A Model of Slovenian Ethical Comsumerism

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Abstract

This article begins with a review of recent theoretical views and positions onfair trade, consumer buying behaviour and ethical consumerism. In the empirical part we use the results of a quantitative survey of 253 Slovenian respondentsto develop a

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model of Slovenian fair trade consumer behaviour. The general attitude to fair tradewas found to bethe most important variable influencing buying behaviour and the knowledge about fair trade concepts the most important factor. In the conclusion we offer recommendations for futurestudies of ethical consumerism in Slovenia.

Keywords: fair trade, buying behaviour, ethical consumerism, business ethics, marketing

Introduction

Fair trade (FT hereafter) is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect and seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions and securing the rights of marginalized producers and workers, especially in the developing countries ("the South"). Organizations dealing with FT which are supported by consumers are actively engaged in supporting producers, awareness raising and organizing campaigns for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade (Umanotera, http://www.umanotera.org, 23/10/2010). FT

creates conditions where people and producers in developing countries can develop and manage poverty. This cooperative action of FT is beneficial for producers because it allows them work, fair pay and subsistence. On the other hand, it allows consumers to purchase products that have a strong "ethical" touch and in this way promote and meet consumer needs for ethical consumerism, important concepts to inhabitants of developed nations ("the North"). Working Party for Solidarity and Social Economy FT offersthe following definition (Audet, 2004,1): "FT is an alternative form of trading, which is based on voluntarily accepted norms that respect the social rights of producers and workers and is at the same time protecting the environment." On one hand, its aim is to improve the living conditions of small producers from the South through the trading system, which is based on fair prices and sincere and long-term trade relations. On the other hand, it seeks to change the existing rules of international trade by raising awareness and consumer education and by pressing the government through campaigns and lobbying. Changing the existing rules of international trade and consumer awareness is also an important part of its operation. FT works and brings multiple benefits into the international environment. It helps marginalized groups to survive with integrity and in this way

protects them from monopoly companies that are not willing to pay the "fair price" for the purchase of products. Through the transmission of information to consumers it encourages "ethical consumerism", which is based on personal moral values of the consumer. It is often referred to as "an alternative form of trading." Why alternative? In order to operate successfully, FT tries to reduce the number of intermediaries and enables manufacturers the same basis and direct access to the market. It is therefore necessary to eliminate intermediaries in trade (because they collect fees for their intervention) or to reduce their number to a minimum. FT acts as a cooperative. International Federation of Cooperatives ICA has set the following definition of cooperatives: "Cooperative is an autonomous association of individuals who are voluntarily linked in order to meet common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations within the company they have jointly owned, democratically managed and controlled" (ICA 2003). Cooperative is an association that helps individuals achieve the objectives for which such individuals could not or would be very difficult to realise. Cooperative like clusters allows their members greater bargaining power in the market and a number of other benefits. The basic operating principles are: *voluntary and open membership, democratic member control,*

member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, cooperation among co-operatives, care for confidentiality.

Cooperatives work towards the sustainable development of their communities with the implementation of policies approved by the members (ICA 2003). FT operates as a system of cooperatives, which has clearly defined rules and principles. In order to avoid misuse of FT and its goodwill and purpose, the umbrella organization IFAT set 10 standards to be followed by all organizations of FT. IFAT closely monitors the implementation of these standards in practice and verifies that they are strictly observed. Enforcement and compliance with these standards is a prerequisite for the functioning of the system FT. We are talking about ten standards of FT: *creating market opportunities for economically disadvantaged producers, transparency and accountability, capacity building, promotion of FT, paying a fair price (fair price payment), gender-equality, better working conditions, regulated child labour, the care for environment, creating trade ties.*

When the FT principle was clearly set and standardized by the IFAT, the alternative trade organizations and product providers realize that it would be more recognizable if they formed a certification mark, which would be used on FT products and in this way ensure any products produced or grown by the principles of FT, which we presented in the previous section (Nicholls and Opal 2005, 127). To formalize a system of certification of FT products, it was necessary to develop a certification system that would be controlled by an independent certification agency, who received the title of "national labelling initiatives FT." That is why certification has become an important element of the FT movement. Today, the certificates are given worldwide to product of FT by one of 19 organizations for certification, operating under the auspices of theFLO CERT (Nicholls and Opal 2005, 128).

The first FT in Slovenia opened in Ljubljana, onDecember 10th, 2004. The second FT named »3 Muhe« was opened on May 7th, 2010 in Maribor (3 Muhe, 2010). Most products are imported through the Austrian and Italian EZA intermediary broker "CTM altromercato". The market is also directly connected through the Humanitas with the organization "Kafuli" in Burkina Faso. Some of the products are imported directly from Africa and Nepal (Krier

2007, 95). In 2007, they started to import the FT products into the large commercial organizations in Slovenia like Mercator, Spar, Petrol, ELeclerc and Hofer. They all saw an option to spread strategy of social responsibility in selling the FT products. Mercator is importing products in collaboration with cooperative »Od Juga«, other major retailers import through other intermediaries.

Consumer decision-making models

The process of deciding has a very important place in the research of consumer behaviour. It is treated with special attention, because the result of the process of decision-making is either a purchase or no purchase of the product (Mumel,1999, 61).Most commonly used is the five-step model of the purchase decision-making process (Kotler, 2004; Potočnik, 2005).

Figure 1: Five-step model of consumerdecision-making process
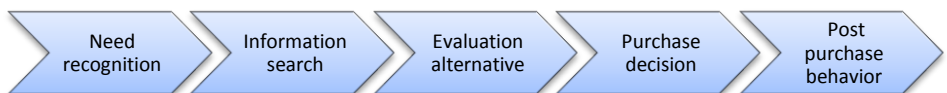
Source: Kotler 2004; Potočnik 2005; Stokes 2002; Palmer 2000.

Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (201, 71) add another two factors to the above presented five-step model of consumer's decision-making: pre-purchase evaluation of the alternatives and disposal of the product. The authors believe that the model presented above is the plan of consumer's mind and can be of great help to marketers to develop marketing, marketing communications and a sales plan. The model represents a course of action at the time of purchase decisions and shows how various internal and external sources can influence and are reflected in consumer's thinking, decision-making and behaviour (Blackwell et al., 2001, 71).

Potočnik (2005) and Kotler (2004) consider that the process of purchase decision-making begins when the customer finds a problem, an unmet need or desire. The need can also be triggered by an internal or external stimulation. "Finding out the need is a decisive stage in the process of purchase decision-making, because the buyer cannot pass on to the next level – information retrieval – until he realizes the problem, need or desire" (Potočnik, 2005, 47). Marketers need to know what the needs of a consumer are. We can also talk about the physiological and psychological

needs. Thirst and hunger are physiological needs but the consumer can also satisfy his psychological need to help the poor by purchasing tea or sugar from FT. This is what the concept of FT is based on: with a purchase you can help yourself and the poor people from the South. Once a customer perceives an unmet need or a problem, he will start to search for information and solutions to meet the unmet need (Blackwell et al., 2001). Consumers first begin with an internal search from their long-term memory or from any knowledge and experience they already have(Mumel, 1999; Blackwell et al., 2001; Potočnik, 2005). If the consumer does not have the information he is looking for, he will search for external information from several different sources, acquaintances, friends and family (Blackwell et al., 2001; Potočnik, 2005). Consumers are looking for information in different ways: some by searching the internet, others through media, advertisements, shopping, etc.

Kotler (2004) believes that there are two levels of seeking information: increased attention and an active search for information. With increased attention, the customer is more receptive to information about the product. With active search for information, a consumer is looking for printed materials, calls a

friend and visits the shops. Kotler divides consumer's information sources into four groups, namely: (i) personal sources: family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances, (ii) business sources: advertising, sellers, brokers, packaging, in-store presentations, (iii) public sources: mass media, consumer organisations, and (iv) the experiential sources: handling, inspection and use of the product (Kotler, 2004).

Personal sources of information that have a confirmatory and value function have the biggest impact on a consumer. Acquaintances, friends and family members play an important role in purchases where the consumer is highly involved in the purchase and does not have sufficient knowledge and experience for the purchase of the product. Public sources, especially information retrieval over the internet, have a growing influence. With this method, the consumers want to achieve a greater perceptual matching of information and thus reduce the risk of further decisions (Chung-Hoon and Young-Gul, 2003, 3).

In the case of FT, information is essential for consumer's decisions. Information on the operation of FT, fair price and the purpose of FT are extremely important to the consumer according to the

different marketing mix, which we already presented and is more turned to the producer and not to the consumer. It is not only important that the information is sufficient, it is also important that it is of high quality and that it reaches all sources of information (Kotler, 2004). Mumel (1999) notes that criteria consumers use to evaluate alternatives are called evaluative criteria. The number, type and importance of the criteria vary from consumer to consumer and from product to product. These are the factors that consumers take into account when deciding on a purchase. Certain characteristics that are important in choosing are easier for consumers to evaluate. These are price, size andbrand. It is harder for consumers to assess the quality, reliability or usefulness for health. Most consumers use price and brand as a substitute for a measure of quality. The essence of the brand "Fair trade" is also its mission (Rihtaršič, 2008). Precisely for this reason the FT certification mark is extremely important. It guarantees consumers the quality and visibility of the product and makes the evaluation and selection of the product much easier. The next stage of the consumer's purchase behaviour, after careful evaluation of alternatives, is the purchase. The buyer must make two very important decisions. He/she must make the decision on the purchase of a product or service and where the

product will be bought because a choice of the product can also influence the choice on the seller (Potočnik, 2005). Mumel (1999) says that the buyer must choose the store and the product, which can be done in three ways: (i) simultaneously, (ii) first choose the product and then the store, (iii) first choose the store and then the product.

The above theoretical frameworks fully apply in the case of FT in Slovenia. Numerous times consumers first decide to make a purchase in Fair trade and only then they choose a product. On the other hand, those consumers who buy Fair trade tea or coffee buy this product in shopping malls, because it is easier due to convenience, the location and easier parking. After successful completion of the purchase of the product the consumer decides on the possibilities and methods of use of the product. He/she can use the product immediately or defer the use to a later time (Blackwell et. al., 2001). It is particularly important that the consumer is satisfied with the use of the product and that the product meets the need of the customer. If the product does not meet those needs, "a negative evaluation of the product" follows (Mumel, 1999). In a fair purchase of the product, we must not neglect the use of the product. FT products must meet the

consumer's needs in their quality and usability – as for justice. Even if satisfied, the consumer repeatedly questions the accuracy of his choice. The consumer is uncertain whether he/she decided properly – this is called the after-sales dissonance (Mumel, 1999; Blackwell et al., 2001). It is therefore extremely important that the consumer gets confirmation and information that his decision about the purchase was correct. The disposal of the product is the last stage in the model of the consumer's purchase decision. A consumer may retain, discard, sell, process or recycle the product (Mumel, 1999; Blackwell et al., 2001). Nowadays, consumers are becoming increasingly eco-conscious. It is important for them that the product is recyclable, biodegradable and that they do not pollute the environment when they dispose of it. This certainly applies to the FT products and their consumers.

Ethical consumerism

The research on so-called *ethical consumerism* has shown that the "moral consumers" are motivated by desire to be better people and this should be their personal integrity. On the other hand, there is a danger that with this ethics of virtue, the main problem

of consumerism would be recognized in hedonism and a desire for selfish pleasure of unethical consumers. Such a definition would disqualify consumers with whom ethical companies want to communicate the most (Barnett, Cafaro and Newholm, 2005). Moral consumerism is reflected in various forms of consumer behaviour and it has become particularly visible in the last 15 years. This has developed into a real movement that includes various forms of purchase behaviour and various activities of "moral consumers", including the boycott of certain companies, buying products that are not tested on animals, avoiding buying products that are manufactured by children or purchase products of FT and organic food, re-usable and recycled products (Crane and Matten, 2007). Ethical consumerism is about freedom of choice. Jelovac believes "*that ever since the emergence of a market economy, freedom was conceived as a precondition of the existence and development of well-being.Freedom is seen as a choice, continuity of operations*"(Jelovac 2010, 88). A moral consumer is free to decide whom to support or boycott with his or her purchase. It is all a matter of voluntary choice. A shopping cart is in a figurative sense a symbol ofthe "right to vote". Brinkmann (2004) considers that there are four types of ethical consumerism: 1) *a positive shopping*, favouring ethical products (FT, organic food

products or animal-friendly), 2) *a negative buy*, which means avoiding the products with which we do not agree (eggs from caged hens, or cars with high CO_2 emissions), and 3) *shopping based on corporate policy as a whole* (boycotts of "Nestle" and buying "Body Shop" products), 4) the fourth transparent approach is a *combination of the previous three* and means that the consumer is looking for companies and products together and evaluates which is the most ethical brand. Throughout the review of the literature we can see various models of moral purchase behaviour. In the core of the models there is mostly the logic of "deliberate action" or "planned behaviour". So it is about the knowledge or belief that is leading to the establishment of positions that affect intention and behaviour (De Pelsmacker and Janssens, 2007). With its clearly defined set of business rules which are based on respect for human rights and the promotion of development work and not "charity", FT satisfies the needs of even the most demanding ethical consumer. In fact, it guarantees with its certificate that the purchase decision is morally correct. This is why we also see great success of FT development not only in Slovenia, but also in the whole Europe and the U.S.

Method

The data werecollected through survey questions. The questions were based on the previously discussed research and related to all the main constructs: knowledge about FT, information quantity, information quality, scepticism, concern, product interest, price acceptability and convenience. We used a five-point Likert scale for rating. In analysing the data of our empirical study, we used factor analysis, analysis of the reliability and validity of scales, descriptive statistics and analysis of variance statistics and structural equation modelling.

Sample

We obtained the sample for our study using the principle of snowball sampling. The sample consisted of 258 respondents of which 253 provided usable data. The criterionforusability was at least 90% of responses. Reliability of the measurement instrument was tested by using Cronbach alpha. As shown in Table 1, the value for reliability is under 0.7only in the category "convenience of purchase". We explain this with the limited availability of sales outlets.

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Table 1: FT dimensions and constructs

Dimension	Construct name	Sign	Cronbach alfa
Knowledge of FT	KNOWLEDGE	+	0.815
FT Information	INFO QUALITY	+	0.705
	INFO QUANTITY	+	0.785
Attitude towards FT in general	CONCERN	+	0.724
	SCEPTICISM	-	0.754
Attitude towards FT products	PRODUCT INTEREST	+	0.856
	CONVENIENCE	+	0.639
	PRODUCT LIKEABILITY	+	0.926
	PRICE ACCEPTABILITY	+	0.698
Buying behaviour	BUYING BEHAVIOUR	+	1.000

The model of FT consumer buying behaviour in Slovenia

The basis for the model was taken from the existing research[20]of Janssens and De Pelsmacker (2005).In the process of designing our own model we took into account different theoretical frameworks for models of buying behaviour.

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[20]The authors explain their model (shown in Figure 1) as following: At the core of the model is traditional Knowledge- Attitudes- Behaviour logic. For reasons of clarity, in this Figure, the actual construct has been replaced by a description of their main overarching dimensions: *Information about FT* stands for two constructs: perception of the quantity of FT information and perception of the quality of FT information. *General attitude towards FT* stands for two constructs: concern/interest in FT and scepticism/lack of belief in FT as a principle of doing business. *Attitude towards FT products* stands for four constructs: product interest, product likeability, shopping convenience and price acceptability. Conceptually, knowledge is assumed to load on two information constructs, two general attitude constructs and four product attitude constructs. Each of the two information constructs is assumed to have an impact on all general and product attitudes, as well as on buying behaviour. The two general attitude constructs are modelled to load on all four specific attitude constructs as well as on behaviour directly. Finally, all four product attitudes are assumed to have an impact on buying behaviour (De Pelsmacker and Jansen, 2007).

Figure 1:A conceptual model for FT buying behaviour by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007)
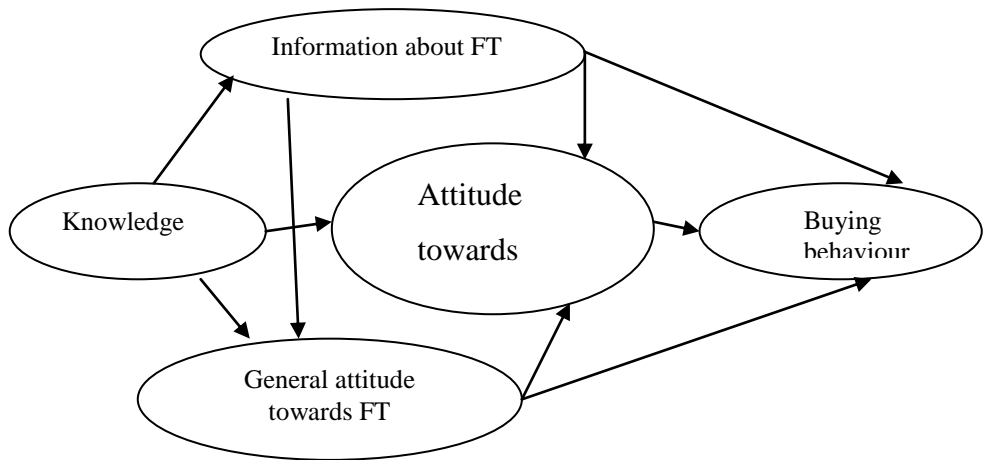
Figure 1 shows a conceptual model of *Fair trade buying behaviour*. In this research, the model consists of 10 variables. Questions were analysed using factor analysis.The suitability of data for factor analysis was checked using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin indicator, which has a value of 0.821, i.e. greater than 0.5, suggesting that the data satisfy the requirements for factor analysis. With the help of thecorrelation matrix we see that correlations between individual variables are relatively strong.

Specific factors influence the variable convenience to the greatest
extent.

Table 2: Factor Correlation Matrix

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1.000	-.146	-.180	-.091	.106	.148	.036	.330	-.114	.141
2	-.146	1.000	-.047	.028	.012	-.106	.151	-.098	-.045	-.077
3	-.180	-.047	1.000	-.330	-.354	.210	-.330	.176	.463	-.231
4	-.091	.028	-.330	1.000	.274	-.051	.169	-.166	-.164	-.071
5	.106	.012	-.354	.274	1.000	-.038	.363	-.112	-.285	.127
6	.148	-.106	.210	-.051	-.038	1.000	-.106	.198	.081	-.016
7	.036	.151	-.330	.169	.363	-.106	1.000	-.285	-.310	.045

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8	.33 0	- .09 8	.17 6	- .16 6	- .11 2	.19 8	- .28 5	1.0 00	.09 1	- .04 1
9	- .11 4	- .04 5	.46 3	- .16 4	- .28 5	.08 1	- .31 0	.09 1	1.0 00	- .19 9
10	.14 1	- .07 7	- .23 1	- .07 1	.12 7	- .01 6	.04 5	- .04 1	- .19 9	1.0 00

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization

By using the method of maximum likelihood, we reach the factor weights for individual factors. The Pattern Matrix indicates regression coefficients (see Table 3).

Table 3: Pattern Matrix

	FACTOR									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
KNOWLEDGE 1	-.036	- .014	.015	- .018	- .765	- .024	- .120	- .003	- .080	.002
KNOWLEDGE 2	-.047	.019	- .082	.031	- .870	.083	- .004	.102	.138	.030
KNOWLEDGE 3	.045	.045	.117	-	-	-	.006	-	-	-

				.123	.592	.060		.025	.035	.023
SCEPTICISM 1	-.083	.074	.012	.016	.063	-.015	.560	.078	-.071	.029
SCEPTICISM 2	.044	-.035	-.055	.051	.007	-.068	.492	-.139	.086	-.058
SCEPTICISM 3	.068	.045	-.001	-.065	.188	.012	.655	-.077	.105	-.019
SCEPTICISM 4	.043	-.008	-.032	.060	-.060	.030	.602	-.013	-.295	.079
SCEPTICISM 5	-.052	.000	-.031	-.003	.003	-.054	.392	-.016	-.400	.042
CONCERN 1	.068	-.006	.282	-.157	-.253	-.033	-.130	-.090	.289	.032
CONCERN2	-.054	.009	.077	-.051	-.056	-.026	.008	.110	.593	-.006
CONCERN 3	.005	.006	.367	-.017	-.117	-.020	-.136	.031	.303	-.121
INFO QUALITY 1	.792	-.047	-.031	-.057	.007	.060	.052	.036	.076	.121
INFO QUALITY 2	1.008	.015	.065	.028	.026	-.031	-.060	.035	-.043	-.153
INFO QUALITY 3	.367	-	-	.017	-	.020	.085	.030	-	.300

		.017	.158		.020				.110	
INFO QUANTITY 1	.066	-.044	-.101	-.022	-.115	.091	.061	.527	.074	-.047
INFO QUANTITY 2	-.048	-.085	.157	.008	-.084	-.097	-.060	.710	.065	-.016
INFO QUANTITY 3	.143	.048	.014	-.042	.142	.016	-.112	.557	-.036	.294
INFO QUANTITY 4	.090	-.018	.112	-.083	.046	.042	-.132	.441	-.037	-.160
PRICE ACCEPTABILITY 1	.024	.049	.007	-.048	.022	.539	-.004	.083	-.041	-.084
PRICE ACCEPTABILITY 2	-.020	.066	.147	.076	-.089	.485	.038	.040	.125	-.170
PRICE ACCEPTABILITY 3	.016	-.081	.101	-.060	-.002	.631	.042	-.085	-.001	.130
PRICE ACCEPTABILITY4	.000	-.049	-.105	.054	.031	.776	-.105	-.020	-.037	.068
CONVENIENCE 1	.028	-.971	.017	.063	.106	.043	.077	.133	.037	-.119
CONVENIENCE 2	-.011	-.513	.000	-.040	-.025	-.015	-.048	-.035	-.033	.047
PRODUCT LIKEABILITY	-.030	.009	-	-	-	-	-	.017	.021	.047

1			.001	.857	.029	.058	.004			
PRODUCT LIKEABILITY 2	.009	-.011	-.081	-.976	-.033	.075	.017	-.023	-.036	-.088
PRODUCT LIKEABILITY 3	.025	-.011	.051	-.868	.019	-.010	.012	.032	.015	.024
PRODUCT INTEREST 1	.104	-.044	.677	.045	-.127	.021	-.041	.057	-.026	-.124
PRODUCT INTEREST 2	-.021	-.023	.926	.000	-.007	.065	.033	.025	.059	.103
PRODUCT INTEREST 3	-.102	.043	.721	-.117	.044	.042	.001	.027	-.016	-.056
BUYING BEHAVIOUR	-.077	-.046	.268	-.045	-.052	.054	-.068	-.038	.181	.100
Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.										
Rotation converged in 12 iterations.										

Now we have enough statistical data to create a model following the pattern of De Pelsmacker and Janssen. Our model was designed by using the module AMOS in SPSS. Multiple regression equations were simultaneously examined with the help of structural equation modelling (SEM) statistical techniques (Hair, 2010). The following Table 4 presents the dimensions of the fit of the model.

Table 4: Goodness of fit measures for the buying behaviour model

Fit measures	Sign
X^2	705,903
Degrees of freedom	397
X^2/ d.f.	1.778
TLI	0.878
CFI	0.898
RMSEA	0.051

As is apparent from the results, the model fits the data well, since the value of Chi-square/degrees of freedom is fewer than 3. In addition, the RMSEA value is 0.051, which is slightly above the recommended value of 0.05 (Bryne, 2010).Most significant pathways are plotted in Figure 2 below. Due to the matching data, traditional logic is somewhat changed. The independent dimension became "information on FT" with its variables: the quantity and quality of information. A purchase is decided by understanding the concept of FT and concern for the implementation and operation of the concept of FT. Both variables have a direct impact on the interest in FT products and with it on the decision to buy. Quality of information is more important than the quantity when it comes

to independent variables. Too much information adversely affects the care and conscience of people. We can say that it comes to commercializing the concept and with it a different positioning on the market. Knowing the concept of FT has a major impact on concern for FT in general. This starts an interest in FT products, which ultimately leads to a single purchase. General view of FT is the most important variable in the model and the concern for the operation of the concept of FT in general is the most important factor. The price of the products is most affected by convenience of a purchase. Good location and a reasonable layout of products within individual stores have a positive effect on the achieved price.

The model clearly shows that the quality of information indirectly affects the knowledge of FT and concern. Knowing FT in quality of information indirectly affects concern. Concern indirectly affects the likeability of products, product interest and buying behaviour. Interestingly, scepticism has no effect, because consumers have not even developed it due to their poor knowledge of FT and the quality of information. Convenience of purchase affects the price, which is not surprising: due to low demand, there is a short supply and consequently the price is low.

Discussion and Conclusion

With the entrance of FT on the Slovenian market, a form of ethical consumerism has developed, which we call *positive shopping*. In the future, it is necessary to devote additional efforts to inform consumers. Information, in addition to other factors in the social environment, will be critical for the development of other forms of ethical consumerism. Survey results certainly give their contribution to the theory of ethical consumerism. Estimated model of purchase behaviour of FT consumers could be an important and useful starting point for further work of organizations engaged in the promotion, acquisition and sale of FT products. This is one of the forms of moral consumerism and social entrepreneurship. In the future, it is necessary to further research other different forms and ways of moral consumerism in Slovenia.

Figure 2: Estimated behavioural model of purchasing FT products
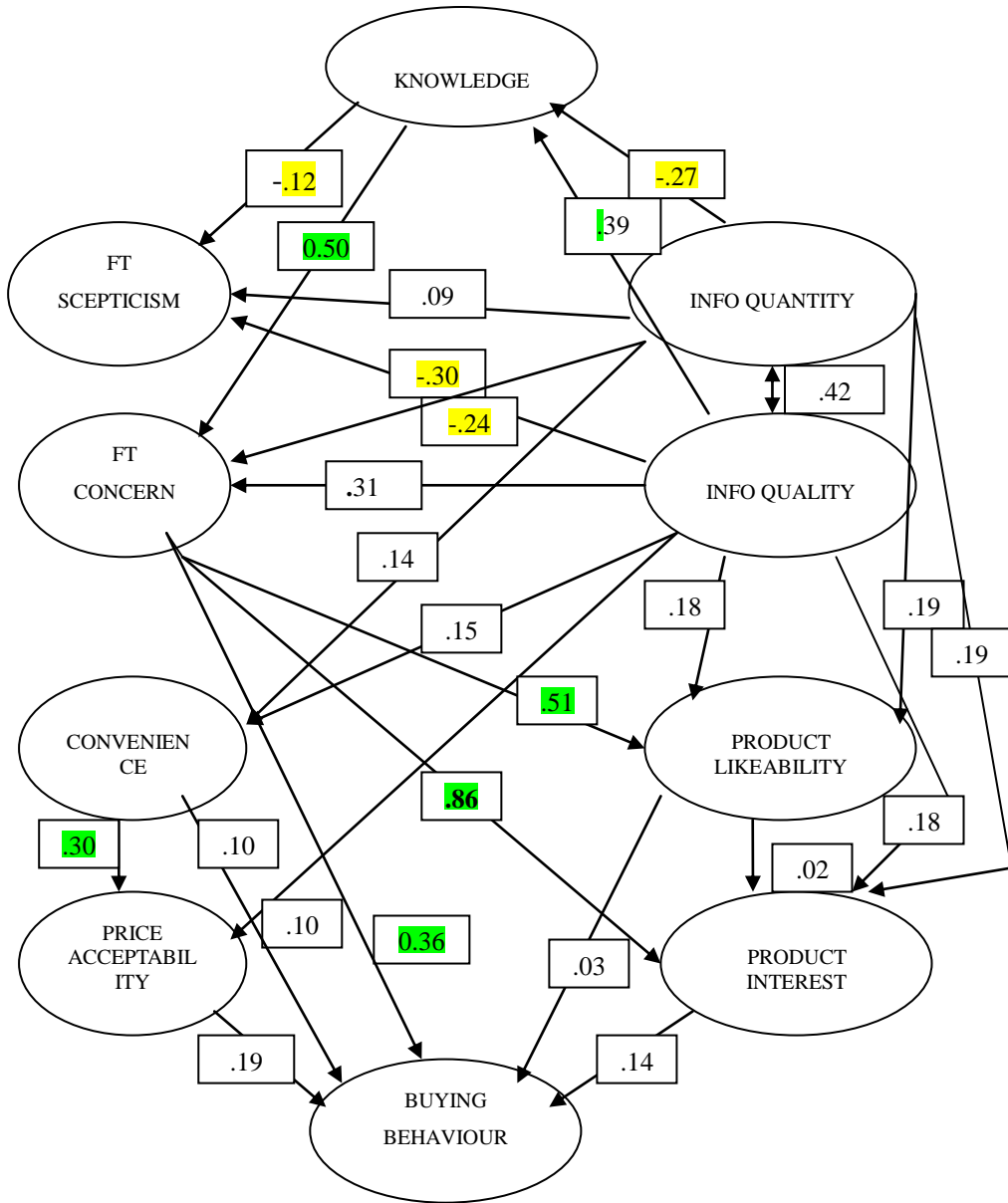
In the future, it is necessary to focus additional efforts on informing consumers and at the same time focus on their education in the light of promotion and development of the concept of *Social Corporate Responsibility* (Jelovac, 2012). Such information, in addition to other factors in the social environment, is the key to developing other forms of moral consumerism and behaviour of different stakeholders. State institutions must connect with non-governmental organisations and systematically inform consumers about FT. In other countries, where we can observe a highly successful development of FT purchasing habits, consumers were informed of the importance of purchasing a FT product. Governments informed them with the help of non-governmental programs and campaigns.We believe that the model of consumer FT purchase behaviour in Slovenia which was presented in this article is a solid starting point for the development of FT and other forms of ethical consumerism in Slovenia.

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