**FAIRTRADE BUYING BEHAVIOUR: WE KNOW WHAT THEY THINK, BUT DO WE**

**KNOW WHAT THEY DO?**

**ABSTRACT**

Emerging global discussions on ethical consumerism has boosted academic interest in fairtrade but

little is known as to what marketing factors drive fairtrade retail sales. This gap has profound implications for marketing research insight and the future of the fairtrade industry, yet no objective

attempt has been made to uncover the underlying marketing drivers of fairtrade sales. Meanwhile, the

argument for the awareness-concern-action point of view, based on claimed behaviour is not sustainable. To provide a more robust and objective insight we draw on the analysis of supermarket

loyalty card dataset based on actual purchasing behaviour of 1.7 fairtrade shoppers to establish the

relationships between fairtrade retail sales volume and marketing factors such as price, distribution

and promotion. Insight emanating from the result shows supermarket shopper attitude towards fairtrade price does not reflect the price premium feature of the fairtrade concept. We also demonstrate that increasing fairtrade retail sales growth is not shopper demand driven but predominately attributable to widened distribution and prevalent price increases. This result leads us to suggest that the continuing pursuance of mainstreaming strategy on the premise that increasing

awareness drives fairtrade retails sales growth because there is a growing ethical concern will not

guarantee building shopper loyalty. Further, we offer insight and strategic direction for marketing

researchers and managers attempting to maintain fairtrade as a thriving ethical consumer driven

phenomenon.