

## **Campaign to Promote the Consumption of Fair Trade Coffee**

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This persuasive campaign was created for the purpose of persuading consumers to buy fair trade coffee. The campaign was created under the assumption that there would be unlimited funds available to both construct and release the messages involved. As the target audiences are likely uninformed on the issue, the messages are designed to stimulate the consumer's interest about the issue and inform them about the poverty faced by small coffee farmers. In gaining interest and support from the consumers, the campaign attempts to change their purchasing behavior. The messages target three specific audiences, gourmet coffee consumers, down market coffee consumers, and the shareholders of corporate retail coffee producers such as Procter and Gamble, and Kraft Foods. The campaign utilized four specific messages; two television commercials to target each of the consumer audiences, informational pamphlets and a website to target all of the audiences, and shareholder meetings held in conjunction with the meetings held by the corporate coffee retailers, which will target the shareholder audience. The campaign messages were created using persuasion theories. Balance and cognitive consistence theory, as well as generating positive and negative feelings through the use of god and devil terms are important aspects of the messages. In addition the messages use Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Fisher's narrative approach, and the elaboration likelihood model. The campaign has aspects of a product focused model, specifically the positioning model. All these theories work together to achieve an ultimate goal, persuading consumers to change their purchasing behaviors and buy fair trade coffee.

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Coffee has captured the hearts of American consumers since its introduction to the country around three hundred years ago ("History of Coffee"). Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 54 percent of people 18 and older say they drink some type of coffee beverage daily, averaging 3.4 cups consumed per person every day (2004 National Coffee Drinking Trends Study). This campaign will raise awareness and draw attention to the need to give small coffee farmers fair prices. The specific purpose of this campaign is to persuade the audiences to purchase fair trade coffee.

Coffee is a very unstable crop in regards to average price per pound and the quality of the harvests. Prices for coffee are in the midst of a cycle between low prices and high prices that have been going on since the 1900s. Periods of high prices last only one or two years while low prices can last decades. During times of high prices, farmers are more willing to plant coffee trees. This tendency causes a problem as it takes three to five years for a tree to begin producing coffee cherries. By the time the first harvest is taken from the tree, the prices have dropped again and farmers will uproot trees to make room for more profitable plants (Dicum and Luttinger 38). Along with use of harmful chemicals, extremely small profit to the farmers, and even smaller income of farm workers, child labor with fair trade coffee is a huge problem. Only about 13 percent of coffee farmers and workers have completed their education (Dicum and Luttinger 45). In order to meet daily quotas, coffee pickers bring their children to help them in the fields. These children can be younger than six years old, and because the farm does not officially employ

them, child labor restrictions do not apply.

Small farmers often do not have enough money to meet production costs, and so they must borrow money from lenders so they can bring their coffee to market. They are charged very high interest rates and they are unable to make enough to pay off the loans, creating the need for more loans (Dicum and Luttinger 44). By selling coffee through fair trade cooperatives, some production costs are lowered, so the farmers are able to make a profit. There are active cooperatives in many countries such as Ethiopia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Peru, and Tanzania among others ("Fair Trade Coffee").

There are campaigns currently working toward gaining the awareness of coffee consumers. One of the biggest is Global Exchange. Although they put a lot of effort into their fair trade campaigns with coffee and cocoa, the organization is primarily focused on human rights. Since they incorporated coffee into their fair trade campaign in 1999, the campaign has produced some groundbreaking results and has been a huge influence in raising fair trade awareness.

This campaign will be different from existing campaigns like Global Exchange, Oxfam International, and Transfair USA, although it will draw help and inspiration from them. The biggest difference is that this campaign will center solely on fair trade coffees, while existing campaigns focus on a variety of projects. The main goal of this campaign is to create a demand for fairly traded coffee, showing coffee retailers that if fair trade coffees are produced, people will buy them.

Most of the campaign will be focused around raising the awareness of the consumers, targeting consumers through their buying habits. The first audience the campaign will target consists of people who purchase their coffee from specialty coffee establishments, the most common being Starbucks. Most Starbucks drinkers are between the ages of 20 and 29 as this age group consumes the most specialty coffees (Dicum and Luttinger 163). The campaign will try to persuade the gourmet consumer audience to make a conscious choice to purchase the fair trade options that Starbucks provides. This group is fairly unconcerned about an increase in price as they are already buying more expensive coffees; it is likely that they have the disposable income to spend the extra money.

The second group the campaign will target consists of those who purchase down market coffee at establishments like Dunkin Donuts. Because the coffee is much less expensive than Starbucks, it is probable that this audience will consist of people of lower income levels that have less disposable income. In this group of coffee consumers between the ages of 30 to 49 will be targeted, as they are the group that consumes the second largest amount of coffee (Dicum and Luttinger 162). The campaign aims to make the people in this group imagine themselves as a coffee farmer. It will ask them to think about how they would feel if they, like the coffee farmers, were unable to make enough money to care for their families.

The third and fourth groups targeted by the campaign include the shareholders of retail coffees commonly sold in grocery stores. As the brands produced by Procter & Gamble and Kraft are the largest two retail brands, Folgers and Maxwell House (Dicum and Luttinger 129), my campaign will ask shareholders of the companies to push for the production of fair trade coffees. It is likely that the shareholders of these companies want to earn money from their investments, since fair trade is a market niche that has been untouched. It will appeal to their desire to make money from their investments proving that fair trade can be a profitable undertaking for the company.

Turning to the media involved in the campaign, there will be two separate television commercials created to target both the gourmet and down market coffee drinkers. Also to target

these two audiences, the campaign will utilize a pamphlet to be distributed to the consumers. Based on the number of coffee drinkers in America, 54 percent of American adults (“2004 Coffee Drinking Trends Study”), it is probable that many of the shareholders of Procter & Gamble and Kraft Foods are also consumers. The last message will consist of an informational speech, to be given in conjunction with shareholder meetings.

My campaign will use two separate television commercials, one to target the first two audiences. They will be run on both network and broadcast TV stations, during the overall highest rated prime time television shows because the audiences most likely work all day, and so watch television in the evening. The commercials will run for six months beginning in October 2007 and ending in April 2008, because coffee is most often served hot, and consumption increases as the temperature grows colder. If the messages prove to be effective in showing an increase in purchases of fairly traded coffees, the commercials will run longer. If they prove to be inefficient in obtaining a response, than the strategy and messages will be reworked.

The goal of the commercial messages is to make the consumers to feel a social responsibility to purchase fair trade coffee. The commercial message will consist of an actual small coffee farmer telling his life story. To show that he isn’t the only one experiencing the problem, different farmers will continue the story as it progresses. The consumers will feel a small amount of guilt in knowing the coffee they drink is contributing to the farmer’s poor quality of life. When they purchase certified fair trade coffee, they will feel pride in knowing that they are helping small coffee farmers to care for their families.

The second commercial is aimed at the down-market coffee drinkers. It depicts a hard working American person receiving a very small paycheck, asking the audience to compare themselves to the small farmers. The audience will understand that the extra money is similar to a donation; the feelings of pride they get from buying a cup of fair trade would be worth the extra money.

The next message is an informational pamphlet targeted toward both down market and gourmet coffee consumers. This pamphlet will sum up the problem while providing a clear and simple solution; it will arouse interest in the reader and urge them to visit the campaign website to find out more information about fair trade. Both audiences need more information about fair trade, and so this is a way to give them more information than possible in a commercial. It also directs people to the website to find out more information, and ways they can help. These audiences are relatively uninformed; using a picture of child labor as well as showing them the extreme poverty farmers face will appeal to their emotions, and will persuade these audiences to take the simple action of buying fair trade.

The website is at the heart of the campaign as the commercials and pamphlet all refer to it. Like the pamphlet, it is a hybrid message in that it targets all of the audiences. The website will have separate pages for audiences to explore, and the consumers will have a page to go to as well as shareholders of industrial coffee companies. It will provide more detailed information about the issue of fair trade and what can be done to help the problem.

The website will focus on the shareholder audience in a more specific way. It is likely that these shareholders are consumers too, and so the first two messages, the television commercials and pamphlets will indirectly target the shareholders of coffee producing companies. Through reaching the consumers, it is very likely that shareholders will also receive the message.

The messages in this campaign are closely linked to persuasion theories. The most important theories used by the television commercials, pamphlet, and website are cognitive consistency and balance theories. Communication scholar Charles U. Larson says that, “humans want to reduce

inconsistencies because they create stress or discomfort” (p. 86). The messages will make the audience feel a mild amount of discomfort after hearing or reading about the problems small farmers are facing. The discomfort comes from the realization that their consumption habits are contributing to the farmers inability to free themselves from poverty, and the use of child labor on the farms.

The television commercials, website, and shareholder meeting have god and devil terms associated with them that are designed to rouse positive and negative emotions (Larson 128). The campaign uses devil terms such as, “poverty,” “child labor,” and “pollution,” all words that our culture associates with negative feelings. On the other hand, the campaign takes “fair trade,” a term that, to many people, doesn’t have an emotion attached to it, and associates it with positive feelings. This turns “fair trade” into a god term in the consumers mind. Another god term I use is “freedom,” a highly valued belief in our culture. The term signifies the freedom farmers gain from receiving a fair price for their coffees, as it allows them to free themselves from poverty. This also brings in another god term, “independence.” Though it isn’t said explicitly, the term is implied through the act of freeing themselves from poverty.

The second commercial refers to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, specifically security needs. Larson says, “If we fear losing our jobs, we have a strong need to obtain income security, and we try to find a more secure job, or we save money for hard times” (p. 154). The audience will be asked to imagine themselves in a situation where that need for security is not met. This should, in turn arouse a sense of empathy for coffee farmers, causing them to take action, and buy fair trade coffee.

The television commercial for the gourmet coffee drinkers also uses Fisher’s narrative approach. “Fisher (1978, 1984, 1987) proposed instead that we can better understand behavior using the story, drama, or narrative as an analytical device, casting the persuasive event in narrative terms (Larson 60).” The commercial tells the story of poor coffee farmers, using real coffee farmers to add fidelity to the story. The story told in the commercial clearly demonstrates good fidelity in that it addresses how the farmers, like the consumers, have needs that have to be met. Our society values helping others that are in need, and doing so leads to a positive outcome for both the farmers and the consumers who buy their products. As a result, the future for the farmers is more secure, and consumers gain positive feelings from knowing their consumption habits are helping instead of harming.

All of the campaign messages use Richard Petty and Joan Cacioppo’s elaboration likelihood model as it deals with “the conscious scrutiny we use in making an evaluative judgment and requires both the motivation and the ability to process information (Larson 73).” The audience will get information they most likely have not heard before so they will need to put thought and energy into processing it, going through the central processing path. In asking people to think a lot about this situation, the messages target people with a somewhat high need for cognition.

Coffee is a product with strong brand names like Folgers and Maxwell House. The elaboration likelihood model says, “strong brand preferences reduce the central processing necessary (Larson 74).” The messages make the audiences think about their brand choices centrally, it is with the central processing path that they will change their attitudes and behaviors, with the hopes of pushing the newly changed purchasing behaviors back into the peripheral processing path. The ELM also says that people want to hold the correct attitudes (Larson 75), fairly traded coffee is clearly a more ethical choice, falling under the category of “right attitudes.”

This campaign is a product focused model of persuasion. It uses Jack Trout and Al Ries’

positioning model in persuading the shareholder audience as it asks them to position the company's brand of coffee as the first major retail coffee to be socially conscious. Trout and Ries theory says that "the first brand to appear in a product class has the natural advantage of being the pioneer in that product class (Larson 254)." By offering this line extension in the retail coffee market, they will be the first major brand to do so, giving them a natural advantage in the market.

In summary, this campaign utilizes balance and cognitive consistence theory, as well as the positive and negative feelings involved with god and devil terms. It uses Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Fisher's narrative approach, and the elaboration likelihood model. The campaign has aspects of a product-focused model, specifically the positioning model. All these theories work together to achieve an ultimate goal, and specific purpose of persuading consumers to purchase fair trade coffee.

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