these existing theories. The methodology section (chapter 3) describes the sample, research design used to collect, and techniques used to analyze data along with methodological limitations and data validity. Next, results are presented, described and analyzed (chapter 4). In chapter 5, a theoretical discussion
combined with the results and findings are presented. Finally, the thesis ends with a conclusion (chapter 6), summing up the thesis and findings, research contribution and suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides an overview on Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE), Just-World Theory, and other concepts relevant to our study. It also describes the development of the theoretical framework used to conduct our study. The review of literature helps to identify a research gap.

Consumer behavior is majorly focused in every industry and sector; understanding the behavior is profitable for the businesses in order to further promote and increase sales of ethical products. With the emergence of sustainability and environmental consciousness, researchers have increased their focus more on environmentally friendly practices. Even though consumers are aware of such alarming issues during the production process, their behaviors indicate quite opposite than their willingness to contribute to a better society. Previously many researchers have pointed out different reasons that lead to a lack of ethical purchase behavior. The review of available literature on consumer behavior concerning ethical consumption reveals that there is possibility to further contribute to the theory of PCE. Companies and marketers will benefit from a more in-depth insight into the impact and possibilities of PCE.
2.1 Theory of Planned Behavior

Ajzen and Fishbein (1975, 1980) have formed the Theory of Planned Behavior explaining how a positive attitude (towards ethical consumption) is a predictor for ethical behavior. According to the theory, attitude does not influence behavior directly but instead shapes behavioral intentions which then changes the actual conduct. The theory claims that intentions correlate with behavior and are influenced by three factors: 1. Individual attitude, 2. Subjective norms (beliefs and motivations influenced social environment), 3. Perceived Behavioral Control (individual’s perceived ability to perform the desired task). Attitude towards behavior leads to behavior if the intention is specific enough. This clarity in intention predicts if the objective of an individual behavior remains constant and, in such cases, if the individual has full control to act (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Later, the theory has been modified and completed with the factor Perceived Behavioral Control (Ajzen, 1985).

The individual should feel empowered to conduct the action intended. High perceived behavioral control will positively impact attitude and actual behavior and helps to translate attitudes into intentions and as well perceived behavioral control into intentions. According to Vermeier’s and Verbeke’s (2006) findings, there is a strong correlation between attitude and intention to buy. For the sake of this thesis, the theory of planned behavior has been extended by adding PCE as an influencer of intention. The extended theory allows to measure purchase intention and assume that a positive intention towards fair trade tea will translate into purchase behavior.

2.2 In-store marketing

In-store marketing is a technique used by brands and companies to influence consumers decision making process at the point of purchase (Quelch & Cannon-Bonventre, 1983). The technique includes communicating directly with the consumers, designing attractive display of products, in-store advertisements, and also promotions. These techniques assist brands and companies to attract consumers attention to the product (Quelch & Cannon-Bonventre, 1983); for example, communicating the uniqueness of a product and its contribution to the society at the point of purchase can help a consumer differentiate the product with its competitors. This
situation is more likely to be successful when a consumer walks into a supermarket with no prior plan. Such behavior is called “Unplanned buying” where a consumer is reminded to buy a product. A study proves that most of the consumers don’t have a prior plan and are always open to purchasing products that are not in their shopping list. Nearly 78% of snack food purchases are largely unplanned (Quelch & Cannon-Bonventre, 1983), and this behavior of consumers highly benefits companies and brands to use effective in-store marketing to influence consumers by increasing their purchase intentions towards a new product (van Herpen et al., 2011). In-store promotions is precisely a technique to achieve such an outcome through emphasizing on product’s uniqueness and stimulating consumers commitment to buy the product (Abratt and Goodey, 1990).

Fair-trade products, or any ethical products can be promoted using the in-store promotions technique. According to van Herpen et al. (2011) fair-trade products have failed to capture the attention of consumers due to poor visibility whereas organic products have become an obvious choice at the point of purchase despite of any special visibility. This could be due to the contribution of organic products to one’s health and well-being, however, per contra, fair-trade products are more likely to attract consumers who are consciously willing to promote a better society for others along with their self. Furthermore, consumers are more willing to invest time on looking for and purchasing organic foods as compared to that of fair-trade products. Such a situation could also be due to less visibility and less significance of fair-trade products when coupled with other products (van Herpen et al., 2011).

It is important to note that unplanned buying is not similar to impulse buying; an impulsive buying behavior is said to be an irresistible urge to buy a product then and there. Such a behavior can negatively influence fair-trade purchases due to the later stage – a buyer’s remorse (regret of buying something).

2.3 Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE)
Perceived consumer effectiveness plays an important role when looking at an individual’s behavior. There have been quite a few definitions of PCE. The term has firmly been shaped by Kinnea et al. (1974) in their work “Ecologically Concerned Consumers: Who are they?”. Their work reveals an empirical evidence on a predictor - consumer effectiveness, in relation to ethical concern. Ellen et al., (1991) defines PCE as “a domain-specific belief that the efforts of an individual can make a difference in the solution to a problem.” (ibid, p. 103). In other words, it is the perception of an individual that they can impact society through their behavior. Through
our understanding of the theory, four important attributes were distinguished to test the theory, namely, awareness, skepticism, perception of self-efficiency, perception of collective efforts. These attributes are important to understand how PCE is influenced by each of them.

**H₁: Empowering statements influence PCE**

**Awareness**

Currás-Pérez et al. (2017) state that consumers with high PCE are generally more concerned and aware of ethical aspects and the impact of their purchase behavior. High PCE has a boomerang effect since personal satisfaction increases if consumers feel their purchase has an effect and is beneficial (Ellen et al., 1991). Overtime, PCE has been investigated in different contexts but hardly any research has been conducted in the context of ethical and socially responsible consumption.

\[ H_{1a}: \text{Empowering statements lead to increased awareness} \]

**Skepticism**

Brown (1979) and Thomson (1981) state that PCE might be directly affected by an individual’s knowledge about the issue concerned, an individual’s personal experience, and also the experience of others. If consumers perceive a social subject as being merely exaggerated and are skeptical about the seriousness of the issue, the consumer is less likely to take actions about it.

\[ H_{1b}: \text{Empowering statements will reduce skepticism} \]

**Perception of self-efficiency**

PCE is the individual’s subjective estimate to make a difference rather than a measure of the individual’s objective effectiveness. Newhouse (1991) consider the estimate as locus of controlling an individual’s perception of whether he or she can bring change through their behavior. Internal and External are two types of locus of control; people with internal locus of control believe that their actions can bring about any change, whereas, people with an external locus of control pay attention to what other people do, and give great importance to other’s actions rather than their own. If consumers believe that their purchase behavior is impactful, they are more likely to translate their intention to action.

\[ H_{1c}: \text{Empowering statements will increase the perception of self-effectiveness} \]
Perception of collective efforts

Consumers with external locus of control feel that their actions are insignificant if others do not support and carry similar actions. Collective effort is highly significant when taking own decisions (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Vermeier and Verbeke (2006) support the idea that PCE has a significant impact on attitude towards purchase of sustainable products. PCE has a positive as well as a negative influence on consumption: if PCE is high, consumers tend to put their attitude or intention into action, but if PCE is low, consumers feel powerless and the discrepancy between one’s attitude and actual behavior increases. Hence, the impact on PCE cannot be viewed just from an individual perceptive only; people around an individual can be influenced by other’s perspectives and beliefs (Currás-Pérez et al., 2017).

H1a: Empowering statements will reduce the perception of collective efforts

2.4 Belief in Just-World

Studies concerning the lack of attitudes being turned into actions, mainly discuss the issue concerning external factors. Only one relevant research addresses the influence of personality traits, character, and belief on pro-ethical behavior. The study by White et al. (2012) investigates consumer intention and action towards ethical products in the context of the just-world theory, developed by Lerner (1980). The theory illustrates how an individual makes sense and finds meaning of the world. Furthermore, people tend to believe that things happen for a reason and every action has a reaction or consequence (ibid). As a result, the individual is convinced that one gets what he/she deserves even to the extent that a victim might have done something to deserve his situation (Lerner and Simmons, 1966). On the contrary, unless others realize that the consequence is totally unfair to the person suffering from it, they will not be willing to restore any injustice and support the victim. (ibid). Lerner (1980) refers to these two different mindsets as one – automatic blaming together with emotional consequences and two – conventional rules of morality.

A belief in the just world enables every individual to deal with their social environment as being stable and orderly, therefore people tend to be motivated to defend their belief in a just world when it is threatened by injustice (Lerner & Simmons, 1966) (Lerner, 1980). If possible, people restore justice but if the injustice seems unlikely to resolve, people restore justice by re-evaluating the situation in line with their belief (ibid). People also tend to derogate the innocent victim because knowing than an innocent victim is suffering threatens people’s view - good things happen to good people and bad things to bad people (ibid). If the opportunity to help is
not available, one’s response is to rationalize the situation is activated and the individual assumes that a victim is somehow deserving of the consequence, and hence nothing can be done about it.

People with lower BJW will act quite opposite to that of people with high BJW. Researchers have also distinguished that an individual’s belief in the just world has an impact on their social behavior (Dalbert, 1999). Bierhoff et al., 1991) found that people who have such belief are more likely to help people in need at least as long as they are seen innocent. These finding align with the study conducted by White et al. (2012). In the study, researchers used just-world theory to highlight that consumers’ concern on justice for others plays a pivotal role in encouraging the selection of products; for example, using ethical attributes to promote fair-trade products. Furthermore, the study claims that using ethical attributes without combining the high need for justice restoration decreases the possibility of influencing consumers to help and support justice restoration (ibid).

**H2: Belief in Just world influences PCE**

- **H2a**: BJW influences awareness of unethical business practices
- **H2b**: BJW influences skepticism of labor issues
- **H2c**: BJW influences the perception of self-effectiveness
- **H2d**: BJW influences the perception of collective efforts

In a nutshell, consumers who view the world as stable and orderly tend to blame others for the consequences in an innocent victim’s life. On the other hand, consumers who view the world as “just” are more likely to fight injustice, if and only if they are convinced that a victim is innocent and deserves justice. Most importantly, their intention to support a victim will be stronger when they believe they are capable of (at least partly) in restoring justice through their purchase behavior.

2.5 PCE influencing purchase intentions

PCE theory suggests that increase in PCE in a consumers’ mindset directly impacts purchase intentions. To test this, the hypotheses below measure the impact of various attributes of PCE influencing purchase intention (PI).

**H3: PCE influences purchase intention**

- **H3a**: Awareness influences PI
$H_{3b}$: Skepticism influences PI

$H_{3c}$: Self-effectiveness influences PI

$H_{3d}$: Collective effort influences PI

2.6 Theory and hypotheses testing framework

The theoretical framework below will assist to study, analyze and answer the research question:

**How to increase Perceived Consumer Effectiveness and purchase intentions?**

![Hypotheses testing theoretical framework](image)

**Figure 5** Hypotheses testing theoretical framework

3. Research design and method

*This section describes the study population followed by data collection methods and techniques used for data analysis*

3.1 Study population

A survey was created in Netigate and was active for 15 days in March 2019. A total number of respondents of the conducted survey were 186, whereas 89 were among the control group and 97 among the experiment group. On average it took 03 minutes 24 seconds to answer to the survey containing 16 questions (see Appendix 8.1). Part of the study was a mocked-up newspaper article, describing the situation of a tea farmer as well as a poster, presenting the changes consumers can make when purchasing fair-trade tea. The poster differed among the two study groups, control and experiment group. The poster shown to participants of the experiment group was supported with empowering statements. For more details refer to Appendix 8.2. The table below (table 1) gives an overview of the study population and the
attributes measured, the sample size (n) indicates the respondents’ distribution in age, tea drinking habit, tea expenditure, awareness on labor issues and important feature when purchasing tea.

**Table 1 Overview of Sample**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Sample (n)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 18 to 34</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total sample</strong></td>
<td>186</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Tea drinking habit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regularly</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Often</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Occasionally</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rarely</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total sample</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Important attribute when purchasing tea</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Price</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Production transparency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Flavor</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total sample</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Spending on tea/month</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not sure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Under 5 EUR</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Between 5 EUR and 10 EUR</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Between 10 EUR and 15 EUR</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Over 15 EUR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total sample</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Awareness on labor issues in tea plantations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Yes</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total sample</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.1.1 Validity

The respondents were randomly selected which was ensured through online distribution through digital platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Hence, the validity of the sample is higher. Furthermore, to avoid any unnecessary discrepancies, a simple sentence structure and
simple English terminology was used, assuming that most of the respondents would understand these essential words. The questions were revised multiple times with the help of colleagues and the questionnaire was formulated as clear, and direct as possible (McIntyre, 1999). Any forms of words that may cause misinterpretation or misjudgment of posed questions were excluded. Further, the survey was structured in a manner that will be convenient for the respondent to follow (Fowler, 1995; Browne & Keeley, 1998). Missing data was filled with the help of SPSS. Participants who do not drink tea were not considered for the analysis since their response is not relevant.

3.2 Data collection

The chosen research tool was survey and vignette that enabled to gather quantifiable information which is further depict through SPSS Statistics software. The research design is purely correlational where we examine the strength and direction of two different variables. Furthermore, the descriptive research method allows to depict attitudes and beliefs through questions which would be difficult to achieve through a real experiment (CIRT, 2019). Through grounded theory, it is possible to systematically collect data using questionnaire from previous pieces of literatures as well as analyze the data using the theory to describe the attitudes and beliefs in accordance to the existing theory.

The chosen research method is survey, in order to collect quantitative data (Mathiyazhagan & Deoki Nandan, 2010). A questionnaire was designed using the previously described theoretical literatures. The questionnaire consisted majorly of vignettes. Vignettes allow to measure individual opinions and attitudes which are difficult to measure with other research methods (Gould, 2007). Furthermore, Vignettes (a type of survey experiment) simulate events from real life. Purpose of using Vignettes was to study the opinions, attitudes, and knowledge of the respondents when given a situation (ibid). Through vignettes respondents were asked to rate their intensity of agreement using Likert scale limited the respondents to choose from a range of 1 to 7, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 7 means “strongly agree” (Salant and Dillman, 1994). The aim was strictly not to gather unnecessary information through free text and hence, it was ensured that the desired scale of choices was provided with a Likert range, beforehand, as mentioned above. The rationale to choose a survey as the research method was to gather a large amount of data in a short period of time. Simultaneously, the vignette type enables to conduct an experiment-like study at no additional cost.
According to Kraemer (1991), the survey allows the researcher to gather subjective responses from the participants. Through the previously discussed literature review, it can be concluded that there exist a few logics of why consumers do not walk their talk in regard to ethical consumption, however, to understand their opinions connected to the main chosen theories PCE and BJW subjective views on fair trade consumption from respondents is needed. The survey method enables to gather information on opinions, perceptions, and beliefs of a large group and will also help to get insights on how the information, in the form of an empowering statement, stated in the survey poster, can impact the respondent’s opinion and views (Salant & Dillman, 1994; Pinsonneault & Kraemer, 1993).

To test the theoretical framework, a survey was developed in intention to examine the impact of BJW on PCE, the effect of empowering statements on PCE and finally PCE influence on the PI. The study consisted of a questionnaire testing the BJW belief in the respondents as well as perception of consumers’ self and collective efforts. For both experiment and control group the questionnaire was identical apart from the poster used in question 9 which differed (see Appendix 8.2). The poster for experiment group consisted of explicit facts on how fair-trade promotes social welfare followed by empowering statement stating that the respondents’ contribution makes a big difference in the lifestyle of farmers.

On the contrary, for the control group, vague information with no solid facts and figures was provided on purchase of fair-trade. Further, a mocked-up news article was provided to influence the respondent’s attitude towards fair-trade. By dividing the questionnaires in this manner, it was aimed to gather data that can later be compared and analyzed using the theoretical framework described. To be able to compare and analyze the results of these two questionnaires, the survey was distributed different people as it had to be avoided that a respondent answers both the questionnaires. This can only make a respondent’s participation void. The questions that were included in the survey were age, tea drinking habits, tea purchasing habits and statements that test PCE and BJW. Questions about cultural background and country of origin were intentionally avoided since cultural difference do not influence attitude towards ethical consumption, as stated earlier. Attributes that had to be measured were clear and hence, avoiding unnecessary questions was self-explanatory.

Table 2 shows the variables under each attribute. Questions for the attributes of self-efficiency in PCE, and BJW are combined since several questions are measuring the same variable. Before
combing the variables for analysis, Cronbach’s alpha was used to test reliability and consistency. Alpha that is .70 or higher is considered as acceptable and reliable (REF). Cronbach’s alpha for the attributes is as follows: for self-efficiency (PCE) alpha is .754, that means 75.4% reliability exists among the combined variables; and for Belief in Just world alpha is .796, that means the reliability is 79.6% among the combined variables.

Table 2 Measures of Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey measures</th>
<th>Perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Awareness</td>
<td>I would change brand if I become aware of unethical or socially irresponsible business practices in tea production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Skepticism</td>
<td>Labor malpractices are often exaggerated by public (for ex., social media, news, people, and so on)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Self-efficiency/effort</td>
<td>There is not much I can do about ethical issues on tea plantations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can exercise pressure on tea producers through my purchase behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Collective efficiency/efforts</td>
<td>My efforts have no impact as long as others do not put the same efforts as me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Belief in just-world
I believe that the farmer in the news article is responsible for his situation.
Bijit (the farmer from the article) deserves his personal situation.
In the world, everyone is responsible for their good and bad situations* ¹

Purchase intentions
Based on the previous information, I would be likely to purchase a fair-trade tea product

3.2.1 Limitations
Kramer (1991) states that results from the survey can be generalized by selecting the desired population of interest as the target group. For that, the survey was distributed to everyone without focusing on specific age groups or other factors (Mathiyazhagan & Deoki Nandan, 2010). However, the challenge here was to get people participating in the survey without giving away too much information about the purpose of this study and therefore influencing the respondents unintentionally. Furthermore, limitations arise in terms of respondents hiding their behavior and complying to most of the agreement questions affects the data and becomes even

¹ The question is reverse coded using SPSS
more challenging to assess a respondent’s attitude towards the posed questions (Pinsonneault & Kraemer, 1993).

Pitfalls associated with using survey and vignette as major research methods are hereby acknowledged and considered. In the study the problem of validity of responses arises as respondents are subjected to their own judgment and perception (Mathiyazhagan & Deoki Nandan, 2010), however, the advantage of getting access to a wide range of participant and the survey being ethically acceptable outweighs the disadvantage (ibid). When it comes to using vignette, structure story in the survey is a challenge, as vignette method is only efficient when story/information provided is believable (Finch, 1987). Furthermore, the author also states that it is unsure if the story provided a particular response to the questions followed (ibid). On the contrary, the survey is the only research method that enables to achieve generalization (Mathiyazhagan & Deoki Nandan, 2010).

Therefore, to test earlier stated hypotheses, the best alternative is vignette and survey method to that of observation which is farther time-consuming and expensive. Most importantly, the chosen research methods allow to avoid the direct respondent observation that may potentially influence their behavior and validity of their responses. It is also important to note that the questionnaire is neither a standard survey nor a conventional vignette. To measure the desired variables, both the survey methods had to be modified to be able to create the present survey design.

3.3 Data analysis
SPSS Statistics software was used to process and analyze the collected data. Through SPSS, statistical methods as mentioned below were used to handle gathered data and test hypotheses:

i. Descriptive measures (Mean and standard deviation) for important variables
ii. Correlation analysis
iii. ANOVA analysis
iv. Independent-sample t-test

More than 90% of participants where “Millennials” (18 – 34 years old) and therefore the remaining age groups were filtered since the sample does not allow to test and prove whether age has an impact on purchase intention of fair-trade tea or not. To check for outliers and confirm that the samples are indeed normally distributed, histograms and Q-Q-plots were
created. The Q-Q-plots determine how well a variable fit to normal distribution. Most dots were close to the normal line and therefore regular normal distribution.

i. Descriptive measures
Descriptive measures are used to measure central tendency and dispersion to get insights into sample and to summarize the data. Mean is the measure of central tendency and Standard deviation is the measure of dispersion.

ii. Correlation analysis
Correlation analysis helps to understand the data in a way that it provides an insight into a possible relationship between two variables. It enables to get an idea of the strength and direction of the relationship between two chosen variables as well as mean comparison between the two chosen variable (Pallant, 2002). A correlation exists if an increase in one variable causes an increase (positive correlation) or decrease (negative correlation) of another variable. A correlation coefficient can range between -1 and +1. Following table (Table 3), according to Cohen (1988) will be used to evaluate the strength of the correlation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation coefficient (range)</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.10 to .29 (or) -.10 to -.29</td>
<td>Small correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.30 to .49 (or) -.30 to -.49</td>
<td>Medium correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.50 to 1.0 (or) -.50 to -1.0</td>
<td>Large correlation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3 Correlation Coefficient (Cohen, 1988)*

According to Cohen (1988), the scale above indicates the strength of the relationship between two variables; one dependent variable and one independent variable. Furthermore, correlation coefficient 0 indicates that there is no relationship between the two given variables, correlation coefficient 1.0 indicates perfect positive correlation, meaning, two variables move towards the same direction at the time same. Correlation coefficient -1.0 indicates perfect negative correlation, meaning, two variables move exactly opposite to significant other’s direction.

Due to the nature of the dataset fulfills, Spearman´s correlation as a non-parametric alternative was used to conduct correlation analyses. This type of correlation analysis is used for ordinal variables, such as the present 7-point Likert scale and for categorical variables, such as age groups.
iii. One-way ANOVA analysis

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) compares the variability between two groups using independent and dependent variables. For One-way ANOVA, only one independent variable is used to measure the variability in addition to multiple dependent variables. Independent variable is referred to as F in ANOVA outcome chart, and larger F ratio indicates bigger variability and smaller F ration indicates little variability between groups as compared to that of within a group (Pallant, 2002).

iv. Independent-sample t-test

The independent-sample t-test enables to compare means of two different groups, in this case; the control group and experimental group. The analysis of the data through t-test gives an insight of whether a statistically significant difference exists between two groups. Furthermore, the test provides results of Levene’s test of variance, that is, if there is a variation between the groups. Effect size is also calculated to calculate the magnitude of the difference that exists between the two groups. Eta squared technique is used to calculate the effect size.

\[
\text{Eta squared} = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N_1 + N_2 - 2)}
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect size</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.01</td>
<td>Small effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.06</td>
<td>Medium effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.14</td>
<td>Large effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4 Effect size (Cohen, 1988)*

4. Analysis and Discussion

This chapter provides the analysis followed by data interpretation to get an understanding of the results extracted from SPSS Statistics. As written in the previous chapter, the results include data from descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, One-way ANOVA and T-test.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis aims to uncover if the two samples, control and experiment group, are comparative and in what way there are differences. Since the surveys for both groups were identical up to the poster in question 9, Means and Standard Deviation for both samples should
be similar. Table 5 below shows that Means are indeed similar for both samples and we can therefore further proceed with comparative analysis.

In the following analysis, we will have a closer look at the control and experiment group individually by testing our previously stated hypotheses. We expect the empowering statement stated on the poster of the experiment group to have an impact on the results and we are therefore not able to combine the dataset concerning variables that follow the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>STD. DEVIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEA CONSUMPTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>.988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEA ATTRIBUTES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MONEY SPENT ON TEA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(EUR)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>.687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>.715</td>
<td>.715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JUST-WORLD BELIEF</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5 Descriptive analysis*

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

4.2.1 H₁: Empowering statements influence PCE
A one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of empowering statements presented in the poster of the experiment group on PCE. There was a significant difference in PCE concerning self-effectiveness and the perception of others’ efforts of the two groups (F (1.480) = 25.213, p < .0001) and (F (1.678) = 14.402, p < .0001) respectively. There is no significant difference between the groups regarding consumers’ willingness to change brand once aware of labor issues and their perception of over exaggeration of labor malpractices. Figure 6 graphically shows the difference in Means of experiment and control group of tested variables.
4.2.2 **H$_2$: BJW influences PCE**

**H$_{2a}$: BJW influences awareness of labor issues**

**Experiment Group**

Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient for the experiment group shows a small, negative correlation ($r = -0.056$, $n = 97$, $p = 0.584$), with lower just world belief associated with higher willingness to change brand if one is aware of labor malpractices.

**Control Group**

Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient for control groups shows a medium, negative correlation ($r = -0.297$, $n = 89$, $p < 0.01$), with lower just world belief associated with higher willingness to change brand if one is aware of labor malpractices.

The lack of significance for experiment group indicates, that empowering statements have a stronger impact on someone’s willingness to change brand than just world belief alone. Further tests in this regard will follow.

**H$_{2b}$: BJW influences skepticism**

**Experiment Group**

Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient for the experiment group shows a small, negative correlation ($r = -0.237$, $n = 97$, $p < 0.05$), with lower just world belief associated with higher perception of over exaggeration of labor malpractices.

**Control Group**

Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient for control groups shows a medium, positive correlation ($r = 0.320$, $n = 89$, $p < 0.01$), with higher just world belief associated with higher perception of over exaggeration of labor malpractices.
The negative correlation of experiment group shows, that people who have a higher just world belief are less likely to perceive an over exaggeration of labor malpractices through public if they feel their actions can somehow restore justice. The outcome shows that just world belief does influence consumers’ perception depending on level of PCE.

**H2c: BJW influences the perception of self-effectiveness**

Experiment Group  
Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient for the experiment group shows a small, negative correlation ($r = -0.011$, $n = 97$, $p < .05$), with lower just world belief associated with lower self-effectiveness of purchase behavior.

Control Group  
Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient for control groups shows a medium, positive correlation ($r = 0.330$, $n = 89$, $p < .01$), with higher just world belief associated with higher self-effectiveness of purchase behavior.

**H2d: BJW view influences the perception of collective efforts**

Experiment Group  
Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient for the experiment group shows a small, positive correlation ($r = 0.073$, $n = 97$, $p < .05$), with higher just world belief associated with higher importance given to other peoples’ efforts regarding a more ethical purchase behavior.

Control Group  
Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient for the control group shows a small, positive correlation ($r = 0.231$, $n = 89$, $p < .05$), with higher just world belief associated with higher importance given to other peoples’ efforts regarding a more ethical purchase behavior.

The lack of significance for experiment group indicates, that if empowering statements are displayed, others’ efforts are not as important as they are in the case of the control group.

### 4.2.3 H3: PCE influences Purchase Intention

**H3a: Awareness influences PI**

Experiment Group  
Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient for the experiment group shows a medium, positive correlation ($r = 0.424$, $n = 97$, $p < .01$), with higher awareness of labor issues associated with higher purchase intention towards fair trade tea.

Control Group
Spearman´s rho correlation coefficient for the control group shows a large, positive correlation 
(r = .567, n = 89, p < .01), with higher awareness of labor issues associated with higher purchase 
intention towards fair trade tea.

H₃b: Skepticism influences PI
Experiment Group
Spearman´s rho correlation coefficient for the experiment group shows a large, negative 
correlation (r = -.557, n = 97, p < .01), with higher skepticism towards labor issues associated 
with lower purchase intention towards fair trade tea.

Control Group
Spearman´s rho correlation coefficient for the control group shows a small, negative correlation 
(r = -.234, n = 89, p < .05), with higher skepticism towards labor issues associated with lower 
purchase intention towards fair trade tea.

H₃c: Self-effectiveness influences PI
Experiment Group
Spearman´s rho correlation coefficient for the experiment group shows a medium, negative 
correlation (r = -.476, n = 97, p < .01), with higher perceived self-effectiveness of purchase 
behavior associated with higher purchase intention towards fair trade tea.

Control Group
Spearman´s rho correlation coefficient for the experiment group shows a medium, negative 
correlation (r = -.430, n = 89, p < .01), with higher perceived self-effectiveness of purchase 
behavior associated with higher purchase intention towards fair trade tea.

H₃d: Perception of collective effort influences PI
Experiment Group
Spearman´s rho correlation coefficient for the experiment group shows a small, negative 
correlation (r = -.242, n = 97, p < .05), with higher importance given to other peoples´ efforts 
associated with lower purchase intention towards fair trade tea.

Control Group
Spearman´s rho correlation coefficient for the experiment group shows medium, negative 
correlation (r = -.480, n = 89, p < .01), with higher importance given to other peoples´ efforts 
associated with lower purchase intention towards fair trade tea.
The stronger correlation in the control group indicates that if there is a weak statement, others’ efforts are weighted stronger. On the other hand, the experiment group suggests that more importance of self-effectiveness can be realized, by using a robust empowering statement as in this case.

### Table 6 Hypotheses table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1a: Empowering statements lead to increased awareness</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1b: Empowering statements will reduce skepticism</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1c: Empowering statements will increase the perception of self-effectiveness</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1d: Empowering statements will reduce the perception of collective efforts</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2a: BJW influences awareness of unethical business practices</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2b: BJW influences skepticism of labor issues</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2c: BJW influences the perception of self-effectiveness</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2d: BJW influences the perception of collective efforts</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3a: Awareness influences PI</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b: Skepticism influences PI</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3c: Self-effectiveness influences PI</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3d: Collective effort influences PI</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of PCE on Purchase Intention. There was a significant difference at the p < 0.01 level in PI (F (1.567) = 26.131, p = .000). Figure 7 graphically shows the difference in Means of experiment and control group of purchase intention.
The correlation analysis already gave us a bit of an insight into the differences among the two samples and therefore the impact of the empowering statement shown to our respondents. To get a better idea of the actual difference among the two groups we further conducted a t-test. A first comparison of the two-sample means (of purchase intention) (Figure 7) gives us an idea that we can expect a significant Levene’s test.

With the help of an independent-sample t-tests we want to find out the difference of PCE and purchase intention among the control and experiment group by comparing the mean scores of the two groups, control, and experiment: The independent sample test compares the means of the two groups, control and experiment group. The two variables used for the analysis are purchase intention and group (control or experiment). We expect unequal means of the two groups since a higher mean of purchase intention of the experiment group is anticipated due to higher PCE achieved through the poster. For our analysis, we rely on “equal variance not assumed” since p-value (Sig.) is small (p < 0.001). The Levene’s test is therefore significant. The negative t value (t = -5.028) indicates that the mean of Purchase Intention of the first group (control group) is significantly lower than the mean of the second group (experiment group). The significance is further confirmed since the coefficient interval does not contain zero (0).

Since p-value < 0.001 we can conclude that there is a significant difference in purchase intention of control and experiment group based on the poster displayed. To measure the magnitude of the difference, we further calculated eta squared as followed:

$$\eta^2 = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N1+N2-2)} = \frac{-5.028^2}{-5.028^2+(89+97-2)} = 0.124.$$
According to Cohen (1988), this indicates a moderate effect. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the purchase intention of control and experiment group. There was a significant difference in scores for the control group (M=4.88, SD=1.744) and experiment group (M=5.98, SD=1.164). The magnitude of the difference in the means was close to large (eta squared = 0.124).

5. Discussion
The following paragraphs provide an overview of the main findings. The results are explained through the theoretical framework. The thesis contributes to the theory of PCE as defined by Ellen et al. (1991). More specifically, the study confirms the interconnectedness of consumers belief in just-world impacting PCE, PCE impacting purchase intention, and of empowering statements impacting PCE.

5.1 General Findings and Discussion
The findings show that empowering statements have a positive impact on PCE. The theory of PCE states that consumers feel belief is strengthened when the information they receive emphasizes the power of their purchase (Hanss and Doran, 2019) (Fink and Schubert, 2018) (Ellen et al., 1991). Furthermore, a belief that their actions positively contribute to solving a social issue strongly influences purchase intentions of the consumer. It was also discovered that empowering statements reduce the perception that collective efforts (by a community or a group) are significant than individual efforts alone. On the one hand, an individual’s perception of self-efficiency is vital for supporting ethical products through purchasing behavior, however, the perception of collective efforts also strongly influences one’s effectiveness. However, on the other hand, when an individual has a stronger belief in just-world, such individual tends to believe that collective efforts are highly important to support a cause or employ ethical behavior for that matter.

A part of PCE theory claims that other peoples’ efforts matter, this is referred to the external locus of control (Ellen et al., 1991). If consumers have a higher external locus of control, they feel that their actions are insignificant if others do not encourage and support such actions. Collective effort is then highly significant for consumers when making decisions at the point of purchase. The analysis reveals that the empowering statement is able to reduce one’s external locus of control, a weaker correlation between collective effort and purchase intention is also
realized. For instance, a consumer feels that his/her individual efforts cannot help in restoring justice, his/her attitude influences the intentions by believing that nothing good can happen unless others behave in the same way as the individual him-/herself. If the empowering statement about consumers’ impactful purchase/contribution is weak, consumers are likelier to automatically revert back to believing that their contribution is valueless if fellow consumers’ contributions are not in line with theirs.

In addition to perception of collective and individual efforts, skepticism has been a cause for less successful purchases of fair-trade products or any sustainable products for that matter (Ellen et al., 1991). The theory of PCE states that PCE is formed and shaped through various influential factors, for example, if a consumer perceives labor issues on tea plantations as a mere exaggeration, that explains the consumer’s skeptical mindset. In such situations, PCE decreases, and consumers tend to be resistant towards products that aim to fight the issue. Belief in just-world also strengthens skepticism as consumers tend to believe the news is exaggerated. There is also general skepticism where consumers are not convinced that if a positive change can/is possible to achieve (White et al., 2012). If people feel incapable of resolving a problem, their attitude towards the social issue changes; and they immediately perceive it as merely exaggerated (White et al., 2012) (Ellen et al., 1991). The findings confirm that empowering statements are able to increase PCE by reducing skepticism towards the benefits of fair-trade products, in this case fair-trade tea.

Likewise, decrease in consumers’ skepticism strengthens an individual’s ability and willingness to contribute to a better society; when they realize that their actions are one of the solutions to make a change and restore the justice. Moreover, consumers seem to be less skeptical towards reporting of labor issues of tea plantations when receiving adequate information. Further, a significant negative correlation between consumers’ skepticism towards information on labor malpractices was noticed, which affects their purchase intention towards fair trade tea. If people are critical and consider labor issues as mere exaggeration, they are less willing to purchase in to support the workers in tea plantations. The empowering statement displayed had a substantial impact on respondents regarding their level of PCE and purchase intention towards fair trade tea.

The study further confirms that consumers’ just-world belief indeed influences PCE. Briefly speaking, belief in a just world is a perception that an individual is responsible for his/her
consequences and any situations that may come; whether or not if it is an injustice or justice is a secondary thought for people with such “just” beliefs (Lerner, 1980). The stronger one’s just-world belief is, the lower one’s PCE will be. That means the just-world belief has a similar impact on PCE as the empowering statement. The way consumers see the world therefore has at least indirect, impact on their purchase intention and ultimately on purchase behavior. The results show that empowering statements outweigh just-world belief only when consumers can acknowledge the value and power of the purchase. Furthermore, when an individual has a stronger belief in just world, his/her willingness to contribute to a better society becomes less of a concern (Lerner, 1980). However, when an individual recognizes that a victim is innocent and deserves justice, the individual would be willing to act accordingly to restore the justice. From the data we gathered, we notice that there is a significant relationship between just-world belief and willingness to change a brand when becoming aware of any unethical practices (PCE - awareness), indicating that empowering statement strongly impacts and supersedes one’s belief in a just world.

In addition to skepticism and stronger just world belief, an individual is more likely to support fair-trade consumption only when the individual is firmly convinced that their purchase behavior will definitely have an impact. It is important to note that PCE indeed plays an essential role in attaining a positive outcome, where an individual having a high perceived self-efficiency will have higher purchase intentions as PCE directly impacts intentions.

To answer the research question “How to increase Perceived Consumer Effectiveness and purchase intentions?”, a holistic approach was needed to see what factors affect PCE and what factors increase and decrease the impact of PCE during marketing activities. We say that, empowering statements largely contribute to a more sustainable and ethical consumption. Increasing PCE in consumers, increases their confidence that their purchase behavior matters and has an impact on diverse social issues. The results show that both, just-world belief and empowering statements have an impact on PCE. The analysis confirms that PCE has an impact on purchase intention towards fair-trade tea. Generally speaking, the higher the PCE, the likelier consumers intend to purchase fair-trade tea. We have considered different aspects of PCE when conducting the analysis – awareness, skepticism, self-efficiency and collective efforts. Awareness about labor issues can be associated with higher purchase intention towards fair trade tea. Higher an individual is aware of labor issues on tea plantations, the more likely they are willing to consume ethically.
Empowering statements about the impact of purchase behavior and someone’s belief in a BJW have an impact on PCE, and therefore leading to influencing purchase intention towards fair trade tea products. Even for consumers who do not have a strong belief in a just world, where everyone gets what he/ she deserves, consumers can develop a positive attitude towards fair trade tea in order to contribute to solving a social issue. This outcome is highly likely when being confronted with empowering statements that focus on pointing out their actions´ impact.

5.2 Additional findings
An additional finding, that is not directly linked to the theoretical framework, is the fact, that price seems to be irrelevant for consumers when purchasing tea. Less than 5% stated that price matters. As described by Devinney et al. (2010), price of ethical products is often associated as a reason behind the attitude-behavior gap. According to that, consumers express a positive attitude towards ethical, fair-trade products, but in reality, they do not purchase accordingly due to higher prices of ethical products compared to contemporary ones (van Herpen et al., 2011). Our study reveals that price is not a barrier to ethical consumption. However, this was not the main focus of our study and we cannot take more assumptions from this finding.

5.3 Limitations
Despite the above-mentioned findings, we cannot close our eyes from limitations that come along with this study. The conducted correlation analysis allows us to determine whether there is a relationship between two variables, but it does not ultimately prove that changes in one variable will lead to changes in the other variable. Further, the correlation was at times only moderate and is therefore not as strong. This might be due to general survey limitations, such as a limited number of respondents. We were not able to measure in all scenarios a significant difference between control and experiment group. This diminishes the importance and relevance of the poster displayed.

Majority of the respondents where millennials, assuming mainly students from Europe due to the distribution channels used. According to a research by Forbes, Millennials are powerful consumers. They occupy over 50% of world’s population and have been the largest, for example, in American history (Soloman, 2018). Importantly, the research says that over 50% of millennials are active and make efforts in buying products that support a cause and especially from those companies that support sustainability measures (ibid). It was also researched that Millennials’ everyday life is digital and hence the search for online information about a certain
product in digital platforms is common practice which increases the likelihood of making a purchase after that according the information obtained. Furthermore, Millennials are aware of trends, crave for authenticity and are value driven, enjoy watching advertisements and are very well equipped with technology that makes them target group for any brand to raise awareness and increase likelihood of successful purchase behavior (ibid).

The research does not consider whether education, profession or cultural differences might impact general knowledge and awareness of the social issue described and therefore on consumers’ purchase intention. Another limitation to consider, is the fact, that the described research was conducted on tea. The thesis claims that findings can be generalized on other food sectors. But it has to be taken into account, that tea might be an exceptional product and findings for other food items might differ and consumers might answer differently when being asked about another product.

Lastly, since we could not test or observe the presented solution in real world, such as actual stores, it is difficult to know if there will be any backlashes and misinterpretations of the poster. It was also not possible to learn if these intentions would turn into long-term behavior, and to learn how an individual will communicate such empowering messages to others that promotes the desired chain of events. Despite these limitations, we can still accept the result and take valid answers from this study.

6. Conclusion
6.1 Summary
Sustainability has become a core value for a lot of companies nowadays. Still, there are companies that exploit workers from emerging countries in the process of their supply chain. However, with rapid increase in usage of digital platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, etc. more and more consumers are startled by the reality. The pressure by consumers does also play a part in sustainability reaching to a political level, where necessary measure are taken towards a more sustainable consumption and production. As mentioned earlier, labors especially in developing countries are at risk of exploitation, tea industry is one of the industries that benefits from low cost labor. Tea being a one of the most consumed beverages, makes this topic of research relevant and approachable for the general population.
This study examines ethical consumption, as a part of sustainable consumption overall. Ethical consumption differs in a way that it deeply dives into the welfare of workers and accompanied social concerns. Despite of increased promotions on ethical consumption by social activists and companies, consumers lack motivation in turning their beliefs and attitudes into actual purchase behavior. There have been many researches for finding an explanation for why this is happening. Some of those reasons are lack of information, awareness, skepticism, high price, unavailability and others.

Following the theory of just world belief, on one hand, if consumers believe that generally good things happen to good and bad things happen to bad people, they accept that something has to be done about the injustice, under the assumption that they are capable (at least partly) to restore the justice. On the other hand, if consumers do not feel capable enough of doing something about the social injustice, they seek other explanations, in this case, consider the issue as being overexaggerated and therefore, convince themselves (unconsciously) that there is no need to change the situation and therefore no need to change their purchase behavior. People tend to seek justice in the world, either by being convinced that everybody in life gets what they deserve or by trying to restore justice through purchase behavior, in this case. The study was able to prove that detailed information about the benefits of fair-trade consumption does influence consumer’s purchase intention through increasing perceived consumer effectiveness, PCE. Companies have to be aware about how consumers world view and PCE impact the perception of their marketing campaign and product display. Promoting products in accordance with the findings of this study is not necessarily more expensive and difficult to follow, it simply requires a different display of fair-trade products and more relevant slogans, images or wording when describing the product. Even people with strong just-world belief will not buy fair trade products if they are not convinced that their actions will actually make an impact in restoring justice and solving the situation of farmers in developing countries.

6.2 Academic research contribution
The study shed a new light on the interconnection of PCE and Just world theory and their relation to purchase intentions. Previous researches in this regard have studied these theories individually in order to understand consumer behavior. The tested theoretical framework provides a holistic view of various attributes affecting consumers and their intentions. To answer the research question, different attributes of PCE have been distinguished – awareness, skepticism, self-efficacy and collective efforts to test the presented theory. This
differentiation of attributes is a new approach and therefore contributes to the theory of PCE. All the hypotheses tested support that belief in Just world influences PCE, therefore, using both theories for future researches and studies can provide valuable and influential insights into consumer behavior.

6.3 Managerial contribution
The results achieved do not exclusively apply to tea consumption and labor malpractices on tea plantations, but generally on social issues caused through food production. Using the suggested solution, companies and supermarkets can influence the customer journey, strengthen the product’s and brands’ image and increase sales of ethical products. Furthermore, the solution promotes clarity of what the company stands for in the minds of consumers, which we believe will hugely impact on sales and increased awareness. The solution largely appeals to in-store marketing techniques to influence consumers at the point of purchase. For instance, at the fair-trade shelves, fair-trade brands can display posters with content on how fair-trade contributes to better world and how the fair-trade certification benefits to the society as a whole. Such type of clarified information positively influences consumers and promotes trust and a sense of responsibility to make the right judgement. Furthermore, such clarified information also reduces skepticism and strengthens belief that ethical consumption is vital for sustainable development.

Consumers with unplanned buying can also be triggered and influenced by posters stating empowering statements in the supermarkets. As more than 70% of purchases are unplanned, the suggested solution will be profitable for brands and companies when placing and promoting products in stores. The solution is also applicable and relevant to any industry or sector that works towards ethical consumption. It’s all about consumers acknowledging that their contribution surely matters to the brands and is able to make a difference in the world. PCE should be targeted in order to tackle ethical consumption and make sure that consumer understand their importance and purchasing power. Increasing the awareness and impact that fair trade consumption has and can improve the life of farmers, their families and community in developing countries. Using these insights, companies and supermarkets can target the consumers by providing them concrete and empowering information that voids their Just-World belief.
6.4 Future Research

Due to time constraints this study was unable to test if consumers’ age, cultural background or any other consumer information have an impact on PCE and therefore purchase intentions. Future research can test the presented theoretical framework through a real experiment or ethnography. Most importantly comparing different cultural contexts. Furthermore, future research can contribute to answer if culture has an impact on just world belief. Also, if the empowering statement is perceived differently by people with different backgrounds. It will be very insightful if the theoretical framework is extended to testing actual consumer behavior. Empirical testing in a real-life experiment or observation can further confirm our results. Another future research can include examining various empowering statements to discover different impacts and what consumers perceive of each statement. This can be done to further develop ideal statements for marketing and promotional purposes.
7. References


8. Appendix

8.1 Survey Questions

Introductory questions:
1. How often do you drink tea?
   a. I don’t drink tea
   b. Regularly
   c. Often
   d. Occasionally
   e. Rarely

2. How old are you?
   a. Under 18
   b. 18 – 34
   c. 35 – 50
   d. 51 – 69
   e. 70+

3. Which attribute from below is important for you when purchasing tea?
   a. Price
   b. Quality
   c. Production Transparency
   d. Flavor

4. On average 20 bags of tea costs 2.5 EUR/100gms of loose-leaf tea costs 5 EUR. How much do you spend on tea per month (approximately)?
   a. I am not sure
   b. Under 5 EUR
   c. Between 5 EUR and 10 EUR
   d. Between 10 EUR and 15 EUR
   e. Over 15 EUR

5. Please read the news article as we will ask you a few questions about your personal opinion with the help of a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree (see figure 8)

   Questions below are asked using 7-point Likert scale – Strongly disagree (1) and Strongly agree (7)

6. I believe that the farmer in the news article is responsible for his situation
7. Bijit (the farmer from the article) deserves his personal situation
8. In the world, everyone is responsible for their good and bad situations
9. Poster (Appendix 8.2)
10. Based on the previous information, I would be likely to purchase a fair-trade tea product
11. I am aware of labor issues (Yes/No)
12. I would change brand if I become aware of unethical or socially irresponsible business practices in tea production
13. Labor malpractices are often exaggerated by public (for ex., social media, news, people, and so on)
14. There is not much I can do about ethical issues on tea plantations
15. My efforts have no impact as long as others do not put the same efforts as me
16. I can exercise pressure on tea producers through my purchase behavior
8.2 Poster (Question 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Group (vague information)</th>
<th>Experiment Group (empowering)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>How can fair trade make things better?</strong>&lt;br&gt;Fair trade standards for tea include a minimum price, which protects farmers against the unpredictable market and price fluctuations. It also includes a premium that producers can invest as they see fit, for example for healthcare, housing or education for their employees or their family members. An amount of money used to purchase tea is invested in child education in order to provide a prosperous future for children of tea farmers. When you buy fair-trade tea, farmers and workers receive fairer wages and are able to bring equality and opportunity to the lives of their families and children.</td>
<td><strong>How can fair trade make things better?</strong>&lt;br&gt;Fair trade standards for tea include a minimum price, which protects farmers against the unpredictable market and price fluctuations. It also includes a premium of +10% (on top of the price of their production) that producers can invest for education for their employees or their family members. 20% of the money spend to purchase tea is invested in child education in order to provide a prosperous future for children of tea farmers. When you buy fair trade tea, farmers and workers receive fair wages and can bring equality and opportunity to the lives of their families and children: for each 2.5 € fair trade tea package sold, 0.5 € goes to the farmer.</td>
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[Figure 8 Control group posters used in the study](image)

[Figure 9 Experiment group poster used in the study](image)