Communicative campaigns to effect anti-slavery and fair trade

The cases of Rugmark and Caféédirect

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Abstract This inquiry examines the challenge for marketers to foster both anti-slavery and fair trade. Analyzes communicative work to enhance both. Describes underlying issues and public misunderstanding; draws on specific themes by illustrating the Anti-Slavery International campaigns to end child labour via the Rugmark label, and the work of a fair trade coffee company, Caféédirect Ltd; and furnishes a link between societal marketing and the emergent theory of sustainable communication to effect anti-slavery and global fair trade. Concludes with a discussion, implications for societal marketing and suggestions for further research.

Introduction
Slavery and slave-like practices are unacceptable to the core values of marketing (e.g. Fisk, G., 1978). Yet, to the surprise of many marketers and consumers, human enslavement and other forms of brutal exploitation are endemic in many industries around the globe, particularly in developing economies. In this paper the author discusses the interactive issues of slavery, human rights and fair trade[1]. An underlying theme of this discussion is the argument that more critical analysis (cf. Kilbourne et al., 1997; Geuss, 1981; O’Neill, 1989) and expeditious intervention by marketers are required (Shultz, 1997; see also Adler and Booth, 1998; Wilmott and Alvesson, 1992; Wish et al., 1997). The author’s aim is to examine this especially troublesome phenomenon of inhumanity and to explore how select marketing communications that explicitly emphasize no-slavery practices and fair trade influence market perceptions and product sales. More specifically, the communicative acts for the Rugmark campaign of Anti-Slavery International and for the fairly traded coffee Caféédirect are explored. The paper concludes with a more general discussion and societal marketing implications.

Contemporary slavery
Contemporary slavery has been called a flourishing business despite its obvious cruelty and illegality (Lees, 1995; The Economist, 1996). It is difficult to comprehend that slavery exists nowadays and people are shocked by the
suggestion. This ignorance may be partly explained by the dearth of literature on the topic. Relevant books and articles are overwhelmingly about slavery in the USA, or in the Western Hemisphere, generally (e.g. Harker, 1994; Rohan, 1988; cf. Ezard, 1996; Sowell, 1994). This is true of both academic and popular literatures (Anti-Slavery International, 1993a). Moreover, people generally tend not to understand that contemporary slavery may be manifest in several forms, including traditional “chattel” slavery, debt bondage, serfdom, servile marriage, child labor, servile domestic work, forced labor, and slavery for ritual or religious purposes (Anti-Slavery International, 1995b, c). Victims of these practices are characterized by their vulnerability and by poverty (Fisk, R., 1995). They typically include women, children, migrant workers, groups attributed low social status, nomadic groups and/or indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, though anti-slavery is a focal point of this paper, the broader context is human rights. “Human rights”, however, has many interpretations, depends on one’s ethnicity and culture, is heavily influenced by one’s physical location (see Macfarlane, 1990), political inclinations, freedom to campaign openly, and funding to express opinion contrary to that held by, for example, the state (cf. Campbell et al., 1986, p. 1; Ewing et al., 1994; HMSO, 1995; Jackson, 1995; Nill and Shultz, 1997). In short, there exist different ideas about what constitutes human rights and slavery, despite the previously cited categorizations articulated by Anti-Slavery International (for a variety of ideas and positions see Human Rights Quarterly, 1997; Barrickman, 1996; Brinton Lykes and Liem, 1990; Cage, 1997; Claude, 1976; Donnelly, 1989; Dorn, 1997; Garling, 1979; Gray, 1997; Heffernan, 1997; Muzhi, 1997). Consequently, we are doubly challenged to effect marketer activities and consumer decision making in ways to eliminate modern-day slavery and exploitative trade (Foxworth, 1991; cf. Waters, 1996).

**Fair trade**

No universally accepted, authoritative definition of fair trade exists. Although several organizations have missions with the specific intent to promote fair trade. A summary of fair trade principles and/or objectives from five different organizations is presented in Table I.

A review of these principles, coupled with the following text, captures important implications of fair trade:

...“fair trade” means that trading partnerships are based on reciprocal benefits and mutual respect; that prices paid to producers reflect the work they do; that workers have the right to organize; that national health and safety, and wage laws are enforced; and that products are environmentally sustainable and conserve natural resources (Fair Trade Federation, 1999, p. 5).

Organizations that promote fair trade differ from, say, independent commercial importers. First, their goal is to benefit the artisans with whom they work, not to maximize profits. Second, they work with producer co-operatives that employ democratic principles. Third, they encourage producers to reinvest their profits in their communities. Fourth, some work to shift processing and packaging activities to the Third World, so that as much work as possible will
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<th>Organization and purpose</th>
<th>Principles and/or objectives</th>
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<td><strong>Fair Trade Federation (FTF)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Links low income producers with consumer markets and educates consumers</td>
<td>Committed to:&lt;br&gt;Fair wages,&lt;br&gt;Co-operative work places,&lt;br&gt;Consumer education,&lt;br&gt;Environmental sustainability,&lt;br&gt;Financial and technical support,&lt;br&gt;Respect for cultural identity,&lt;br&gt;Public accountability</td>
<td>An association of fair trade wholesalers, retailers and producers. Established 1996</td>
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<td><strong>International Federation of Alternative Trade (IFAT)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Aims to improve the livelihood of disadvantaged people in developing countries by linking and strengthening organizations that offer just alternatives to unfair trade structures practices within a framework of solidarity, trust and mutual respect, avoiding prejudice or harm to colleagues’ images and reputations</td>
<td>Committed to a code of practice including: fair trade, transparency, ethical issues, working conditions, equal employment opportunities, concern for people, concern for the environment, respect for producers’ cultural identity, education and advocacy</td>
<td>Coalition of 70-plus alternative trade organizations from 30-plus nations. Established 1989</td>
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<td><strong>European Fair Trade Association (EFTA)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Strives for fair trade in commercial trading in Europe</td>
<td>Committed to:&lt;br&gt;seeking stimulation of practical co-operation between members,&lt;br&gt;developing common policies, offering joint support to producers</td>
<td>Association of 11 fair trade organizations in nine European countries. EFTA members import from over 550 producer groups in 44 countries. Established 1990 after ten years’ informal co-operation</td>
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<td><strong>Max Havelaar Foundation</strong>&lt;br&gt;Operates a quality seal for coffee</td>
<td>Roasters seeking the seal must comply with a number of fair trade criteria</td>
<td>Established in Dutch market in 1988 since introduced to other EU countries including Denmark</td>
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remain with producer countries. Fifth, Fair Trade organizations frequently cooperate, as is the case with Café Direct. Finally, some organizations seek to do for individual products what a social audit does for a company (cf. Arkin, 1996; Howard, 1995; Littrell and Dickson, 1999). For example, after inspection of production sites and relevant documentation, if a foundation is convinced that the products that companies are applying to validate are fairly traded, then they are allowed to display the fair-trade logo on their products; the logo, which has been awarded to Café Direct, guarantees consumers that third-world farmers and producers have not been exploited.

The assurance of fair trade arguably is a fundamental challenge to our liberal trading order that has arisen in recent decades (e.g. Enders, 1997; Howse and Trebilcock, 1996), but it remains a controversial topic. Young (1995, p. 56), for instance, argues that the only way free trade will ever be fair trade is for NAFTA countries to adopt the European Union’s freedom of mobility for all labour and accept the resultant wage inflation that harmonization of work would bring. Some scholars argue that any move away from free trade towards fair trade should be rejected (e.g. Bhagwati, 1995). This proposal is based on the critique that many of the demands for trade liberalization are from rich countries trying to impose their values on poorer countries as preconditions for liberalization. This author embraces a counter-argument that the work of anti-slavery and fair trade is equally applicable to contemporary industrialized countries and to their poorer neighbors. Irrespective of the merit for the adversarial positions, trends indicate that fair-trade products are becoming more readily available and there are attempts to move the fair-trade practice into a much broader range of products (Howard, 1995). According to the Fair Trade Federation (1999), the importance of fair trade in sales is around $400 million each year. In North America fair trade retail sales totaled $35 to 40 million in 1998. Sales of the largest fair trade organization in the USA, Ten Thousand Villages, rose from nearly $3 million in 1985 to $12 million in 1998. Nevertheless, it is claimed that, of all goods exchanged globally, fair trade accounts for only 0.1 per cent (Fair Trade Federation, 1999). Coffee is often

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<td>Transfair International (including Transfair USA)</td>
<td>Committed to: provision and monitoring of Transfair seal, seal offered to traders who buy from registered cooperatives in developing countries, includes coffee, honey, cocoa, sugar and tea</td>
<td>Founded in 1992 by EFTA and Transfair Germany</td>
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Source: adapted by the author from the FTF

Table I.
regarded as one of the world’s most valuable commodities (Bidlake, 1994). Changing the nature of the coffee market to introduce fair trade, rather than free trade, would have immediate impact on several stakeholders in the supply chain and symbolic importance at a time when coffee production is consistently outstripping consumption and oversupply driving down prices (Oxfam, 2000). The latter could also influence trade practices in other commodities/industries.

The preceding text suggests that the marketing systems of the carpet and coffee industries are an interesting study for marketers and others who have concerns about societal marketing and the ethics of relational exchanges. Rugmark and Cafédirect represent potential model-cases in these two industries. Therefore, it would seem important to implement a scholarly examination of them, with hopes to gain insights from the alliances and communicative campaigns by those working against contemporary slavery in carpet marketing and by a fair trade coffee company.

Methods

The author strove to investigate the developmental process and implementation of communications campaigns designed to abet marketing equity, with a specific emphasis on supply chains and the welfare of slave or slave-like laborers who toil in them. The supply chains in focus were the carpet and coffee industries and the principal cases were the communications campaigns for Rugmark and Cafédirect, respectively.

The research design was interpretive (e.g. Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 1985). Particular emphasis was placed on the examination and interpretation of extant policies, documents and trends, site-visits, personal observations and interviews. No pre-set number of interviews was determined. Rather, interviews were conducted until obvious patterns and themes emerged and became iterative (cf. Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Eisenhardt’s (1989) eight-step procedure for theory development was used. Each research theme of the study was analyzed in the four-step interactive process of data analysis following Miles and Huberman (1994). This involved coding (i.e. labeling data into the various research themes), memoing (i.e. theorizing ideas about codes and their relationships) and developing propositions (Glaser, 1978; Gill and Johnson, 1991), which were taken back into the field for discussion with respondents. Interpretations were confirmed through triangulation; that is, claims were supported with multiple evidence such as the comparison of interview notes with the transcription of the interview and/or the inclusion of multiple respondents (Bryman, 1988). Each research theme was then cross-analyzed to list similarities and differences. This data-collection and analysis continued over a period of three years.

Accuracy, or trustworthiness of findings and conclusions (cf. Wallendorf and Belk, 1989; Vass and Wells, 1994), was assured by implementing several processes. For instance, data were collected from multiple sources, including review and analysis of extant publications and documentaries, personal interviews, and direct observations. During the interview process, respondents
were asked to clarify what they meant by key terms such as “fair trade” or “anti-slavery” before probing them to describe the working context of these activities. Rival explanations as patterns within each research theme were considered and then integrated or discarded, depending on feedback from respondents; in this way key informants were interviewed two or three times when ambiguity arose from an interview or when they were invited to comment on the author’s theoretical developments. Data were recorded by field notes and audiotape, which was transcribed to print.

Data were collected with the assistance of the environmental and social justice communications consultancy, Media Natura, with offices in London and New York. This organization allowed the researcher to structure casework of what it does according to the animal, personal health and planet preservation categories in conjunction with four of its UK-based clients. Respondents from Media Natura helped to construct the communications of the research themes of the study; other respondents included representatives from both developed and developing nations. It should be noted that the study did not set out to privilege one region of the world in terms of acting as a representative voice on either anti-slavery or fair trade. Relevant findings of the study are provided below.

**Findings and interpretations**

**Anti-slavery and fair trade movements**

In order to discuss the Rugmark and Cafédirect communicative acts in detail it is first necessary to provide background information on the anti-slavery and fair trade movements, as discussed by the respondents to the study. What emerges is not a clear-cut answer to the question, but rather a rich vein of interpretation for perhaps what “ought to be” instead of what we frequently witness on a global scale in market exchanges. Thus the initial, cursory findings hinted that there is indeed the potential for marketers to develop competitive advantages by informing consumers that slavery exists, that engaging in fair trade helps to eliminate it and then by promoting one’s engagement, accordingly.

The Anti-Slavery Society, now renamed Anti-Slavery International (ASI)[2], has been a vanguard of the anti-slavery movement. It is a small charitable organization, formed in 1839 from previous groups opposed to enslavement. It represents the oldest human rights organization in the world. The essence of ASI is captured below:

> We are a unique organization with an exceptional history as our legacy. We work on the basic right of human beings to be subjects rather than objects and to be citizens rather than vassals. These are the notions that underpin all civil, political, economic and social rights. Be it Burma or Brazil, Sudan or Senegal, Indonesia or India, Pakistan or Paraguay, there are reports of people who have been systematically denied these rights by the greed of others. Slavery and servitude are not fringe issues and their abolition must be a priority for governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations alike (Anti-Slavery International, 1995a).
ASI considers itself a catalyst to raise awareness, to lobby governments and international bodies – ASI has a long-standing consultative status at the United Nations (Media Natura, 1994) – and to campaign for anti-slavery (Anti-Slavery International, 1999, p. 2). In a way similar to many charities Anti-Slavery International derives a substantial proportion of its income form voluntary donation or legacies (ASI, 1993a, 1995a, 1999). Effective communications are vital for the organization’s financial wellbeing, and it is generally regarded to have well-researched and intelligent exhibitions, documentaries and publications vis-à-vis child labor (e.g. Anti-Slavery International, 1978, 1988a, 1991, 1993b, 1996a; Cross, 1991; Moorehead, 1987; Sattaur, 1993; Smith, 1994; Valcarenghi, 1981; Williams, 1992), human rights (e.g. Anderson, 1993; Anti-Slavery International, 1984a, 1993a, 1996b; Smith, 1994), and indigenous peoples (see, for example, Anti-Slavery International, 1984b, 1985, 1988b, 1990, 1997).

Slavery has many (mis)understandings today. Many people truly believe that it no longer exists and is something only to be found in historical documentaries. The ASI staff acknowledges that some people perceive the organization’s name as strange:

This is our biggest problem; on the one hand, we have a name which attracts instant attention, “Oh, slavery, that’s dramatic”, but people do associate with something that was abolished 150 years ago. The fact that it was abolished, of course, doesn’t still mean that it doesn’t still continue! So that is our message really that slavery does still exist. We would be reluctant to drop the word “slavery” from our title because of that shock value that it does have and basically because it is true! “Slavery” does continue under international definitions and concepts of what is meant by “slavery” (Communications assistant, Anti-Slavery International, 1994).

Work by the focal case organization Media Natura (1994) for ASI investigated how a broad range of groups perceived slavery and how these groups thought the general public perceived slavery. These included journalists, directors and desk officers from Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, representatives from the United Nations and European Commission, politicians, representatives of field governments as well as ASI committee members. What appears from this dialogue is slavery being attributed to a historical phenomenon, which Media Natura term a “consensus view.” In other words, an informed audience may be aware of a particular form of slavery, but may not necessarily associate this activity with their interpretation of slavery. These people associate slavery with its historical meaning, “ownership of another human being”, exploitation of labour, or specific contemporary forms. For example, a number of people with professional links to the subject noted that they initially think of slavery in its historical context, before specifying examples of specific forms of modern slavery, typically bonded labour or child labour. Some respondents from NGOs feel that the nature of slavery has changed to human rights and labour exploitation. No one person gave standard definitions of contemporary slavery similar to that of ASI. The latter takes into consideration Articles 1 to 7 of the
Campaigns to effect anti-slavery

The evidence provided to the researcher by ASI (see Media Natura, 1994) cites bonded labour and child labour as those areas considered to be priority forms of slavery today. One issue of common concern across both movements is the level of public confusion surrounding both the issue of fairly traded products and that of contemporary slavery. Many experts on fair trade are also keen to point out the level of confusion around the term and the lack of academic literature available on it:

There is a huge confusion! People assume that, if something is organic, then it must be ethical and, if it's fair trade, then it ought to be organic. They are not the same things at all. There are a lot of companies engaged in organic production but I think a lot of organic production is not fair trade. But there is confusion and a lot of educational work still needs to be undertaken to make that as clear to people as possible. I think that people need as much information as possible to make choices with which they feel happy, those choices may have to change from time to time, but that's part of the whole thing (Sales Director, Cafédirect, 1994).

The considerable confusion surrounding both areas has been acknowledged by various organizations and a number of communicative acts have been introduced as a consequence. The author illustrates two of these initiatives, namely the Rugmark anti-slavery campaign and the campaign for the fairly traded coffee Cafédirect. Both campaigns utilized labels to convey their personal health preservation messages. Detailed discussion follows.

The Rugmark campaign
ASI has developed what is known as the “Rugmark” campaign. Based on much of the work from Anti-Slavery International (1992) and its publication, “Slavery and the Things We Buy”[3], it helps the reader to understand what ASI is trying to communicate and indeed why they are communicating these issues within the UK. As such it represents a good illustration of the interconnections between the first and third worlds. In this context ASI is helping introduce a label on hand-knotted carpets from India to indicate that they have not been produced by child labour. In an attempt to bring this issue to the public’s attention the organization ran a postcard campaign on behalf of the Rugmark (see Figure 1).

The first official announcement that the label was forthcoming was made at the world’s largest carpet fair in 1994 (Anti-Slavery International, 1994). It was subsequently delayed due to the need to ensure that all the controls on the use
of the label were in place before the campaign started. The conditions for its use commit exporters in two main areas:

1. they are not to use child labour as defined in Indian law in any area of production;
2. they must pay all workers at least the minimum wage as set in Indian law.

ASI argued that the delay in the introduction of the mark made it imperative that consumers continue to keep up the pressure on importers and retailers. The threat of consumer boycotts has forced the Indian and Nepali exporters into responding and pressure had to be maintained to stop them from pulling out of the campaign. The concept was not seen as a way of bridging the North-South global divide but an idealistic solution to the world’s ills. This was continually reinforced to the researcher, who observes a strong, normative voice as to what should be done:

In so far as Utopia is something we would never reach or is sometimes interpreted as that, I would say it’s how people should behave anyway [large sigh]. I mean the alienation is what the slaves suffer, in our point of view. So what one is actually trying to get across is that there are people throughout the world who lack this basic human right, the basic human right of freedom! In some ways some of the basic definition of sustainable communication reflects what is happening at the moment in the rich North and the concerns of the rich North, within the rich North. I think what people have to realize is that there is a whole world out there. It’s not just a world of children with swollen bellies because they are starving, it’s a whole world where people are trying to subsist! And that’s a very important green issue as well, because research has shown, recently, that some of these people are desperately trying to subsist and are actually damaging the environment. This is through no fault of their own, because they desperately need the firewood or this or that or the other. So it also is a holistic approach but it is actually one where the rich North has got to really confront within itself what the needs of the poor South are! Thus not shirk responsibility and, in that sense, what I would say in your definition is that it reflects really the concerns of the rich North. The rich North wants to say, “it’s (any environmental problem) out there” and not that we are part of it. This is sometimes in terms of some of the campaigns, like timber, for which they get criticized by the countries in the poor South, saying this is an export-earner for them. In that sense they are right; it is an export-earner for them; therefore we as the rich North have a responsibility to find something else that will save the import (Communications Officer, Anti-Slavery International, 1995a).

**Figure 1.**
The ASI Rugmark campaign to help stop child labour

*Note: The Rugmark attempts to guarantee that carpets for sale have not been made from exploited child labour.*
This illustration also highlights the societal marketing dimensions of fair trade, as perceived by the subject, relating to both Northern and Southern hemispheres in any analysis of the slavery issue. It also reflects on the strong interconnections between theorizing ecological issues and the personal health concerns of fair trade. These are tightly woven together because of the social fabric of many parts of the Southern hemisphere, as indeed is the work on anti-slavery. ASI explains the importance of the “Rugmark”:

Support the Rugmark
Please send a letter to the Store Manager of the large retailers of hand-knotted carpets in your area, asking them whether they are aware of the problems of child labour in the industry and how they ensure that the carpets they sell are not made by children. In addition please ask if they are aware of the proposed “rugmark” in India and if they will restrict their purchases of Indian carpets, once labeled carpets become available. Large stores selling such carpets include Benthalls, John Lewis, House of Fraser, Debenhams, Liberty, IKEA and many others. We would like to receive copies of any replies from the stores (Anti-Slavery International, 1994, p. 8).

As a result of this work it was noted (Anti-Slavery International, 1995b) that many members did write to their local carpet shops. Most stores visited had heard of the label but needed to be convinced that the campaign would work. ASI explained that this was a “Catch 22”-type scenario, since it would only be possible to persuade Indian exporters to apply for registration, if there were a clear demand from their customers. It was also noted that the Rugmark Foundation had a few teething problems and it was taking longer than hoped to inspect the looms. However, it was noted that reasonable levels of supply were forecast in the future and ASI was keen that by then some shops in importing countries will have agreed to sell labeled carpets and to display signs that explain the significance of the Rugmark. The researcher also noted that this industry was proving useful from a fund-raising perspective. In an edition of the Anti-Slavery Newsletter (Anti-Slavery International, 1995b) an insert highlighted the progress made with the Rugmark through the sensation of a child’s murder. In an “action update” leaflet, ASI explains how the publicity around the murder of Iqbal Masih has stimulated the Indian and Pakistan governments into action on carpet labeling:

The Pakistan authorities have announced that they will establish their own labeling scheme in order to assure customers around the world that the carpets they are buying are not produced by exploited child labour. In India the government has ordered exporters to apply to the Carpet Export Promotion Council for the right to use a label, guaranteeing that children didn’t make their carpets. ASI welcomes these initiatives but is concerned that they include some form of independent monitoring of the production process and this should involve local non-governmental organisations. Members can help stress this point by writing to the High Commissioners of both Pakistan and India to welcome the moves but to call for NGO involvement in the monitoring (Anti-Slavery International, 1995a).

ASI thus encouraged members to move from awareness of issues to more pivotal proactive campaigning, using updates such as the above. The organization furthermore legitimated the need for members to move beyond mere awareness and thus to become activists. In this sense what the researcher
notes is that ASI used the right of the citizen to be informed about products s/he consumes to harness her/his power as a consumer to change organizational practices. The ASI staff also explained the significance of the Rugmark as follows:

Well, what you are talking about is something which is reasonably recent as a development! People I think, in various fields, talking about charters certainly did come out of the green movement. But there is a sense that it is marginally easier to campaign than to just have charters. For example, with tropical timber one company in particular is B&Q. We are actually in communication with them because that’s a very good example of green issues being involved with the humanitarian ones. But if you start on the narrow green issues it is marginally easier to say that we will not have this tropical timber and we will boycott this tropical timber because they will hopefully get the message and stop chopping the trees down! But if you say, for example, boycott carpets from India because they are made from child labour, the people you are actually going to hurt are the children and their families! So it is a more complex process of change. The route that we have been going down in that particular example is to work closely and encourage our partners in India to develop a system which is “policable” and “certifiable” and it’s going to be called a Rugmark. There will be and should be carpets coming into this country with Rugmark on them certified as made without exploited child labour! That in a sense is then saying to the consumer, “Have a look at those and ask your importer whether they will import those carpets” and, you know, think about buying those carpets (Communications officer, Anti-Slavery International, 1994).

One can from the above description appreciate the complexities of trying to introduce such a label for consumers in the UK or in other “liberal democracies”. Dahab (1998) notes that, although there are similar concerns of initiatives for changing child labour practices in developing countries, they have different objectives. Perhaps the societal marketing task of raising awareness of these issues should not be under-estimated. Related to this, one of the other ways the ASI set about raising awareness was through the continued presentation of the Annual Anti-Slavery Award to individuals world-wide fighting against slavery and its other public awareness campaigns. These awards offer some opportunity for those interested in the societal marketing and more specifically marketing and development discourses to juxtapose slave-like practices with their more desirable opposite. It is here that the reader can also benefit from considering real-life fair trade practices, the problems associated with developing new fair trade marks and the knowledge levels of these activities amongst the general public. The Cafédirect example below further expands these issues.

**Fair trade and Cafédirect**

Within the fair trade movement the importance of fair as opposed to free trade is recognized as vital. The author sought a range of consequences of the types of practices leading to calls for fair trade, the processes developed over time, conditions where fair trade was minimized and the consequences of this neglect. The communications director of Media Natura provides a clear explanation as to why this is so:

Well, Cafédirect came to us in 1992. It is made up of four fair trade organizations: Equal Exchange, Oxfam Trading, Traidcraft, and Twin Trading. They are all fair trade
The point of fair trade is that it pays third-world producers a fair wage, a living wage. If you're looking at coffee, for example, coffee is only grown in tropical climates – OK, in the developing world – can't grow coffee anywhere else but the developing world. Now the developed world drinks coffee! It's the whole thing about the developed world. In very simple terms, providing a huge amount of capital for third-world countries. So developing countries produce cash crops to then sell back to the developed world, you know, in its very basic form. What then happened was that the developed world started to screw them on price, screw them down and down and down. So suddenly they were reliant on cash crop and desperate for foreign currency to pay off the debts they got to do the thing in the first place. It's a downward spiral and with coffee six years ago there was something called the International Coffee Agreement and it collapsed and coffee prices went down to 1930s levels. Families who grew coffee – 80 per cent of coffee is grown by families, small communities. Suddenly your wage packet is 1/10th of what it normally is and you can't feed your family, can't drive your car, and can't tally it up. That's exactly what happened to these communities! They couldn't exist any more, so they went over to growing cocaine, the coca for cocaine or going to the cities into prostitution. That's not exaggerating. So the fair trade organizations went out and helped them set up co-operatives, lent them money on very, very, very low interest rates (Communications Director, Media Natura, 1994).

Drawing on the work of Eckersley (1992) or Merchant (1992), the researcher notes the increasingly interconnected nature of community when one listens to commentaries on fair trade or anti-slavery. The FTF mission is to encourage equitable, culturally sensitive and environmentally sound community development through the promotion of fair trade practices. In their opinion, “when you purchase a fair trade product, you are helping a person in a developing nation rise above the poverty line” (Fair Trade Federation, 1999). In a sociocultural sense the author interprets informant interviews as fair traders sharing a similar sense of social justice as anti-slavery campaigners. This thought is further illustrated below, in considering the communicative context of Cafédirect, considered so important by the Fair Trade Federation as the UK’s pioneering fair trade coffee brand. In attempting to present this as a coherent picture there is much assistance in taking both recent historical and descriptive analyses of the study’s findings.

Cafédirect is promoted by Traidcraft, a UK fair trade organization with a range of food, tea and coffee offerings (Bidlake, 1994; cf. Strong, 1996). The first fairly traded coffee to become widely available in supermarkets, this premium ground instant has been produced in partnership with Twin Trading, Equal Exchange and Oxfam. Cafédirect overseasers were delighted to be the official sponsor of the successful Fair Trade Exhibition at the first Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, where it was the official coffee at both the Commonwealth Centre and the Media Centre.

Cafédirect’s market success
The coffee is sourced directly from approved co-operatives in Mexico, Peru, Costa Rica and Tanzania. Consumers can purchase Cafédirect at retail venues; catering packs for resale or institutional use also are available. Emphasis is placed on cooperation and not competition for this product, but it is important to convince those who would distribute and consume the product of its benefits.
Bidlake (1994) reported that CaféDirect, which trades on concern for labourers in the supply chain, had just sold its millionth pack with listings in all the major multiples. In 1998/1999 (CaféDirect, 1999) CaféDirect’s coffee sales totaled over £6 million, with its roast and ground coffee accounting for 4 per cent of the market and its freeze-dried instant coffee showing a strong growth with a 13 per cent increase in volume. This feat has been achieved since its launch in 1992, after which Bidlake (1994) asked this fundamental question: How has this coffee, which has so far had little advertising and was launched by a group of non-profit-making organizations, won over the minds and shelf space of the profit-hungry multiples?

The story of the progress with retailers from 1991 to 1994 was indicative of the general uptake in interest at that time. Mitchell (1998) remarks that, with retail sales of $225 million, mostly in Europe, coffee is the world’s top fairly traded product. Coffee is sold under 130 brand names in 35,000 European retail outlets with 90 per cent of UK supermarkets carrying a fair trade coffee. Mitchell (1998) noted that in 1996 CaféDirect alone experienced a 55 per cent sales growth. With a 2 per cent increase in sales in 1998/1999 (CaféDirect, 1999) well over two million jars of instant CaféDirect were sold. Research conducted by National Opinion Poll (NOP) indicated that four out of ten people questioned were aware of fair trade products on sale in supermarkets (in Bidlake, 1994). One in four respondents said that she/he had bought a fair trade product within the last month[4]. Although some retailers, such as the CWS, were sceptical, stating that people had thought that they had seen fair trade products when they had not, the CWS agreed that it showed that people were ready for this sort of product. This research depicts a fair-trade-sensitive shopper as more likely to be single and part of the AB[5] social group, but only just. Of the single people asked, 44 per cent were aware of fair trade products compared with 38 per cent of married people. Awareness in terms of social groups was strongest among ABC1s with 50 per cent of ABs being aware of fair trade products and 42 per cent of C1s and 36 per cent of C2 and DEs. A separate NOP poll carried out in 1993 for Christian Aid found that 85 per cent of people wanted to see fairly traded products in their supermarket and that 68 per cent would pay more, if they could be sure that producers were getting a fair return. CaféDirect (1999) are encouraged by the facts both that all major UK retailers now stock their product and that their fair trade tea product, launched in September 1998, has nearly 30 per cent of the growing UK Fairtrade teas sector. Furthermore they are delighted that the UK (CaféDirect, 1999) Secretary of State along with the Co-operative Bank has delivered a “Fair trade coffee challenge” to the UK’s top 500 companies to sign up to fair trade, as over one-third of coffee is sold thorough coffee machines. Early claims by opinion polls seem borne out elsewhere too, as Mitchell (1998) also notes that, with 25 per cent a year increases in sales, the competition for fair trade retailers from mainstream gourmet retailers has begun in earnest.
It is reasonable to conclude that the steady progress of CaféDirect may be attributed to the communications work for this product; it is not likely that the market could support a product simply on charity. There had to be a persuasive reason to purchase this coffee. In this respect the task of convincing the “right” consumer of the product’s desirable attributes was crucial. The product was described to the researcher as a “trail-blazer”, one of the first of its kind, now widely available in supermarkets all over the UK. CaféDirect offered a guarantee to imply a high level of uniqueness. Included in that guarantee was a promise that the green coffee in CaféDirect is bought on internationally recognized fair trade terms, that they pay an internationally recognized minimum fair price for Arabica and for Robusta coffee beans, regardless of how low the market falls. They also pay a 10 per cent premium above the market rate, enabling growers to invest in their organizations and community. Moreover, CaféDirect provides pre-payments with advances of up to 60 per cent of the minimum price given to growers, upon request. This can help cash flow and eliminate intermediaries who often offer a lower price for beans. With their CaféDirect partnership the company works with growers in the marketplace, as well as locally. They only work with small-scale coffee growers, and farmers’ organizations, which are accountable to their members, not plantations. Nor do they work with brokers. In 1998 alone, CaféDirect invested £200,000 in its “Producer support and development programme” (CaféDirect, 1999).

The preceding text captures well the interactive and coordinated steps that must be taken to ensure fair trade channel management in the case of CaféDirect. Market demand and ultimately supply chain management can be further explored by considering the extent to which consumers must engage in informed and ethical (or at least fair-trade-sensitive) decision making when purchasing products. Thus, it can be argued that the Rugmark and the CaféDirect labels provide clearer and more relevant product information for citizens, which initiate pull through the distribution apparatus. Issue literacy is thus increased and consequently helps to eliminate consumer ignorance and confusion, and in turn provides incentives for fair trade and the elimination of slavery at any stage of the channel. A closer look at CaféDirect consumers follows.

Consumers with macro concerns
Certain consumers have been classed as “semi-ethicals” by respondents in this study. Analysis suggests that those of a semi-ethical inclination may not be confused about anti-slavery or fair trade issues and are likely to represent the voice of many societal marketing concerns. Such citizens attend to product labeling and they require communications to be credible. Elsewhere Bird and Hughes (1997), drawing on Mintel marketing intelligence over the 1990-1994 period, describe semi-ethical consumers in the UK as representing 56 per cent of the market. They are primarily motivated by perceived quality and brand status; “ethical benefits” are an emotional bonus to them and, while they are suspicious of charity brands, they are open to persuasion. People who were
deemed to be “ethical consumers” constituted 23 per cent of the market. They are primarily motivated by their ethical stance and are willing to trade off products for the emotional reward of making a perceived ethical choice; they are willing to pay a premium for charity, alone. Of the other consumers, 17 per cent were identified as selfish and believed that ethical issues were a waste of time; 4 per cent were undecided.

Taylor Nelson values instant coffee, in the UK alone, at £563.3 million (around US$850 million), growing by 3 per cent year-on-year in the 52 weeks to September 22 (see Bray (1996) for details). Volume sales in the same period grew by 1.2 per cent. Liquid and ground, on the other hand, is put at £64.4 million, having grown by 1.6 per cent year-on-year in both expenditure and volume. There is a trend towards drinking coffee at the expense of other hot beverages, especially tea. Daily coffee consumption has risen over the past ten years, and the increasing number of quality café bars makes it more widely available. More recently the Euromonitor (1999) database values sales in the US instant coffee market at $791.2 million in 1998 up from $739 million in 1994. If one is going to compete in either sector, it is imperative to target customers clearly, so that the message can be effective. The communications director of Media Natura explains:

So first we decide that we’re going to advertise Cafédirect, to ethicals. So even if we get every single one of them to buy a pack and one for their friends we won’t make any odds. So it’s not what we call the selfish consumer they’re sort of sort C2DEs they’re very brand-loyal they’ll eat Kellogg’s, drink Nescafé, they’ll have Heinz beans, Persil, you know they don’t like to take risks. So then we decided we’d go for the semi-ethical consumer ABC1 adults, high disposable income and the sort of people who wear their brands, sort of I am my brand I am my shopping trolley, they own the brands. OK, this would be similar to the pale green consumer. They would have an awareness of the issues but not necessarily an understanding. They would maybe belong to WWF maybe Greenpeace, one or the other and the National Trust but they wouldn’t go on a march, they wouldn’t even consider it. As long as there is a green splodge on the product that’s all right. So we decided to advertise to the semi-ethicals. We had to be, as in communication, single-minded (if you focus with 20 ideas they won’t get any; if you focus on one there’s a good chance that they will!) However, we had to do two things: first, we had to talk about the quality of the coffee, essential, you’ve got to tell people it tastes good or else why are they going to buy it? We also started to tell people about the altruistic element of Cafédirect as fair trade coffee. We had to first explain what fair trade is for people to be actually able to place and understand why there is Cafédirect. Of course we didn’t have an opportunity to do that; we had to do both at the same time because of funds. So that’s why you’ve seen the advertising on the train stations (Communications Director, Media Natura, 1994).

So what is apparent here is the need to focus clearly on a single issue in one’s communications. For example, in explaining the concept of fair trade to those people likely to be semi-ethicals. The sales director of Cafédirect also confirms this belief in this target audience:

Media Natura have identified for us through our research Cafédirect’s prime target as being women aged 25-35 up to about 40, and ABC1s. Those are already sort of crude classifications, but those are also, I accept it goes a bit down in the age range, sort of women aged between 18 and 30, I mean now its something like 20% at least claim to be vegetarian most of the time. There is an overlap and the organic thing as well. But those are people who are already
Campaigns to effect anti-slavery

Issue-literacy of these consumers could be equally applied, whether talking about fair trade, anti-slavery or even genetically modified foods. It is notable in this exchange that marketers now believe that these consumers, mainly female, will be so concerned about what they consume that they will read closely the labels on the products concerned. The front of the Cafédirect packet carries the fair trade logo and states that the coffee has been traded in such a way as to ensure that producers and their families benefit directly from a consumer’s purchase. The back of the packet explains who are the four fair trade organizations involved, as well as making the following promise:

Cafédirect’s promise is a high quality coffee for the consumer and a higher income for the small farm producer. World coffee prices are unstable and have fallen dramatically in recent years. This coffee comes to you direct from the producers and the price includes a premium for them. Cafédirect is part of a new movement towards fairer trading, helping create stability and justice for ordinary people around the world.

From assessing both campaigns and in considering the issues of public awareness and confusion the research study has shown that communicative acts which provide information of importance to semi-ethical consumers are expected to meet certain criteria. These include the provision of credible and clear information and confirmation of organizational claims and practice. Trust and dialogue between an organization and its publics are also important. In order to avoid further confusion amongst consumers focus on a single issue of concern is also deemed to be necessary.

Discussion and implications for marketing

This author invites marketers and consumers to engage in practices to abet fair trade and to eliminate slavery. Examples from cooperative endeavors among business organizations demonstrate practical implications for communicative practices in the carpet and coffee industries. Indeed, the overarching theme of this paper is communication to enhance awareness, understanding and action to manage supply chains in ways that foment anti-slavery activities, human rights and fair trade, while at the same time delivering tangible goods valued by consumers. To effect initial and lasting change, diligence is required. Consequently, it is imperative to invoke a campaign of “sustainable communication”; that is, holistic information dissemination and understanding to facilitate the welfare of all those who contribute to the types of supply chains described here and the greater ecosystem more broadly (McDonagh, 1998, p. 599).

To complicate matters, some marketing practice is complicit in contemporary slavery. To move away from such incidents suggests that those advocating fair trade should be consulted. Furthermore, such work sheds light on how one fully categorizes consumers in the marketplace with macro concerns. What now needs to occur is for marketers to link marketing practices
to this need for sustainable communication at an organizational level, in order to help facilitate the dimensions of systemic global fair trade and anti-slavery. Marketers are well positioned to help eliminate contemporary slavery, to encourage fair trade and ultimately to facilitate the socioeconomic transition of regimes that will be less likely to threaten international peace and security in their efforts to defend repressive systems, including global marketing systems (cf. Friedman, 1999; Howse and Trebilcock, 1996). Figure 2, for example, provides a framework for the enactment of anti-slavery and fair trade practices, which produce better issue-literacy, with the objective of enhancing consumption of fair trade produce. In this context issue-literacy should be considered the relevant knowledge-base of these consumers.

With respect to the general headings, production pertains to the transformation process by which human rights are enacted through societal marketing scrutiny that has a critical perspective. This scrutiny involves a dynamic in which global governments, non-government organizations, multinational corporations and perhaps other institutions provide markets and facilitate exchanges that respect the dignity of human and non-human resources. Part of this dynamic must also address the sensitivities of informed and conscientious consumers who would find unthinkable the purchase of goods produced by slave labour. Thus, one output is marketing communication in the forms of global-labels and marks to promote anti-slavery, fair trade and quality of life, which in turn abet better issue-literacy and fair trade consumption. Reduction refers to reduced levels of slavery and slave-like practices, as well as a reduction of public ignorance of the issues. Such a model has implications for the institutions involved in exchange relations, notably a call to endorse anti-slavery product labels and universally monitored and recognizable fair trade marks. In this way the system potentially promotes a better public awareness of human rights, anti-slavery and fair trade.

Through reporting on the communicative acts of “Rugmark” and Cafédirect this author also highlights that the so-called “semi-ethical” consumer can

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**Figure 2.**
Effecting anti-slavery and fair trade: a challenge for societal marketing
contribute to the eradication of global ills such as poverty and child labour. The importance of these communicative acts and consumers within the sphere of marketing, therefore, seems crucial to effect change for the better in these areas. Semi-ethicals are likely to seek confirmation of organizational claims and practice. There is evidence of a high proportion of the general public who have low awareness (issue-literacy) of modern slavery and slave-like practice confirmation. Issue-literacy for the semi-ethical person is enabled through trust and dialogue-building communicative acts such as the anti-slavery or fair trade movements, which the author believes societal marketing scrutiny can help provide, as articulated in Figure 2. The latter can be realized through the coupling of societal marketing scrutiny to the organizational use of sustainable communication. What follows should permit mechanisms, that lead to clarification and improved public issue literacy, which the present study finds is somewhat low. In this way, informed citizens are persuaded that the organization is attempting to do something globally about issues of both slavery and fair trade, in which it or its market sector may be implicated.

**Suggestions for further research**

It is hoped that, while the cases cited may bring about a sustained reduction in slavery and slave-like practices, they may also elicit further empirical investigation and important theoretical deliberations for those interested in a macro scrutiny of fair trade. It is also conceivable that these new labels and products, following McCracken’s (1986) heuristic model of the movement of cultural meaning through marketing and consumption, permit consumers to engage in a variety of fair trade symbolic actions. They may do this to acquire, use and enhance these meanings for their own personal symbolic projects, for instance, being “politically correct.” The article highlights the scope for extending consumer research among semi-ethical citizens and their fair trade brand relationships (Fournier, 1998), which could richly inform such a macro project. One wonders, for instance, how would the semi-ethical consumer compare with Rudmin and Kilbourne’s (1996) voluntary simplifier or with Ozanne and Murray’s (1995) reflexively defiant consumer?

It has been noted elsewhere that there are various levels of issue literacy and interest within the general public, business, government and related organizations (e.g. Dahab, 1998). Moreover, there is evidence of the interconnectedness between issues of slavery and environmental degradation (Eckersley, 1992; McDonagh, 1998). This supports the author’s claim that, if marketing can focus on the ecological crisis (see Kilbourne et al., 1997), then there is a natural overlap to the issues of anti-slavery and fair trade. This suggests that there is a need for further research to develop a more macro-social theory of fair trade that takes both globalism and localism perspectives as well as insights from political economy into account (Joy and Wallendorf, 1995; Roberts, 1995).

Other aspects reported in this text still need further clarification and investigation. For example, what is the precise implementation of the Rugmark
scheme, its widespread public understanding, and how do we ensure that the companies involved are adhering to the principles of the scheme? It is thus imperative that more research is conducted in this area to investigate several basic questions that arise. What are the global implications for fair trade channels of production, import and export standards (cf. Dahab, 1998)? What are the institutional funding implications for initiatives such as Rugmark and Cafédirect, if they are to be given institutional support in the USA, Europe and elsewhere? How can global governments educate and rehabilitate offending organizations, industrial sectors or multinational corporations? Does societal marketing defend the institutions of free trade and the critical management perspective champion fair trade as the only successor to free trade? A useful starting-point in the process of answering some of these questions might be to revisit previous research and enquire as to the potential size of the world’s fair trade market (cf. Boddewyn and Falco, 1988; Priddle, 1994). Likewise the role of the multinational corporation also ought to be assessed with respect to fair trade, given alleged abuses of the free trade system (e.g. Harvey, 1995). It is estimated (Oxfam, 2000, p. 6) that less than one-third of total revenues in the coffee industry go to the developing countries which produced the raw materials. While coffee-shops globally serve up premium-priced cappuccinos to city commuters (BBC, 2001), over-supply indicates that coffee producers are headed for collective disaster. Most revenue goes to the multinationals such as Philip Morris, Nestlé, who trade and process the coffee, or major coffee retailers such as Tesco and Starbucks.

A fundamental implication of this study concerns to what, if anything, could a theory of advantage grounded in fair trade lay claim? Furthermore how could such theory development incorporate what Desmond and McDonagh (1999) argue is a need to include a theory of power in relation to marketing and consumption? Booth (1999) suggests two things we should bear in mind here. First, no critical project can be advanced, if agreement on the nature of the project and the direction in which it needs to be developed cannot be reached. Second, Booth (1999), drawing on the work of Said (1994), claims that criticism must think of itself as opposed to every form of tyranny, domination and abuse with social goals of non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom. This author therefore suggests the imperative that we develop a project on the theory of advantage grounded in fair trade and more equitable relations in the marketplace.

Final thoughts

This study underscores the importance of understanding anti-slavery and fair trade communicative acts and their connection with marketing practice and theory. It is appropriate to bring the reader back to Figure 2, where it is suggested that societal marketing can facilitate the systemic categorization and analysis of factors and forces that inhibit and promote anti-slavery and fair trade. An expansion of this model and an empirical test of the relations presented therein would be welcome and are encouraged. In conclusion, it is
important for marketers to further debate and to investigate the case for fair trade, including globally recognized fair trade labels and marks, and other policies and practices that deter slavery and promote human rights. We must focus on the interactive systems – governments, non-government organizations (NGOs), consumers, marketers, producers and channel intermediaries – and points for optimal and efficient intervention that will enhance the most desirable societal outcomes, beyond the immediate profits of a few dominant players in the marketing channel. Taking such an approach has the potential to diminish slavery globally, while ultimately presenting marketers with a global research and implementation project into what constitutes a complex and interactive social phenomenon of fair trade.

Notes
1. The paper does not attempt to be a true account of the vast literature on the complexities of these areas. So, the author does not present the literature as being in any way definitive or a summary of classic works but as a background to key issues before discussing communication policies.

2. Located within ASI there is also a separate organization called the Coalition on Child Prostitution and Tourism, to which ASI provides some funding and assistance; for example, ASI funded a Campaign against Sex Tourism for this organization.

3. This is the title of a teaching resource pack ASI produce to help schoolteachers and other interested parties explain slavery in the UK today.

4. When respondents were asked whether they would rather buy a fair trade product or donate the money to a charity working for the same cause, 44 per cent said that they would rather buy the product and 45 per cent would rather give the money to charity.

5. Dibb et al. (1994, p. 119) define social grade A as upper middle-class persons, where the head of household occupation is higher managerial, administrative or professional; grade B are middle-class, intermediate managerial administrative or professional, grade C1 lower middle-class, supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional, grade C2 skilled working-class, skilled manual workers, grade D working-class, semi- and unskilled manual workers, and grade E those at lowest levels of subsistence, state pensioner, widows, casual or lowest grade workers.

References


Jackson, J. (1995), “Renewing our minds: people who are victimized may not be responsible for being down, but they must be responsible for getting up”, *Essence*, Vol. 26 No. 1, May, p. 76.


Further reading
