An exploration of values in ethical consumer decision making

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Abstract

Consumer concern for ethical issues has been well documented across much of the developed world. Research on values is also prominent in the literature. Neglected in consumer behaviour is an understanding of the pertinence of particular values in ethical decision making contexts. This paper outlines the results of qualitative research, which explores those values pertinent to ethical consumers in decision making and the nature of their influence in grocery consumption contexts. A questionnaire was used to ascertain the dominance and nature of values influencing consumer decision making in this context.

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INTRODUCTION

The existence of consumers who are ethically concerned has been well documented over the past several decades. Throughout this period, surveys, reports and academic research have consistently highlighted the existence of a group of consumers who are concerned about a broad spectrum of issues ranging from the environment and animal welfare to societal concerns including human rights. Mintel (1994) used the term 'ethical consumer' to describe those consumers who considered environmental issues, animal issues and ethical issues, including oppressive regimes and armaments, when shopping; this term is now widely used when referring to such a consumer group. More recently, a report by the New Economics Foundation suggested that, despite the rapid growth of ethical consumerism to date, this is only the beginning of a market which has immense future potential (Doane, 2001). The report documents promising growth

rates in this sector, with figures including a market share growth of 15 per cent and an 18.2 per cent (£4.8bn to £5.7bn) growth in the value of selected sectors between 1999 and 2000. Particular growth has been experienced in areas including ethical investment and organic produce (Doane, 2001).

Despite the attention given to the subject of ethical consumerism and the rising concern about ethical issues in society, research developing a deep understanding of the ethical consumer is limited. Important contributions have been madke in this area (eg Newholm, 1999; Shaw, 2000) and, in the context of grocery shopping, Shaw (2000) and Shaw and Shiu (2003) established and validated a comprehensive model of ethical consumer decision making. This work, which focused on consumer intention to purchase fair trade grocery products, resulted in a model of decision making with an explanatory ability $R^2 = 0.52$, which is in line with published research (Sutton, 1998). Although representing an improvement on traditional models (in this study the 'Theory of Planned Behaviour' was used; Ajzen, 1991), it is important to note that a substantial amount (approximately 48 per cent) of consumer intention remains unexplained, which may be the result of other relevant measures not being included in this model. It is, therefore, necessary to consider how future research can achieve improvements in understanding. Pertinent to Shaw's (2000) model of ethical consumer decision making were measures of ethical obligation and self-identity (Shaw *et al.*, 2000; Shaw and Shiu, 2003). Ethical obligation was important as individuals felt a sense of obligation to purchase ethically, while identifying themselves as ethical consumers. Given the importance of these measures it is considered vital to explore the possible links between ethical obligation and self-identity and the underlying values motivating these measures. Values are an important area of literature contributing to an understanding of consumer behaviour (eg Kahle *et al.*, 1986; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). It is regarded as vital, therefore, to explore the role of values and their pertinence in ethical consumption contexts.

Research in the area of human values has been ongoing for many decades within social psychological research. One of the most prolific researchers into human values was Milton Rokeach, who began research in the area from the late 1960s and whose initial work provides the foundation of current research. Through research in the area Rokeach developed both a definition of a value and a comprehensive list of values termed the 'Rokeach Value Survey'. Rokeach defines a value as 'enduring prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs that a specific mode of conduct (instrumental value) or end state of existence (terminal value) is preferred to another mode of conduct or end state' (Rokeach, 1973: 5). As highlighted in the definition, Rokeach (1973) categorised values into two types, either instrumental or terminal. The Rokeach list of values is split equally between these two categories and comprises a total of 36 values.

The development of a comprehensive list of values was a major contribution to values research; however, Rokeach (1973) did not identify a structure underlying the values he developed. Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) were the first to hypothesise and test in cross-cultural situations both the Rokeach Value Survey and the 'Schwartz Value Survey' (an expanded list of 56 values, see Appendix 1) within a circular structure (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987; Schwartz, 1992). This structure comprises ten groups of values (self-direction, stimulation, achievement, hedonism, security, benevolence, universalism, conformity, power and tradition). These value types have been validated both within a cross-cultural research setting and in areas where specific

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contexts have driven the importance of values.

One of the main applications of values is in the area of political and social research (eg Braithwaite, 1994; Peterson, 1994). Ethical decision making and moral judgments also comprise an area where values research can make a contribution, as evidenced in the work undertaken by Ostini and Ellerman (1997). As commented by Ostini and Ellerman (1997), however, although the Schwartz Value Survey can be used as a basis for research, no specific list of values exists for ethical or moral decision making based on this instrument. As is evident from the above discussion, given the increasing importance of ethical concerns among some sectors of consumer society, there has been limited application of the Schwartz Value Survey within specific contexts. This paper therefore, will, discuss the process undertaken to explore specific value items within the Schwartz Value Survey (Schwartz, 1992) which contribute significantly to the decision making process of ethical consumers in the context of grocery purchasing.

METHODOLOGY

While the existing literature explores the importance of values in a wide variety of contexts, it fails to explore the importance of specific values within the context of ethical consumption. Given the limited insights provided by the literature into the importance of values in ethical consumerism, focus groups and in-depth interviews were deemed effective means of exploratory data collection, as relatively little is known about the phenomenon of interest (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). Such an approach was considered necessary to explore those values which are guiding principles for ethical consumers in the context of grocery purchasing. First, focus group discussions were supported by the use of a questionnaire in which participants rated the importance of the Schwartz Value Survey in the context of grocery purchasing. Secondly, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted on the basis of questionnaire responses. The nature of the ethical research focus necessitated the use of an accentuated population, thus a purposive sample of ethical consumers was obtained by using members of the Scottish Co-operative Society. Society members were specially selected who had stated an interest in ethical issues generally, which also served to avoid bias towards any specific ethical issue. Such a sampling approach is supported by Glaser and Strauss (1967) who highlight the researcher's need to seek out individuals for whom the processes being studied are most likely to occur. Purposive sampling has also been adopted in previous research exploring ethical consumption (eg Shaw and Newholm, 2002; Shaw *et al*., 2000; Shaw and Clarke, 1999). All documented research took place between September 2001 and April 2002.

Focus groups

A sample of 35 ethical consumers split into four focus groups was used to explore the values of the target population (a profile of the participants is contained in Appendix 2). A protocol of questions was used in the focus group discussions, developed in accordance with established guidelines (Krueger, 1988). Sessions were relatively unstructured to encourage participants to raise any aspect of the topic that they considered important. Claxton *et al.* (1980) have criticised this looseness of structure, claiming that it fails to generate a list of attributes. Van de Ven and Delbecq (1974) add to this criticism by claiming that participants are left with a feeling of incompletion and dissatisfaction. These disadvantages were confronted in this study by the administration of a short questionnaire (outlined below). Each discussion lasted approximately two hours, was tape-recorded and an impartial observer made notes. Focus groups were fully

transcribed and an analysis of the focus group data revealed those values that were important to ethical consumers in this study context.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was constructed as outlined by Schwartz (1992). This questionnaire detailed Schwartz's 56 values and value meanings (see Appendix 1). Participants were asked to rate on a seven-point scale the importance of each value as a guiding principle to them when they go grocery shopping. Participants were given the opportunity to state additional values and alternative value meanings if they did not agree with one listed. The questionnaire was valuable in providing documentation of important values, supporting focus group data and aiding the focus group discussions due to the unfamiliarity of participants with the value scale.

In-depth interviews

Eight consumers candidates were contacted following the focus groups and were invited to participate in an in-depth interview. Participants were selected who represented the broadest spectrum of questionnaire responses. As recommended by Wass and Wells (1994), cited in Saunders *et al*. (2000), in-depth interviews provide a useful means of clarifying and exploring questionnaire findings. The questionnaire was used as a method of structuring the interview, to enable the direct clarification of information on the values given and to gain a deeper understanding of the determinants of the candidate's responses on the questionnaire. Interviews were tape-recorded and were between 1.5–2.0 hours in length. All interviews were fully transcribed.

Data analysis

Analysis of the qualitative data was aided by computerised qualitative coding package Nud*ist. While Nud*ist systematically manages textual data, it was then interpreted by the researcher and compiled into discrete themes which were amplified with examples from the data text. The questionnaire data were analysed using the statistical package SPSS. Appendix 1 demonstrates the important, unimportant and additional values revealed through this process and provides a framework for discussion in the next section of this paper.

RESULTS

Appendix 1 details the frequencies revealed from the questionnaire for each value. To obtain a general insight into the importance of each value a majority measure (more than 50 per cent) was taken to indicate whether a value was considered important or unimportant. As outlined in Appendix 1, focus group data analysis revealed three main coding categories, namely, important values, unimportant values and additional values, as guiding principles when grocery purchasing. These categories will form the framework for the proceeding discussion.

Important values

This section discusses those values that the majority of participants considered to be important guiding principles when grocery shopping. The values are discussed in turn under their relevant value type, namely, self-direction, stimulation, achievement, hedonism, security, benevolence, universalism and conformity (see Appendix 1).

Value type: Self-direction

The questionnaire revealed that all self-direction values with the exception of 'creativity' were important guiding principles when grocery shopping. These values are derived from organismic needs for control and mastery (eg Bandura, 1977; Deci, 1975; White, 1959) and the interactional requirements of autonomy and independence (eg Kluckhohn, 1951; Kohn and Schooler, 1983; Morris, 1956). Discussion analysis particularly highlighted 'freedom', 'independent', 'self-respect' and 'curious' as important

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values; these values will now be discussed in turn.

Freedom (freedom of action and thought). The majority of participants valued their freedom of choice when grocery shopping. Considered important was the ability to make decisions over what to buy and what not to buy. Many participants felt that their freedom of choice was being constantly challenged and undermined through persuasive advertising and marketing campaigns, common in a consumer-oriented society. Indeed, this view echoes the distrust of large organisations and their marketing activities found elsewhere (Shaw and Clarke, 1999). The following participant noted:

> 'Well I certainly don't want to be bombarded by someone trying to sell me something, even advertising I don't want to be pressurised into. I mean you know the way they do get through to you psychologically and you end up buying something and thinking what am I doing this for. So when you are buying something, you want that feeling of freedom. I think it is a value that affects you when you are buying things.' (Maya)

This notion is displayed in wider society through the subvertising messages of the Canadian group Adbusters, which also promotes campaigns such as 'Buy Nothing Day'. The role of such 'culture jammers' (Klein, 2000) serves to fuel a general mistrust of multinational companies and allows consumers to display a rejection of advertising and 'unnecessary' levels of consumption.

Due to the difficulties often associated with ethical consumption, such as problems of availability, limited ranges and location of retail outlets (Shaw *et al*., 2000), participants felt that their freedom of choice when grocery shopping was restricted. The frustration felt due to this lack of 'freedom' when seeking out ethical grocery products is resounded in the words of the following participant:

> 'I've just had a new Co-operative (supermarket) beside me, but there are no organic foods in it except bananas. I think they could have a bigger section for organic foods. I think from my observations, you really have to go to specialist shops to get organic stuff.' (Pauline)

Also considered pertinent in terms of a desire to purchase ethically was information. Where information is limited it adversely impacts one's control. This is considered below:

> 'I want to do my own shopping, I want the freedom to work it out for myself, let me know the product contents and I will work it out for myself.' (Maya)

This quote highlights the desire for adequate product information that enables consumers to make informed individual choices. Previous research has also highlighted the importance of information in helping individuals to feel empowered in making ethical consumption choices (Shaw and Clarke, 1999) and in forming their ethical beliefs (Strong, 1997; Burgess *et al*., 1995). Indeed, Burgess *et al*. (1995) further stress the need to provide consumers with simple, well-targeted information that is manageable. This is important given the potential for 'information overload' in ethical consumption contexts (Shaw and Clarke, 1999). As one participant noted:

> 'I think there should be more information about it, I don't think there's enough information put in your face about it [referring to general ethical matters]. I mean the only reason I knew about fair trade coffee was from reading the label.' (Bob)

This comment suggests that labelling is an effective means of communicating the ethical credentials of a product, thus supporting a much-needed market reaction to the lack of reliable information sources available to consumers.

The value 'freedom' was related to respondents valuing their freedom of action and thought in the marketplace, where their consumption purchases act as votes (Smith, 1990). Respondents used their consumption votes in favour of

more ethical products and companies through 'buycotting' (Friedman, 1996). An example of buycotting is illustrated through respondents' membership of the Scottish Co-operative Society due to its concern for ethical issues and the avoidance of other supermarket chains. Respondents also engaged in consumer action against unethical products and companies, a practice known as boycotting (Smith, 1990). It must be noted, however, that without readily available information, consumers are unable to exercise successfully their freedom of action and thought, and hence use their purchasing power as votes within the marketplace, however inefficient that may be (Newholm, 1999).

Independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient). Ethical consumers value their independence when grocery shopping and like to consider themselves 'self-sufficient'. They have confidence in and rely upon their own decision-making process.

Self-respect (belief in one's own worth). 'Self-respect' was highlighted in an interesting dimension by one participant:

> 'It's very much the in thing to be ethical and aware and it comes across as being intellectual as well . . . that you have an awareness and that you have the education to know about these multinationals or about these issues. Therefore, if you're putting Cafédirect [Cafédirect is a brand of fair trade coffee in the UK] in your trolley and driving around with it then you're saying to other people I'm clever enough to know the difference between this and Nescafe.' (Julia)

This quote demonstrates the position that ethical consumption has in today's society. It is the view of this participant that selective ethical consumption displays to the rest of society an aspect of one's personality and identity. This relates in part to the work of Shaw *et al.* (2000) in discussing the inclusion of self-identity in the decision-making model, Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). For this consumer (Julia), self-respect is an important part of self-identity, which is gained through ethical purchasing behaviour. This notion of displaying beliefs and gaining recognition for them was noted as being important to a sample of participants; however, it should also be noted that a number of participants were completely opposed to the notion of being seen as a 'do gooder'. As one participant explains:

> 'I don't want people to know, I just do these things for me, just so that I know I'm doing some good. I don't want praise and I don't want anybody knowing what I'm doing, it's just for me.' (Catherine)

This comment is a clear display of altruism, which demonstrates how self-identity may be externally displayed to varying degrees.

Curious (interested in everything, exploring). Participants considered 'Curious' to be an important value; an example of this was the country of origin of grocery products and their journey to the shelf. This curiosity was linked not only to the environmental problems of food transportation, but also to the consumption of fair trade grocery products, as noted below.

> 'Well it is like staring through a minefield, there are so many factors which can determine, I'm concerned about the product, I would like to know how it was produced, how was it marketed. I wouldn't say I'm a PR expert or anything but I just have a natural curiosity and I'm concerned about the conditions in these countries that produce the coffee and tea.' (Andrew)

Participants also revealed that they were curious and interested in exploring and trying new grocery products. This is important in the ethical product market, which is currently developing in that it highlights potential consumer interest in new product ideas. It is important for any new product developments to inform the consumer clearly of their benefits. This is particularly important where many participants were curious as to what goes

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into food, a curiosity that could be attributed to recent controversial ethical issues such as genetically modified foods and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle.

Value type: Stimulation

'A varied life' was the only stimulation value deemed important by participants. Stimulation values are driven from the presumed organismic need for variety and stimulation in order to maintain an optimal level of activation (Berlyne, 1960; Houston and Mednick, 1963; Maddi, 1961). With the ever-growing number of products on the shelves, it is natural to assume that this organismic need for variety, which is conditioned by social experience, is heightened when grocery shopping.

While participants found the value 'a varied life' important when grocery shopping, no participant related the value specifically to ethical consumption. This is perhaps not surprising given the fact that ethical consumption is often not an easy option, but requires time, energy and commitment (Shaw and Clarke, 1999) (see section above entitled 'Freedom'). It could be considered that the task of ethical consumption is often demanding due to difficulties in, for example, availability, and as such is often not considered to be an enjoyable challenge.

Value type: Achievement

The achievement values 'capable', 'influential' and 'intelligent' were considered important guiding principles when grocery shopping. The defining goal of the value type achievement emphasises the obtainment of social approval through demonstrating competence according to social standards (Schwartz, 1992). The achievement value 'influential' featured highly during the focus group discussions.

Influential (having an impact on people and events). 'Influential' was an important value for participants, where they considered the impact that their shopping purchases may have on other people and the environment. One participant noted:

> 'You want to know that the goods you are buying are not going to do any harm to somebody else, in terms of the way they are produced or treated or even the effect of you consuming it might have.' (William)

This notion reflects a trend, which has been highlighted by various authors (eg Shaw and Clarke, 1999; Klein, 2000), that even when presented with a global, large-scale problem, people feel the need to take local action. In terms of grocery shopping this need is reflected in the purchasing behaviour of ethical consumers. For example, purchasing fair trade coffee in the knowledge that the coffee grower has received a fair price for their product. This supports the role of ethical obligation and self-identity in decision making (Shaw *et al*., 2000; Shaw and Shiu, 2003). Ethical consumers are often driven by an ethical obligation to society and a desire to have an influence on people whose standard of living is often below their own. Indeed, the importance placed on the value 'influential' by participants led to their consumption of ethical grocery products in other areas such as organic foods and recycled products.

Value type: Hedonism

The hedonism value 'enjoying life' was considered important to participants, while 'pleasure' was considered unimportant. The motivational goal of the value type hedonism is pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself (Schwartz, 1992). 'Enjoying life' could be considered a common pursuit in modern society, as evident from the many recreational activities available. Analysis revealed that, in the context of grocery shopping, 'enjoying life' centres around the fact that eating is an enjoyable activity. The high profile that eating as an enjoyable activity has for ethical consumers is reinforced in many aspects

of today's society. Television cookery programmes and celebrity chefs highlight the position to which the necessary task of eating has been elevated. Therefore, it could be suggested that ethical consumers' views on food and eating are simply reflective of society as a whole.

In terms of 'pleasure' a distinction seems apparent, which could be attributed to the fact that the need for pleasure when grocery shopping is conditioned by social experience, ie being an ethical consumer. It could be suggested that, due to participant concerns for issues such as fair trade and the environment, they attached less importance to their own pleasure. This view supports previous work that found a measure of ethical obligation towards others to be an important driver in ethical consumer decision making (Shaw *et al*., 2000).

Value type: Security

The security values 'clean', 'family security' and 'healthy' were considered important guiding principles when grocery shopping. The motivational goals of the value type security are safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships and of the self (Schwartz, 1992). The focus group discussions highlighted the value 'healthy' as particularly significant.

Healthy (not being sick physically or mentally). Analysis revealed that, in the context of grocery shopping, consumption decisions were strongly influenced by the desire to maintain good health through the purchase of healthy foods. One participant highlights this concern:

> 'Yeah, I mean I buy things as a consumer and I do care about what I put into my body. I'm concerned about what I eat, I don't eat junk food and I try and eat healthily.' (Roger)

While 'health' is an established concern for many people, it is often linked to other ethical issues (Shaw and Clarke, 1999). Indeed, analysis revealed that participants linked the value 'healthy' with other issues such as organic produce, animal welfare and non-genetically modified foods. This link is revealed by the following participant:

> 'I go for organic and free range eggs, things like that . . . it also tastes better and its healthier for you.' (Isobel)

Value type: Benevolence

The benevolence values 'helpful', 'honest', 'loyal', 'responsible' and 'true friendship' were considered important guiding principles when grocery shopping. The motivational goals of the value type 'benevolence' are preservation and enchantment of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact (Schwartz, 1992). 'Benevolence' requires positive interaction in order to promote the flourishing of groups (Kluckhohm, 1951; Williams, 1968) and the organismic need for affiliation (Korman, 1974; Maslow, 1959). In the context of ethical consumption, participants found the benevolence values 'helpful' and 'honest' to be particularly pertinent as guiding principles when grocery shopping.

Helpful (working for the welfare of others). Participants regarded the value 'helpful' as important when grocery shopping, in terms of staff knowledge. As discussed earlier (see the section entitled 'Freedom') information is vital to ethical consumers who often use their purchase as a vote in the marketplace for ethical alternatives. One participant noted:

> 'I remember when I first started working in a shop, I had to know exactly what I was talking about when I spoke to a customer. Now you go into a shop and they don't know anything and it is a shame.' (Jack)

Honest (genuine, sincere). In terms of the value 'honest' one participant noted:

> 'Honesty is important for me when I'm shopping, as far as ethos is concerned. I

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> want honesty about the goods that they sell, I don't want anything underhand.' (Dylan)

A relationship based on 'trust' is important for customer loyalty. Company conduct is an important issue for participants, who will often boycott stores that they do not trust. The respondents membership of the Scottish Co-operative Society, which has a policy of honest labelling, is reflective of the importance placed on this value. As one participant noted:

> 'I wouldn't trust Safeway . . . whereas if you are going to the Co-op bank, you know your money is not going to be buying guns to kill kids. And there are no hidden charges.' (Alistair)

This supports Schwartz and Bilsky's (1987) claim that there is a need for positive interaction in order to promote the flourishing of groups (Kluckhohm, 1951; Williams, 1968) and the organismic need for affiliation (Korman, 1974; Maslow, 1959). The Scottish Co-operative society has successfully won the loyalty of the participants, because it combines ethics with traditional product attributes.

Value type: Universalism

All universalism values with the exception of 'a world of beauty', 'wisdom' and 'inner harmony' were considered important guiding principles when grocery shopping. The motivational goals of universalism are 'understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature' (Schwartz, 1992: 12). This goal can be achieved from survival needs of groups and individuals as they come into contact with those outside the extended primary group and become aware of the fragility of natural resources (Schwartz, 1992). Universalism values stress the importance placed on accepting and treating all others justly so as to avoid life-threatening strife, and respecting the environment on which life depends (Schwartz, 1992). Ethical consumers display the characteristics of being members of an individualist culture, which tends to distinguish less sharply between in-groups and out-groups when responding to the needs of others (Triandis, 1990; Triandis *et al*., 1990). Particularly highlighted during the focus group discussions were the universalism values of 'equality', 'social justice' and 'protecting the environment'.

Equality (equal opportunity for all) and social justice (correcting injustice, care for the weak). These values are both centred on the protection of the welfare of all people (Schwartz, 1992) and as a result are discussed together. Both values we are major guiding principles for participants when grocery shopping, This prosocial concern for members outside their own in-group is reflected in the words of one participant:

> 'Yes, well I think it is a real issue and it comes into your shopping, but I mean it is just one symptom of a huge worldwide economic system which in fact is always exploiting. That's probably the wrong word, it isn't exploiting, it is actually ''I want to maximise for me in the western country, so I want to drive down prices, I want the cheapest option, the cheapest cost to me''. And that in a sense is at the expense of the guy producing it, so there is an economic system of imbalance.' (Blair)

Particular issues of social justice in globalisation may have been used to demonstrate feelings of injustice as heightened media attention has given these issues a relatively high profile (eg Klein, 2000). This desire for social justice is reflected by ethical consumers in the marketplace, both in their choice of products and in terms of the stores they chose to frequent. As one participant noted:

> 'If you buy fair trade, these people through a co-operative are getting a reasonable return; they are not getting ripped off. I

> think it is an excellent thing that these people get a return for their labours.' (Alistair)

Discussion of equality and social justice aroused many debates concerning the power of multinational companies. As discussed by Shaw and Clarke (1999), multinationals are generally viewed with extreme negativity by ethical consumers for a variety of reasons such as exploitation and manipulation. In relation to the values 'equality' and 'social justice', the issue of capitalism was dominant, as discussed in the section below entitled 'Additional values'.

Protecting the environment (preserving nature). This value has the goal of protecting the welfare of the natural environment and has been deemed important previously in consumption behaviour studies (eg Brown, 1992; Peattie, 1992). One participant noted:

> 'I think it is important to think about, you know your time on this planet is limited and there is another generation coming up and another generation and you would hope that the things that you have experienced in your lifetime, that you have seen, you would hope that future generations would be able to enjoy that.' (Janette)

Participants considered the impact that their grocery shopping may have on the welfare of the environment. For example, individuals stated concerns about the effects of packaging, recycling and the environmental consequences of genetically modified crops, as reflected in organic purchasing. Indeed, although all participants abhorred excess packaging, 'good packaging' was often considered acceptable. Furthermore, attractive packaging was also highlighted as an acceptable. From a marketing perspective this is an interesting issue as it clearly displays the desire that ethical consumers have, not only to purchase ethically but also to purchase ethical alternatives that are equal in appeal to their counterparts.

Value type: Conformity

Analysis highlighted the importance of all conformity values with the exception of the value 'obedient'. The defining goal of conformity is the restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social norms (Schwartz, 1992). The importance attached to conformity values could be attributed to the fact that participants may feel that in order to promote the smooth functioning of grocery shopping, which involves social interaction on a regular basis, they must emphasise self-restraint from socially disruptive behaviour. For example, 'self-discipline' is a value demonstrated by ethical consumers through a variety of purchases that they make. As one participant commented:

> 'Resistance to temptation, yes it's easy to buy cheap eggs.' (Scott)

This quote highlights a conflict that ethical consumers are often presented with, where it is often easier and cheaper simply to opt for the non-ethical alternative.

Unimportant values

This section discusses those value types ('power' and 'tradition') that the majority of participants considered unimportant guiding principles when grocery shopping. Other individual values (see Appendix 1) were highlighted as unimportant and it is interesting to note some possible reasons for this. Schwartz (1992) removed the value type 'spirituality' and it was notable in this study that none of these values ('a spiritual life', 'meaning in life', 'inner harmony' and 'detachment') were considered important. Indeed, Sagiv and Schwartz (2000) have since removed 'detachment' as a value. Furthermore, the context for this study was specific in

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terms of the behaviour being explored, namely, grocery shopping. In many instances it is not difficult to relate the unimportance of values such as 'daring', 'forgiving', 'national security' and 'obedient' in this context. The hedonism value 'pleasure' has been discussed previously.

Value type: Power

Analysis revealed that participants were either opposed to, or attached little importance to, Schwartz's (1992) power values, which reflect an individual's needs for dominance and control (Korman, 1974; Schutz, 1958). Schwartz (1992) views the central goals of power values to be attainment of social status and prestige, and control or dominance over people and resources. These goals are in conflict with the strong universalism values held by participants such as 'equality' and 'social justice'. Rather, participants revealed 'capitalism' and 'consumer power' as important guiding principles when grocery shopping. While these particular power values are not included in Schwartz's (1992) value model set, analysis has revealed the necessity for their inclusion in this consumption context (see the section below entitled 'Additional values').

Value type: Tradition

All traditional values were deemed unimportant guiding principles when grocery shopping. The motivational goals of traditional values are 'respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion imposes on the individual' (Schwartz, 1992: 10). The low importance of tradition could be linked to the importance placed upon the individual in society coupled with other trends including the diminishing role of 'traditional' religion in society, and indeed some disappointment in the role of the church in ethical consumption (Shaw and Clarke, 1999).

Additional values

This section discusses those additional values, which are not included in Schwartz's (1992) value model set, yet findings of the present study reveal that they are considered important as guiding principles when grocery shopping. Additional values are 'capitalism', 'consumer power' and 'animal welfare' (see Appendix 1).

Capitalism (control and dominance of multinationals)

Analysis revealed 'capitalism' as an important 'negative' value when grocery shopping. Participants viewed the power of multinationals negatively, due to their control and dominance in the marketplace, thus linking the value 'capitalism' to the value type 'power'. Indeed, this anti-capitalism sentiment is highlighted in the words of one participant:

> 'I mean some of these multinationals, they dictate everything and I mean the World Bank and World Trade Organisation they are just dictating and they have only one god and that is as you say making money for those that happen to be in it.' (Alistair)

Multinationals such as supermarkets tend to be viewed negatively, particularly those which were considered to have poor company ethics and which stock few ethical product lines. This supports findings by Shaw and Clarke (1999).

Consumer power (the impact of purchase decisions)

Participants valued their power as a consumer and exercised this power through the consumption of ethical grocery products. Like 'capitalism', it is deemed that this value fits under the value type 'power'. The importance of this value for ethical consumers is reflected in the words of one participant:

> 'I haven't done a hell of a lot but I have done it a tiny bit and it may be gives us a

> sense of satisfaction and a sense of purpose even, because there may be tens of thousands of people like myself all over the country just buying a tin of coffee or a packet of tea which in total has an impact.' (Bill)

This positive view of power relates to Smith (1990) who discussed the power of the consumer vote in the marketplace. Evidence of voting through boycotts and buycotts have had remarkable results in the past in reversing large multinational company decisions (eg Klein, 2000).

Animal welfare (protection for the welfare of all animals)

Participants exercised a concern for 'animal welfare' when grocery shopping. As one participant noted:

> 'Well, I would go for organic and free range eggs things like that, make-up that is not tested on animals, you know that type of thing.' (Janice)

The issue of animal rights is important to ethical consumers and has an impact on their shopping habits in addition to wider lifestyle choices. This value fits under the value type 'universalism' due to its focus on those outside the extended primary group and the realisation of cases of abuse to the welfare of all animals.

DISCUSSION

This exploratory study has provided important insights into the neglected area of values in ethical consumption. Although previous research has provided important insights into ethical consumer decision making (eg Shaw and Shiu, 2003), this work has neglected to explore the role of values as a guiding principle in ethical consumption contexts. The insights generated from this study highlight that many of the values included in Schwartz's (1992) value model are considered unimportant within the context of ethical consumerism and, in addition to this, the existing set of values does not account for all of those values that are important in ethical decision making.

The universalism values, with their emphasis on prosocial concern, were considered most important in ethical consumer decision making. This is in keeping with the wide definition of ethical consumers provided by Tallontire and Rentsendorj (2000), which states that ethical consumers make purchase decisions that are economically, socially and environmentally responsible. An example of this can be seen where the value 'protecting the environment' drives the purchase of recycled products. The importance placed upon self-direction values, with an emphasis on independent thought and action, supports findings by Shaw and Clarke (1999), where it could be suggested that the acquisition of information is driven by the organismic needs for control and mastery inherent in self-direction values. It is not surprising to find that power values are unimportant guiding principles for ethical consumers, due to their requirements of status differentiation (Durkheim, 1964; Parsons, 1957) and dominant/submissive interpersonal relations both within and across cultures (Lonner, 1980). The desires for dominance and control conflict with participants' strong universalism values such as 'social justice'.

The value model designed by Schwartz (1992) is not context specific, explaining the need for the addition of the values 'capitalism' and 'consumer power', which were revealed as important values to ethical consumers. It must be noted that, although 'capitalism' is a 'negative' value, it is still a guiding principle when grocery shopping, and can drive consumption choices such as shopping at stores with an ethical outlook or avoiding ethically questionable brands such as Nescafe. Nescafe is a Nestle brand and as such is subject to a long-running boycott as part of the Baby Milk Action campaign. The addition of 'consumer power' to the

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value model supports evidence for the growth and commitment of ethical consumerism. While the power values provided by Schwartz (1992) emphasise the attainment or preservation of a dominant position within the more general social system, 'consumer power' on the other hand emphasises the active demonstration of how power can be used ethically within the context of consumption. The aim of the value 'consumer power' is to utilise one's control and dominance as a consumer to the benefit of others and for the protection of resources through the consumption of more ethical products.

The addition of 'animal welfare' to the value model supports previous research on issues of ethical consumption such as vegetarianism and organic farming (Shaw and Clarke, 1999). Analysis reveals an important role for values in ethical consumer choice, which is deserving of more detailed attention.

Future research

In conclusion, although there is widespread support in the literature for Schwartz's Value System (Schwartz, 1992), the present study has revealed that, for specific consumers and decision-making contexts, in this study namely ethical consumers, not all values are meaningful. Furthermore, the context of the present study highlighted areas where value meanings were inappropriate and additional value measures were required. It is important to note that, although this study provides important insights into the nature and pertinence of those values that are important in ethical consumer decision making, it is exploratory in nature. A further study based on a larger sample of ethical consumers would be prudent to assess the stability of these important findings within an existing ethical consumer decision-making model (see Shaw and Shiu, 2003). A survey of this nature is recommended by the authors to provide a statistical basis from which to derive broader inferences and generalisations on the identified values imperative to a deeper understanding of ethical consumer decision making. Such research is considered important given the documented growth and potential of this market (Doane, 2001).

APPENDIX 1 SCHWARTZ'S (1992) LIST OF VALUES, VALUE IMPORTANCE AND FREQUENCIES IN ETHICAL CONTEXTS

Value type	Value (meaning)	Importance	%
Self-direction	Freedom (freedom of action and thought)	Important	85
Self-direction	Self-respect (belief in one's own worth)	Important	61
Self-direction	Independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient)	Important	64
Self-direction	Choosing own goals (selecting own purposes)	Important	52
Self-direction	Curious (interested in everything, exploring)	Important	64
Self-direction	Creativity (uniqueness, imagination)	Unimportant	18
Stimulation	A varied life (filled with challenge, novelty and change)	Important	73
Stimulation	An exciting life (stimulation experiences)	Unimportant	21
Stimulation	Daring (seeking adventure, risk)	Unimportant	18
Achievement	Capable (competent, effective, efficient)	Important	67
Achievement	Influential (having an impact on people and events)	Important	58
Achievement	Intelligent (logical, thinking)	Important	58
Achievement	Ambitious (hardworking, aspiring)	Unimportant	24
Achievement	Successful (achieving goals)	Unimportant	45

(Continues)

APPENDIX 1 CONTINUED

Value Type	Value (meaning)	Importance	%
Hedonism	Enjoying life (enjoying food, sex, leisure etc)	Important	67
Hedonism	Pleasure (gratification of desires)	Unimportant	48
Security	Family security (safety for loved ones)	Important	79
Security	Healthy (not being sick physically or mentally)	Important	91
Security	Sense of belonging (feeling that others care about me)	Unimportant	42
Security	Social order (stability of society)	Unimportant	48
Security	National security (protection of my nation from enemies)	Unimportant	36
Security	Reciprocation of favours (avoidance of indebtedness)	Unimportant	24
Security	Clean (neat, tidy)	Important	64
Benevolence	True friendship (close, supportive friends)	Important	55
Benevolence	Loyal (faithful to my friends, group)	Important	52
Benevolence	Honest (genuine, sincere)	Important	70
Benevolence	Helpful (working for the welfare of others)	Important	88
Benevolence	Responsible (dependable, reliable)	Important	85
Benevolence	A spiritual life (emphasis on spiritual not material matters)	Unimportant	18
Benevolence	Meaning in life (a purpose in life)	Unimportant	48
Benevolence	Mature love (deep emotional and spiritual intimacy)	Unimportant	9
Benevolence	Forgiving (willing to pardon others)	Unimportant	45
Universalism	Equality (equal opportunity for all)	Important	97
Universalism	A world At peace (free of war and conflict)	Important	70
Universalism	Unity with nature (fitting into nature)	Important	64
Universalism	Social justice (correcting injustice, care for the weak)	Important	85
Universalism	Broad-minded (tolerant of different ideas and beliefs)	Important	76
Universalism	Protecting the environment (preserving nature)	Important	91
Universalism	A world of beauty (beauty of nature and the arts)	Unimportant	36
Universalism	Inner Harmony (at peace with myself)	Unimportant	42
Universalism	Wisdom (a mature understanding of life)	Unimportant	48
Conformity	Politeness (courtesy, good manners)	Important	76
Conformity	Self-discipline (self-restraint, resistance to temptation)	Important	52
Conformity	Honouring of parents and elders (showing respect)	Important	52
Conformity	Obedient (dutiful, meeting obligations)	Unimportant	12
Power	Social power (control over others, dominance)	Unimportant	9
Power	Wealth (material possessions, money)	Unimportant	15
Power	Social recognition (respect, approval by others)	Unimportant	36
Power	Authority (the right to lead or command)	Unimportant	9
Power	Preserving my public image (protecting my 'face')	Unimportant	6
Tradition	Respect For Tradition (preservation of time-honored customs)	Unimportant	48
Tradition	Detachment (from worldly concerns)	Unimportant	6
Tradition	Moderate (avoiding extremes of feeling and action)	Unimportant	42
Tradition	Humble (modest, self-effacing)	Unimportant	0
Tradition	Accepting my Portion In life (submitting to life's circumstances)	Unimportant	18
Tradition	Devout (holding to religious faith and belief)	Unimportant	21
Power (new)	Capitalism (control and dominance of multinationals)	Important	*
Power (new)	Consumer power (the impact of my purchase decisions)	Important	*
Universalism (new)	Animal welfare (protection for the welfare of all animals)	Important	*

*Additional values revealed as important through focus group discussions shown in bold.

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APPENDIX 2 PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Pseudonym	Primary ethical concerns
Alan	Local production
Alistair	Fair trade
Andrew	Fair trade, environment, corporate social responsibility
Anna	Corporate social responsibility
Ben	Fair trade
Bill	Human rights
Blair	Fair trade, health
Bob	Fair trade
Catherine	Organic
Clare	Fair trade
Colin	Genetic modification
Dylan	Organic, genetic modification, human rights
Frank	Health, fair trade
Isobel	Free range
Jack	Fair trade, country of origin, local production
Janette	Organic, health
Janice	Organic, free range, animal welfare, local production
Judith	Genetic modification, vegetarianism
Julia	Corporate social responsibility, local production
Lisa	Health
Lynn	Environment, local production
Maya	Fair trade, environment, local production
Michael	Corporate social responsibility
Pamela	Organic
Pauline	Animal welfare, genetic modification, environment
Peter	Free range, environment
Rob	Corporate social responsibility
Robert	Local production
Roger	Organic, free range, health
Rory	Organic
Scott	Genetic modification, organic, free range, local production
Sharon	Fair trade, organic
Susan	Organic, free range, health
Terry	Corporate social responsibility, organic
William	Human rights

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