How Do Consumers Face the Decision to Buy Fair Trade Products? A Marketing Approach

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Abstract
In this article, we propose and empirically test a causal model to understand how consumer social orientation, the credibility of nonprofit organizations, the perceptions of fair trade products, and the attitudes toward the fair trade brand interact and affect the buying intentions of fair trade products in a sample of 292 Spanish consumers. The findings show that consumer social orientation has the greatest effect on buying intentions, above consumers’ perceptions of fair trade products, the credibility of the trading nonprofit organizations and consumers’ attitudes toward the fair trade brand. Actually, consumers’ attitudes toward the fair trade brand have no significant effect on consumers’ buying intentions. The findings also demonstrate that the credibility of nonprofit organizations only influences consumers’ buying intentions indirectly through consumers’ perceptions of the functional utilities of fair trade products.

Keywords
fair trade, social orientation, nonprofit organizations, functional utilities, brand

Introduction
Fair trade (FT) is described as a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency, and respect, which seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers, especially in the south (World Fair Trade

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Organization [WFTO], 2017). Thus, FT has become a relevant issue for the international nonprofit and voluntary sector because it represents an alternative trading system that overcomes the disparity that surrounds contemporary consumption and sustainable development between developing and developed economies.

The distribution of FT products in developed countries is coordinated largely by nonprofit organizations (NPOs) that buy those products from producer groups in developing countries to sell them in developed markets through specialized shops and retail outlets (González, de Juan, & Khanter, 2014). In this regard, NPOs and cooperative organizations are the pioneers of the FT movement and they are frequently referred to as “Alternative Trading Organizations” (ATOs; Becchetti & Huybrechts, 2008). A growing number of ATOs are, in fact, distribution groups. For example, some ATOs are formed by an NPO and a co-operative (e.g., Oxfam Wereldwinkels in Belgium, IDEAS in Spain, or Equal Exchange in the United Kingdom) or an NPO and a commercial company (e.g., Traidcraft in the United Kingdom, Dritte Welt Partner in Germany, or CONA in Austria). It is also possible to find NPOs and co-operatives acting as second-mover organizations, that is, entities that emerge mainly in the distribution area (e.g., supermarkets selling FT products) or in the import and the transformation of fairly traded goods (e.g., coffee roasters or chocolate producers; Becchetti & Huybrechts, 2008). Examples of second-mover organizations include the Co-op group in the United Kingdom and COOP in Italy: NPOs that have included FT products in their assortment, considering their inclusion coherent to their philosophies. Internationally renowned NPOs, such as Intermón Oxfam (Spain), the European Fair Trade Association (Netherlands), or CTM Altromercado Soc. Co-op. (Italy), also operate in the FT market as ATOs or second-mover organizations (WFTO, 2017).

Nevertheless, the market share of FT products in developed economies remains very small when compared with non-FT products (Schollenberg, 2012). For example, in 2014 in Spain, which is the country where we implemented our study, the annual expenditure on FT products was only €0.71 per person, while the European average expenditure was €13.42 per person (National Fairtrade Coordination Committee, 2016). Even though there are some countries where the average expenditure on FT products is significantly higher (e.g., in Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Finland, people expend more than €25 per person, annually, on this type of social products), most countries expend less than €15 per person (annually; Pereda & Fairtrade Ibérica, 2014).

These figures lead scholars and practitioners to believe that the demand for FT products in developed economies is still much lower than the potential supply coming from developing countries, which indicates that NPOs still have a long way ahead to improve their marketing strategies and boost the sales volume of FT products (Obermiller, Burke, Talbott, & Green, 2009). In this article, we suggest that NPOs still need to better understand consumer behavior (Obermiller et al., 2009) to decide the best marketing strategies that, without necessarily converging with conventional marketing rules, will allow them to expand the FT market.

Based on this idea, the goal of this study is to propose and empirically test a conceptual model to better understand how consumers in developed markets take the decision to buy FT products. The model integrates several psychological and marketing
variables that have been demonstrated to be explanatory of consumers’ buying intentions of FT products but have not been studied integratively before. Specifically, we explore the relationships that exist among consumer social orientation (CSO), the credibility of trading NPOs, consumers’ perceptions of FT products (i.e., functional issues), consumers’ attitudes toward the FT generic brand (FT brand), and consumers’ buying intentions. The lack of integration, in previous literature, of all these variables into one single comprehensive model means that the interaction among them is still unknown; thus, it has not been possible to estimate and compare their real contribution with consumers’ buying intentions or behaviors in the context of FT products.

This article is organized as follows: First, we provide an overview of the theoretical and empirical basis of the article. Second, we present our conceptual model, define the four variables that we propose as direct antecedents of consumers’ buying intentions and propose the research hypotheses. Third, we describe the research method of the study. Fourth, we present and discuss the findings. Fifth, we summarize the most relevant conclusion, limitations, and future lines of research that derive from our study.

Theoretical Background

In practice, FT applies many of the basic concepts of marketing management: the dominant intellectual approach to marketing today (Witkowski, 2005). In this regard, a relatively extensive line of research has focused on exploring the FT movement from a marketing perspective, with a special interest in understanding consumers’ buying intentions of FT products (de Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007; Kim, Lee, & Park, 2010; Murphy & Jenner-Leuthart, 2011).

Our study is included in this line of research. More precisely, we support our conceptual model on the cognition, attitude, and conation sequence, which defends that consumers’ intentions to buy a product are only developed after the consumers’ experiences affect a company or brand as a consequence of positive perceptions concerning the characteristics of a company’s brand, products, or services, among other issues (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Table 1 presents a summary of some of the most influential papers that have tested models, including the most frequent cognitive and attitudinal antecedents of FT: consumers’ buying intentions in the marketing literature.

As it can be observed in Table 1, many of the variables used to explain consumers’ buying intentions specifically relate to the beliefs and cognition of the consumers. In this regard, three variables especially stand out (de Pelsmacker, Driesen, & Rayp, 2005; de Pelsmacker, Janssens, Sterckx, & Mielants, 2005; Kim et al., 2010; Littrell, Jin Ma, & Halepete, 2005; Obermiller et al., 2009): (a) CSO, (b) the credibility of NPOs that sell FT products, and (c) consumers’ perceptions about the quality, price, and convenience of FT products. Scholars have also explored attitudinal variables, such as consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand (de Pelsmacker, Janssens, et al., 2005). In this regard, previous literature has demonstrated that it is advisable to promote FT as a generic or “meta-” brand (i.e., an umbrella for various products) because it generates overall brand awareness when there is very little coherence across regional, national, and international brands (Castaldo, Perrini, Misani, & Tencati, 2009). Other
Table 1. Empirical Papers That Explore the Factors That Affect Consumer Buying Intentions of Fair Trade Products.

| Authors                          | Research goal                                                                 | Research context | Dimensions | Independent variables                                                                 | Latent variables                      | Dependent variables |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Littrell, Jin Ma, and Halepete (2005) | To explore how generational cohorts of FT consumers differ                    | 1,055 consumers (U.S.) | CSO        | Socio-political attitudes and behavior                                                 | NPOs                                   | Purchase intentions for FT apparel |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | NPOs       | Retail preferences                                                                    | FT products                           |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | FT products| Product orientation                                                                    | Other variables                        |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | Other variables| Product behavior                                                                      | CSO                                    |                                    |
| De Pelsmacker, Driesen, and Rayp (2005) | To identify the average price premium that consumers are willing to pay for an FT brand | 808 consumers (Belgium) | CSO        | Personal values                                                                       | FT products                           | Willingness to pay for FT product attributes |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | NPOs       | Retail preferences                                                                    | FT products                           |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | FT products| Product attributes                                                                    | Other variables                        |                                    |
| De Pelsmacker, Janssens, Sterckx, and Mielants (2005) | To assess the relative importance that consumers attach to different characteristics and marketing practices of ethically labeled coffee | 750 consumers (Belgium) | CSO        | Personal values                                                                       | FT products                           |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | NPOs       | Label issuer                                                                          | FT products                           |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | FT products| Marketing strategy                                                                    | Other variables                        |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | Other variables| Branding                                                                               | CSO                                    |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | Other variables| Label information                                                                     | NPOs                                   |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | Other variables| Type of ethical issue                                                                  | FT products                           |                                    |
| De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) | To investigate the dynamics and structure of buying behavior based on FT knowledge, general attitudes toward FT, attitudes toward FT products, and the perception of the quality and quantity of FT information | 615 consumers (Belgium) | CSO        | Personal values                                                                       | FT products                           | Buying behavior |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | NPOs       | Retail preferences                                                                    | FT products                           |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | FT products| Product attributes                                                                    | Other variables                        |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | Other variables| Knowledge of fair trade                                                                 | CSO                                    |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | Other variables| Information about FT                                                                  | NPOs                                   |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | Other variables| quantity and quality of fair trade information                                        | FT products                           |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | Other variables| General attitude toward FT (concern/interest in FT, skepticism/lack of belief in FT) | Other variables                        |                                    |
| Doran (2009)                     | To explore the personal values that motivate consumers to buy FT products     | 809 consumers (U.S.) | CSO        | Personal values                                                                       | FT products                           | FT consumption                   |
| Castaldo, Perrini, Misani, and Tencati (2009) | To investigate the link between the consumer perception that a company is socially oriented and the consumer intention to buy products marketed by that company | 400 consumers (Italy) | CSO        | Personal values                                                                       | Other variables                        | Brand loyalty |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | NPOs       | Company perceptions                                                                   | FT products                           | Willingness to pay a premium price |
| Obermiller, Burke, Talbott, and Green (2009) | To examine consumers' coffee preferences, their comprehension of labels, the price they are willing to pay for FT coffee and the effectiveness of advertising socially responsible consumption as primary benefit of purchasing FT coffee | 107 consumers (U.S.) | CSO        | Personal values                                                                       | Other variables                        |                                    |
|                                  |                                                                                |                  | NPOs       | Company perceptions                                                                   | FT products                           |                                    |

(continued)
| Authors                     | Research goal                                                                 | Research context                      | Independent variables                                                                 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kim, Lee, and Park (2010)   | To investigate how ethical consumption values, FT product beliefs and FT corporate evaluation determine FT brand loyalty | 155 consumers (U.S.) and 409 consumers (Korea) | CSO: Ethical consumption values, NPOs: Fair trade companies evaluation, FT products: Fair trade product beliefs |
| Bezzençon and Billi (2010)  | To provide an adequate instrument to measure involvement, its antecedents and its impact on FT consumption behaviors | 433 consumers (Switzerland)           | Dimension: Product involvement, (product sign value, product hedonic value, product utility), Other variables: Ethical product decision involvement (ethical product sign value, ethical product hedonic value, ethical product risk, ethical product adhesion) |
| Murphy and Jenner-Leuthart (2011) | To explore the extent to which the presence of FT coffee in cafés may help in strategic positioning and differentiation | 143 consumers (New Zealand)          | CSO: Attitudinal variables (environmental, social, political, and importance of origin), NPOs: Perceived attributes, FT products: Perceived attributes |
| Long and Murray (2013)      | To explore convergence and divergence of ethical consumption values through a study of organic, FT, and local food | 903 consumers (U.S.)                 | CSO: Attitudinal variables (environmental, social, political, and importance of origin), Other variables: Demographic characteristics (attitude toward FT and Barriers to FT purchasing) |
| Benson and Connell (2014)   | To expand the knowledge base of Baby Boomers’ attitudes, behaviors, and perceived barriers related to FT purchasing | 168 consumers (U.S.)                 | CSO: Social and environmental concerns, Other variables: Demographic characteristics (consumption characteristics) |
| Yang, Qing, Hu, and Liu (2014) | To investigate Chinese consumers’ willingness-to-pay for FT coffee given different amount of product information | 564 consumers (China)                | CSO: Social and environmental concerns, Other variables: Demographic characteristics (consumption characteristics) |

Source. Compiled by the authors.

Note. FT = Fair trade; CSO = consumer social orientation; NPO = nonprofit organization.

*aAs proposed in our article.
variables have also been explored as antecedents of consumers’ buying intentions, but their significance to explain them has not been clearly confirmed (e.g., consumers’ sociodemographic characteristics; de Pelsmacker, Driesen, & Rayp, 2005; Yang, Qing, Hu, & Liu, 2014). Based on this previous literature, we propose our conceptual model to explore consumers’ buying intentions of FT products, as shown in Figure 1.

**Research Hypotheses**

**The Role of CSO**

As shown in Table 1, previous researchers have frequently paid special attention to the importance of issues linked to CSO. This variable increases the ability of conceptual and causal models to explain consumers’ intentions to buy FT products (de Pelsmacker, Driesen, & Rayp, 2005; Kim et al., 2010; Shaw & Shiu, 2002).

On one hand, CSO includes consumers’ concerns about environmental matters, social welfare, corporate ethical processes, and other ethical issues when buying products, which refer to the dimension of consumer ethical values. On the other hand, CSO also includes a second dimension of socially responsible behavior (Papaoikonomou, 2013), which is a close representation of consumer self-identity and ethical obligation—as defined by Shaw and Shiu (2002). In this regard, consumer socially responsible behavior refers to a consumer’s internalized ethical behavior that derives from his or her personal beliefs about appropriate social and ethical compliance.

Through understanding the concerns of a consumer, greater insight can be gained into why consumers behave as they do. For example, Doran (2009) demonstrates that
personal concerns determine FT consumption, while demographics prove to be useless in creating a profile of the FT consumer. This means that socially concerned consumers have better perceptions of ethical products that comply with their personal concerns (de Pelsmacker, Driesen, & Rayp, 2005; Kim et al., 2010; Littrell et al., 2005). Ethical consumers will also evaluate NPOs more positively because they share the same value scheme (Kim et al., 2010; Littrell et al., 2005), while they will feel more closely attached to the FT brand than to conventional commercial brands (Kim et al., 2010). As stated by Benson and Connell (2014), the typical FT consumer is idealistic and has a strong sense of world citizenship and empathy toward others in developing countries: “They have a positive attitude towards fair trade products and perceive it easy to purchase fair trade goods” (p. 367). At the same time, the responsible and ethical behavior of socially concerned consumers makes them try not to effortlessly accept the product offering in the market and have a tendency to prefer ethical options, such as FT products (Papaoikonomou, 2013). Based on these ideas, we propose the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** CSO directly and positively influence consumers’ perceptions of the credibility of NPOs.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** CSO directly and positively influence consumers’ perceptions of FT products.

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** CSO directly and positively influence consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4):** CSO directly and positively influence consumers’ buying intentions of FT products.

**The Role of NPOs**

Past research also suggests that consumer perceptions of companies have direct and positive effects on buying intentions. In the FT realm, NPOs are protagonists (Bartley, Koos, Samel, Setrini, & Summers, 2015), so it is important to analyze how the perceptions of these organizations may influence the buying intentions of consumers.

As an example, FT products are distributed in Europe mainly through groups of NPOs, ATOs, and second-mover FT organizations (Becchetti & Huybrechts, 2008). These groups buy products from more than 125 producers belonging to 40 different countries, and they distribute those products to retail outlets. It is also noteworthy that many times these NPOs also become retailers themselves, as they sell the FT products they import through their own shops (Witkowski, 2005).

A remarkable finding of previous FT marketing literature is that consumers perceive the ethical brands and products that are issued by these NPOs differently than they perceive the brands and products that are issued by other institutions or for-profit organizations. For example, the brands that are issued by local governments are less well received than brands issued by the European government or by NPOs (de Pelsmacker, Janssens, et al., 2005). Actually, it is generally agreed that NPOs are
among the most credible FT brand and product endorsers (de Pelsmacker, Janssens, et al., 2005). In this regard, corporate credibility is “the extent to which consumers feel that the organisation has the knowledge or ability to fulfil its claims and whether the organisation can be trusted to tell the truth or not” (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001, p. 235). Thus, credibility is a two-dimensional variable that includes two components: expertise and trust (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001).

In general, the credibility of an organization not only contributes to improving the attitudes toward the brand and buying intentions but also builds brand equity for the products it sells (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001). For example, Castaldo et al. (2009) empirically confirm that consumers’ perceptions of an organization’s ethical attitudes are related to the trust consumers feel toward that organization. In their model, consumer trust is also directly related to brand loyalty and willingness to pay a premium price for FT products. They specifically argue that “socially oriented companies [i.e., NPOs in this article] can successfully leverage their reputation in those business areas where trust is crucial in determining consumer choices” (Castaldo et al., 2009, p. 1) and that they will outperform their competitors at fostering consumer trust.

Those researchers provide two reasons for that argument: First, consumers should believe that a reputable organization—one that has been building a positive relationship with society and is commonly appreciated as an ethical player—has strong incentives to maintain its reputation. Therefore, consumers will think that such an organization is less probable to renge on promises. Second, NPOs are more transparent, as they typically subject themselves to increased disclosure. Therefore, consumers should feel that NPOs are more probable than competitors to fulfill their obligations. Llopis (2007), who establishes that one important factor influencing FT consumption is consumer trust in NPOs that sell FT products, reports similar findings. Based on these ideas, we propose the following three hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 5 (H5):** The credibility of NPOs directly and positively influences consumers’ perceptions of FT products.

**Hypothesis 6 (H6):** The credibility of NPOs directly and positively influences consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand.

**Hypothesis 7 (H7):** The credibility of NPOs directly and positively influences consumers’ buying intentions of FT products.

**The Role of FT Products**

Previous researchers have also highlighted the role of FT product characteristics as important antecedents of consumers’ buying intentions (Castaldo et al., 2009; de Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007; Kim et al., 2010; Littrell et al., 2005; Murphy & Jenner-Leuthart, 2011; Obermiller et al., 2009). In this regard, product quality, price, and shopping convenience are often the most important product attributes that affect consumer decision-making (Yamoah, 2014). All these product characteristics refer to the “functional utilities” concept (Keller & Aaker, 1992), which is usually incorporated as a multidimensional construct in consumer behavior models (Vázquez, del Río, & Iglesias, 2002).
For example, consumers often prioritize aspects, such as product quality and price, when making decisions concerning FT (Schollenberg, 2012). Although FT consumers support ethical concerns and NPOs, their FT purchases are not viewed as purely altruistic acts, as they are unwilling to sacrifice product attributes for the sake of being ethical. Thus, the success of FT lies in the promotion of good product attributes to “cut through the countless clutter of competitors’ products” (Wright & Heaton, 2006, p. 415).

With regard to convenience, previous researchers have argued that many consumers fail to engage with FT products due to their piecemeal availability in retail stores, which does not match consumers’ expectations (Yamoah, 2014). These types of ethical products are primarily sold in specialty shops, and consumers who are pressed for time find it inconvenient to buy their FT products in different shops from their regular ones (González et al., 2014). The scattered distribution of FT products could even harm the FT brand due to the lack of convenience. In this regard, Nicholls and Opal (2008) argue that there is an absence of a well-planned portfolio of FT products that are purposely priced and well distributed for the mass market. Therefore, the distribution strategy represents one of the biggest challenges for NPOs, which are generally reluctant to sell their products through large retailers (e.g., grocery stores, supermarkets) or the hotel and catering channel. These ideas allow us to propose the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 8 (H8):** Consumers’ perceptions of FT products directly and positively influence consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand.

**Hypothesis 9 (H9):** Consumers’ perceptions of FT products directly and positively influence consumers’ buying intentions of FT products.

**The Role of the FT Brand**

The last variable in our model refers to consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand (de Pelsmacker, Janssens, et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2010), measured as consumer evaluations of the distinctiveness, prestige, and attractiveness of the FT brand (Currás, Bigné, & Alvarado, 2009). This brand refers to the judgments that consumers make of the international certification brand that accompanies the commercial brand of the NPOs that ultimately sells the product (Witkowski, 2005). In this regard, since 1997, most FT labeling has been coordinated by the Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International (FLO; Obermiller et al., 2009). FLO is a consortium of organizations that coordinate the international certification of FT products and provide farmers and trading organizations with an FT brand (i.e., owned and licensed by FLO) that is a globally recognized symbol of the international FT system (Raynolds, 2009). The FT brand can be found in more than 120 countries and on a wide range of products—numbering more than 27,000 around the globe—including food and drinks, cotton and clothing, and even jewellery made from FT gold and other precious metals.

We consider that the FT brand, developed and licensed by FLO, is a good example of a powerful international brand that improves consumers’ buying intentions. This brand closely matches the increasing social and ethical concerns of consumers;
therefore, they will easily identify with it. Brand attitudes, formed as a result of a social identification process, are more accessible in the memory of consumers, and this greater accessibility increases the likelihood of brand attitudes influencing the behaviors of consumers (Currás et al., 2009). Thus, we propose the final hypothesis of this article:

**Hypothesis 10 (H10):** Consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand directly and positively influence consumers’ buying intentions of FT products.

**Method**

**Sample**

To test our conceptual model, we designed an empirical research approach based on online surveys that were answered by Spanish respondents who were not necessarily (dedicated) FT or ethical buyers. More precisely, data were collected among a sample of people closely related to the University of Cantabria (Spain), including students, lecturers, and staff members. The selection of this sample for the study was based on two main reasons. First, in the emerging context of FT consumption, surveying consumers on the street could lead to very low response rates due to the lack of knowledge of many consumers about FT products. Thus, we decided to minimize this risk by implementing the study in a real university research context, where there are frequent awareness-raising campaigns throughout the year (e.g., permanent outlets for FT products, regular lectures, and film series on the FT concept). By doing so, we expected to reach a higher number of consumers with a certain level of understanding of the FT concept, which would increase the response rate and the amount of valid surveys collected for the study. In this regard, the University of Cantabria is one of the nine FT universities that exist in Spain. Second, we observed that university samples are frequent in the study of ethical and FT consumption patterns, as evidenced in the studies of de Pelsmacker, Driesen, and Rayp (2005), de Pelsmacker, Janssens, et al. (2005), Obermiller et al. (2009), and Kim et al. (2010), among others. According to de Pelsmacker, Driesen, and Rayp (2005), using a university sample allows researchers to improve the response motivation by appealing to collegiality and conducting the survey using the university’s channels in a more respondent-friendly way.

The online link to the survey was emailed to the entire university community (i.e., 9,587 students, 1,224 lecturers, and 572 staff members) in March 2014. After the database had been refined and the invalid surveys removed, the final sample composed 292 valid cases. The distribution of the cases in the sample was as follows: 65.4% students, 24.3% lecturers, and 10.3% staff members. With regard to gender, 52.3% of respondents were females, while 47.7% were males. The mean age among respondents was 29 years. Even though the response rate was relatively low, the final sample size was larger than that observed in previous studies, and it was reasonably representative of the sociodemographic composition of the university members—in terms of links to the organization, gender, and age.
Measurement Scales

All the variables were measured with 10-point, Likert-type scales (see Table 2). Specifically, CSO was measured with a two-dimensional, nine-item scale adapted from the studies of Obermiller et al. (2009) and Papaioikonomou (2013). Five items (CSO1-CSO5) evaluated the consumers’ ethical values (e.g., concern about pollution, fair wages), and four items (CSO6-CSO9) evaluated the consumers’ socially responsible behaviors (e.g., recycling, reducing energy, water consumption). To evaluate NPOs, we asked the respondents of the survey to select and evaluate the organization that was most familiar to them among a list of all the NPOs that sell FT products in Spain. For this purpose, we used the two-dimensional, six-item scale—originally developed by Newell and Goldsmith (2001)—to measure corporate credibility. Three items (NPO1-NPO3) evaluated consumers’ trust of the NPOs, while three items (NPO4-NPO6) evaluated consumers’ perceptions of the NPOs’ expertise in marketing FT products. Consumers’ perceptions were collected for a total of six NPOs. A total of 82.41% of respondents assessed Oxfam Intermón, while other organizations were assessed by a significantly lower volume of consumers (i.e., Espanica = 8.53%, IDEAS = 5.03%, Alternativa 3 = 1.51%, Altromercato = 1.51%, Gira = 1.01%). FT products were rated with a three-dimensional scale based on the previous proposals of de Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) and Kim et al. (2010). The seven-item scale included consumers’ opinions about the quality of FT products (PRO1-PRO3), their price (PRO4-PRO5), and the convenience of their distribution (PRO6-PRO7). Consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand were measured with a three-dimensional scale based on the proposal of Currás et al. (2009). The nine-item scale measured the distinctiveness (BRA1-BRA3), prestige (BRA4-BRA6), and attractiveness (BRA7-BRA9) of the brand to the consumer. Finally, consumers’ buying intentions were measured with a three-item (BUY1-BUY3), one-dimensional scale adapted from Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996).

Before testing the research hypotheses, Harman’s single-factor test was conducted to check for common method variance (CMV). Method variance refers to variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than the constructs of interest. According to Podsakoff, Mackensie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), there are four general sources of CMV: (a) the use of a common rater, (b) the manner in which items are presented to respondents, (c) the context in which items on a questionnaire are placed, and (d) the contextual influences (i.e., time, location, and media) used to measure the constructs. Based on these ideas, a check was made on whether the correlation among variables was significantly influenced by their common source. The results of the analysis indicate that the items loaded on more than one factor, and they were not concentrated in any one general factor. Consequently, CMV did not significantly influence this quantitative research.

Findings

Multidimensionality of the Latent Variables

First, we explored the structural validity of the four multidimensional, latent variables of the study. Therefore, as a first step in the study, we implemented a first-order
| Latent factors | Items |
|---------------|-------|
| **CSO**       | Ethical values: |
|               | CSO1: Consumers should be forced to pay higher prices for products that are not socially responsible; CSO2: There should be an international law forcing all companies to pay fair wages to employees; CSO3: I would be willing to sign a collective petition in favor of a social or environmental cause; CSO4: Consumers should urge their friends to not use products that pollute or damage the environment; CSO5: I get angry when I think of the damage that pollution is doing to the environment. |
|               | Socially responsible behavior: |
|               | CSO6: I recycle different types of materials daily (e.g., paper, batteries, glass); CSO7: I implement measures to reduce energy consumption daily; CSO8: I implement measures to reduce water consumption daily; CSO9: I implement measures to reduce environmental pollution daily (e.g., I do not use sprays, I ride a bicycle or use public transport). |
| **NPOs**      | Trust: |
|               | NPO1: This organization gives me confidence; NPO2: This organization acts honestly; NPO3: This organization is reliable. |
|               | Expertise: |
|               | NPO4: This organization is extensively experienced; NPO5: This organization is managed in a professional manner; NPO6: This organization has skills that make it good in its field. |
| **FT products** | Quality: |
|               | PRO1: Fair trade products are tasty; PRO2: Fair trade products are healthy; PRO3: Fair trade products have a high quality. |
|               | Price: |
|               | PRO4: Fair trade products have a good quality/price ratio; PRO5: Fair trade products offer the best value for money. |
|               | Convenience: |
|               | PRO6: Fair trade products are easily available in the market; PRO7: Buying fair trade products does not require an effort for me. |
| **FT brand**  | Distinctiveness: |
|               | BRA1: The fair trade brand is different from other brands in the market; BRA2: The fair trade brand is very different from other “conventional” brands; BRA3: The fair trade brand stands out from other competing brands. |
|               | Prestige: |
|               | BRA4: People around me have a positive image of the fair trade brand; BRA5: Overall, the fair trade brand has a good reputation; BRA6: The fair trade brand is of high value. |
|               | Attractiveness: |
|               | BRA7: I like what the fair trade brand represents; BRA8: I like the values that the fair trade brand embodies; BRA9: The fair trade brand is attractive. |
|               | Buying intentions: |
|               | BUY1: I have the intention to buy fair trade products in the future; BUY2: It is likely that I will buy fair trade products in the future; BUY3: Next time I buy a product, I will buy a fair trade product (if it is available in that category of products). |

*Note. CSO = consumer social orientation; NPO = nonprofit organization; FT = Fair trade.*
confirmatory factor analysis for each variable (i.e., CSO, NPOs, FT products, and FT brand) according to the maximum robust likelihood estimation procedure in the EQS 6.1 software. The findings of these analyses were adequate for the scales that measured CSO (see Table 3), FT products (see Table 4), and the FT brand (see Table 5). In each case, the alphas and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) indicators were above the minimum recommended values of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively, which confirmed the internal reliability of the multidimensional variables. In addition, all items were significant to a confidence level of 95%, and their standardized lambdas were higher than 0.50, which confirmed the convergent validity of the dimensions. In addition, the confidence interval for the correlation of the dimensions for each scale did not contain the value of “one,” which confirmed the discriminant validity of the dimensions.

Several goodness of fit indices were also used to evaluate the fit of the model to the collected data (see Tables 3 to 5). For the measurement of the overall fit, we also used the following: Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index (BBNFI), Bentler-Bonett Non-Normed Fit Index (BBNNFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). As measures for the incremental fit, we used the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). The results confirm that the BBNFI, BBNNFI, IFI, and CFI statistics exceeded the recommended minimum value of 0.90, while RMSEA was located within the maximum limit of 0.08.

Table 3. First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis for CSO.

| Latent factors                  | Mean | SD  | Items | λ* | R² | Cronbach α | AVE |
|--------------------------------|------|-----|-------|----|----|------------|-----|
| Ethical values                 | 6.89 | 1.77| CSO1  | 0.57| .32| .85        | 0.53|
|                               |      |     | CSO2  | 0.77| .59|            |     |
|                               |      |     | CSO3  | 0.88| .78|            |     |
|                               |      |     | CSO4  | 0.69| .48|            |     |
|                               |      |     | CSO5  | 0.68| .46|            |     |
| Socially responsible behavior | 6.92 | 1.97| CSO6  | 0.76| .58| .91        | 0.77|
|                               |      |     | CSO7  | 0.94| .89|            |     |
|                               |      |     | CSO8  | 0.92| .85|            |     |
|                               |      |     | CSO9  | 0.72| .52|            |     |

Discriminant validity

| Ethical values | Socially responsible behavior |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| Ethical values | 0.59 (0.06)                  |
| Socially responsible behavior | [0.47, 0.70]               |

Note. CSO = consumer social orientation; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; NFI = Normed Fit Index; NNFI = Non-Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; IFI = Incremental Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Goodness of fit: NFI = 0.96, NNFI = 0.97, CFI = 0.98, IFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.06.

*The figures above the diagonal indicate the correlation (and error) between pairs of latent factors. The figures below the diagonal represent confidence intervals.

*p < .05.
As a second step in the study, the multidimensionality of each variable was confirmed with a second-order confirmatory factor analysis. The second-order analysis is a statistical method employed to confirm that a theoretical variable (i.e., latent variable) loads into a certain number of underlying dimensions. By checking the goodness of fit indices of these analyses, which were above 0.90 in all cases, we confirmed the multidimensionality of CSO (NFI = 0.97, NNFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.98, IFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.06), FT products (NFI = 0.98, NNFI = 0.97, CFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.07), and FT brand (NFI = 0.95, NNFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.97, IFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.07), as we had established theoretically.

On the contrary, the first-order confirmatory factor analysis for the scale that measured the credibility of NPOs showed that there was no discriminant validity between the dimensions of trust and expertise (i.e., the confidence interval between both dimensions included the value of “one”), and the goodness of fit indices indicated too much correlation between all items in the scale (see Table 6). Thus, the conceptual multidimensionality suggested for this latent variable was not confirmed. Nevertheless, the rest of the parameters evaluating the reliability and convergent validity of the scale were adequate. Thus, in the next section of this article, we will proceed with the analysis to test the research hypotheses of the study, considering the credibility of NPOs as a one-dimensional construct.

Table 4. First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis for FT Products.

| Latent factors | M    | SD   | Items | λ*    | R²   | Cronbach α | AVE  |
|----------------|------|------|-------|-------|------|------------|------|
| Quality        | 5.78 | 1.66 | PRO1  | 0.91  | .83  | .93        | 0.82 |
|                |      |      | PRO2  | 0.86  | .74  |            |      |
|                |      |      | PRO3  | 0.95  | .90  |            |      |
| Price          | 6.26 | 1.95 | PRO4  | 0.92  | .85  | .93        | 0.87 |
|                |      |      | PRO5  | 0.95  | .91  |            |      |
| Convenience    | 4.20 | 1.76 | PRO6  | 0.65  | .42  | .71        | 0.54 |
|                |      |      | PRO7  | 0.68  | .46  |            |      |

Discriminant validitya

|            | Quality | Price | Convenience |
|------------|---------|-------|-------------|
| Quality    |         | 0.77  (0.05) | 0.61 (0.07) |
| Price      | [0.67, 0.87] |         | 0.74 (0.06) |
| Convenience| [0.47, 0.75] | [0.63, 0.86] |            |

Note. FT = Fair trade; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; NFI = Normed Fit Index; NNFI = Non-Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; IFI = Incremental Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Goodness of fit: NFI = 0.97, NNFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.98, IFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.07.
aThe figures above the diagonal indicate the correlation (and error) between pairs of latent factors. The figures below the diagonal represent confidence intervals.

*p < .05.
After analyzing the multidimensionality of the four latent variables, we performed a final first-order confirmatory factor analysis that included all variables in the causal model with their final composition (i.e., first- or second-order variables according to the findings of the previous confirmatory factor analyses). The purpose of this step was to confirm the goodness of fit of the model, as well as the convergent and discriminant validity between the different variables that compose it. The findings are presented in Table 7. The CFI, in all cases, were above 0.90 and confirmed the goodness of fit between the scales and the data collected for the study. In addition, all the standardized lambdas of the items that formed the latent variables were significant and greater than 0.50, ensuring the convergent validity of the model. Finally, we evaluated the discriminant validity of the factorial structure, estimating the confidence intervals for the correlation between the latent variables. The findings confirmed the discriminant validity of the model because no confidence interval included the value of “one.”

### Hypotheses Test

Once the structural validity of the model was successfully confirmed, the research hypotheses were tested by implementing the structural equation modeling (SEM) in the EQS 6.1 software. The findings of the causal analysis are shown in Figure 2. As it

| Latent factors      | M    | SD   | Items  | $\lambda^*$ | $R^2$ | Cronbach $\alpha$ | AVE |
|---------------------|------|------|--------|-------------|-------|-------------------|-----|
| Distinctiveness     | 5.70 | 1.79 | BRA1   | 0.81        | .65   | .85               | 0.65|
|                     |      |      | BRA2   | 0.81        | .65   |                   |     |
|                     |      |      | BRA3   | 0.80        | .63   |                   |     |
| Prestige            | 6.04 | 1.61 | BRA4   | 0.62        | .39   | .82               | 0.61|
|                     |      |      | BRA5   | 0.80        | .65   |                   |     |
|                     |      |      | BRA6   | 0.89        | .80   |                   |     |
| Attractiveness      | 6.81 | 1.88 | BRA7   | 0.80        | .64   | .89               | 0.72|
|                     |      |      | BRA8   | 0.81        | .66   |                   |     |
|                     |      |      | BRA9   | 0.93        | .86   |                   |     |

**Discriminant validity**

| Latent factors      | Distinctiveness | Prestige   | Attractiveness |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------|----------------|
| Distinctiveness     | —               | 0.74 (0.05)| 0.61 (0.07)    |
| Prestige            | [0.65, 0.83]    | —          | 0.74 (0.05)    |
| Attractiveness      | [0.48, 0.74]    | [0.64, 0.85]| —             |

*Note. FT = Fair trade; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; NFI = Normed Fit Index; NNFI = Non-Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; IFI = Incremental Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Goodness of fit: NFI = 0.94, NNFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.96, IFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.07.

*The figures above the diagonal indicate the correlation (and error) between pairs of latent factors. The figures below the diagonal represent confidence intervals.

*p < .05.
is observed in Figure 2, the findings confirmed that there were significant and positive effects of CSO on the credibility of NPOs ($\beta = .55$, $t = 6.59$, $p < .05$), perceptions of FT products ($\beta = .66$, $t = 6.14$, $p < .05$), and brand attitude ($\beta = .44$, $t = 3.17$, $p < .05$). CSO also improved consumers’ buying intentions ($\beta = .40$, $t = 2.17$, $p < .05$). These findings support hypotheses H1 to H4.

In addition, the credibility of NPOs had significant and positive effects on consumer perceptions of FT products ($\beta = .25$, $t = 3.08$, $p < .05$) and brand attitude ($\beta = .18$, $t = 2.33$, $p < .05$). These findings support hypotheses H5 and H6. Nevertheless, the findings showed that the credibility of NPOs did not directly affect consumers’ buying intentions of FT products ($\beta = .13$, $t = 1.93$, $p > .05$). Thus, hypothesis H7 is not supported in our study.

As far as consumers’ perceptions of FT products are concerned, the findings confirmed that those perceptions significantly and positively affected consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand ($\beta = .36$, $t = 2.77$, $p < .05$) and their buying intentions of FT products ($\beta = .55$, $t = 3.75$, $p < .05$). These findings support hypotheses H8 and H9.

Finally, consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand did not significantly affect the buying intentions of FT products ($\beta = -.21$, $t = -1.32$, $p > .05$). Thus, hypothesis H10 is not supported in this study.

**Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects in the Causal Model**

To determine which antecedent had the strongest effect on the buying intentions of FT products among consumers, we calculated the indirect and total effects of each
variable—following the procedure described by Currás et al. (2009). The findings of the estimation are presented in Table 8. The findings showed that the variable that had the greatest effect on consumers’ buying intentions was CSO (β = .84). CSO had a very important direct effect on buying intentions (β = .21), which was intensified by the indirect effect through consumers’ perceptions of FT products (β = .36) and the credibility of NPOs (β = .08). The second most relevant variable was FT products (β = .55), and its effect on buying intentions was completely direct. The third variable, in terms of the improvement of buying intentions, was the credibility of NPOs (β = .14), although its effect was only indirect and mediated by consumers’ perceptions of FT products.

| Latent factors   | M   | SD  | Items       | λ* | R²  | Cronbach α | AVE  |
|------------------|-----|-----|-------------|----|-----|-------------|------|
| CSO              | 6.91| 1.65| Values      | 0.71| .50 | .72         | 0.56 |
|                  |     |     | Behavior    | 0.79| .62 |             |      |
| NPOs             | 6.94| 1.48| NPO1        | 0.90| .81 | .94         | 0.72 |
|                  |     |     | NPO2        | 0.95| .91 |             |      |
|                  |     |     | NPO3        | 0.95| .90 |             |      |
|                  |     |     | NPO4        | 0.78| .61 |             |      |
|                  |     |     | NPO5        | 0.59| .34 |             |      |
|                  |     |     | NPO6        | 0.87| .76 |             |      |
| FT products      | 5.76| 1.67| Quality     | 0.85| .73 | .82         | 0.60 |
|                  |     |     | Price       | 0.83| .70 |             |      |
|                  |     |     | Convenience | 0.61| .38 |             |      |
| FT brand         | 6.18| 1.49| Distinctive | 0.60| .38 | .76         | 0.52 |
|                  |     |     | Prestige    | 0.68| .47 |             |      |
|                  |     |     | Attractive  | 0.85| .73 |             |      |
| Buying intentions| 5.80| 2.29| BUY1        | 0.97| .94 | .93         | 0.82 |
|                  |     |     | BUY2        | 0.94| .88 |             |      |
|                  |     |     | BUY3        | 0.81| .66 |             |      |

Discriminant validity

|           | CSO       | NPOs      | FT products | FT brand | Buying    |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|----------|-----------|
| CSO       | —         | 0.56 (0.06) | 0.79 (0.05) | 0.87 (0.05) | 0.75 (0.06) |
| NPOs      | [0.43, 0.69] | —         | 0.63 (0.05) | 0.62 (0.05) | 0.56 (0.06) |
| FT products | [0.70, 0.88] | [0.52, 0.73] | —           | 0.81 (0.04) | 0.78 (0.03) |
| FT brand  | [0.77, 0.97] | [0.52, 0.73] | [0.73, 0.88] | —         | 0.64 (0.05) |
| Buying    | [0.64, 0.87] | [0.45, 0.67] | [0.71, 0.85] | [0.54, 0.74] | —         |

Note. AVE = Average Variance Extracted; CSO = consumer social orientation; NPO = nonprofit organization; FT = Fair trade; NFI = Normed Fit Index; NNFI = Non-Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; IFI = Incremental Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation. Goodness of fit: NFI = 0.92, NNFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.96, IFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.06.

*The figures above the diagonal indicate the correlation (and error) between pairs of latent factors. The figures below the diagonal represent confidence intervals.
*p < .05.
products. On the contrary, the findings showed that the FT brand had no direct or indirect effect on consumers’ buying intentions.

**Discussion**

The findings of the study confirm the adequacy of the conceptual model to understand consumers’ buying intentions of FT products, and they clarify the role that each
variable plays in improving such intentions. Moreover, the findings show that the most important antecedent of buying intentions is CSO, which is determined by consumer ethical values and responsible consumption behavior. Those ethical concerns bring the consumer closer to FT purchases because they improve the credibility of the NPOs, consumers’ perceptions of FT products, and consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand. These findings align with most previous FT marketing literature, which has extensively discussed the important role of values and responsible behaviors in promoting ethical consumption (Doran, 2009; Kim et al., 2010).

As far as consumers’ perceptions of FT products (i.e., functional utilities) are concerned, this is also a very important variable in the model with a direct impact on consumers’ buying intentions. Previous literature has defended that consumers attach great importance to product quality and price, which are direct determinants of buying behavior (de Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007). The third component of the perceptions of FT products is convenience. According to our results, this dimension has a less heavy load on the second-order construct than quality and price, indicating that this attribute is less relevant when assessing FT products than the other two. Nevertheless, the factor loading remains statistically significant at a 95% confidence level; thus, the convenience of the distribution remains a factor taken into account by consumers when assessing the functional utilities of FT products. It should also be noted that, as shown in Table 4, the assessment given by consumers to convenience ($M = 4.20$) is significantly lower than their perceptions about the quality ($M = 5.78$) and price ($M = 6.26$) of FT products. Therefore, it is necessary to continue working on improving the distribution and merchandising actions associated with FT products. These results are in line with the findings of previous researchers, who have stressed that the distribution of products remains one of the weakest points of FT (Wright & Heaton, 2006).

When talking about NPOs, the first interesting finding of our analyses is that the traditional two-dimensional structure proposed to evaluate corporate credibility (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001) is not confirmed in our article. As derived from the first-order confirmatory factor analysis that we implemented for this variable, the trust and expertise dimensions of the credibility construct did not present discriminant validity, which means that the consumers in our sample perceived them as the same concept. We consider that the type of trading organization that we evaluated in the research (i.e., NPOs) can better explain the finding. In this regard, trust in NPOs is generally assumed because of their social motivation and business goals (Llopis, 2007). Moreover, trust is closely related to their expertise in marketing ethical products, such as FT. Somewhat, trust and expertise go hand-in-hand in the FT market, and the classic distinction between both concepts may not be as clear among NPOs as among for-profit companies (Llopis, 2007).

As for the consequences of the credibility of NPOs, this variable has a positive effect on consumers’ buying intentions, although it is only indirect and mediated by FT products. These findings place NPOs as the third factor (i.e., in order of importance), which helps us understand FT consumption in the context of our research. The positive impact of this variable on buying intentions aligns with previous findings in academic literature (Kim et al., 2010; Murphy & Jenner-Leuthart, 2011). Nevertheless, we consider that the low intensity of the relationship is, once again, determined by the NPOs
that we explored in this article. Many of these organizations usually sell few categories of products, and they do not advertise their organizations as strongly as for-profit companies with a wider product portfolio. Thus, NPOs are still not as well known in the market as for-profit organizations, and consumers may not have a good, strong perception of them (Llopis, 2007).

The last variable explored in the article is consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand. The findings confirm the multidimensionality of the construct, which is composed of the distinctiveness, prestige, and attractiveness of the FT brand. In addition, consumers’ attitudes can be strongly enhanced by CSO and product perceptions; however, it is insignificant for the improvement of consumers’ buying intentions of FT products. We consider that this finding is justified by the numerous initiatives and branding schemes that exist at the local, national, and international levels (Doherty, Davies, & Tranchell, 2013), as well as by the lack of information on the FT concept and brand certifications that is available to consumers in Spain (González et al., 2014). On one hand, market changes in recent years have dramatically altered the composition of the FT market away from specialized FT organizations to a plethora of other organizations with varying rationales for engagement and marketing development of the FT movement internationally (Doherty et al., 2013). For example, by 2005, 240 different ethical brands were already in use in Europe, and when codes of conduct were included, the number amounted to approximately 800 (de Pelsmacker, Janssen, et al., 2005).

In addition to those brands, an increasing number of supermarkets and multiple retailers across the world have started to introduce their own-label FT products (e.g., Carrefour, Ahold Group, Co-op, Sainsbury’s; Doherty et al., 2013). These competing branding programmers and certifications, and their complexity, may confuse consumers and undermine credibility (Bartley et al., 2015). On the other hand, the FT brand has not been given enough visibility through the Spanish media, and the distribution of information is still held in minority and highly specialized circles (González et al., 2014). Thus, its recognition is still limited among consumers, and evaluative issues (e.g., distinctiveness, prestige, or brand attractiveness) are not taken into consideration as significant factors that determine their buying intentions. This finding contrasts strongly with the FT awareness among consumers in other European countries, such as the United Kingdom, where numerous surveys report that about three quarters of the general public are aware of the FT brand (Yamoah, 2014).

Conclusion, Implications, Limitations, and Further Research

With the purpose of identifying useful managerial implications for the NPOs that distribute FT products in developed countries, the main goal of this article has been to test a conceptual model that presents consumers’ buying intentions as a consequence of their social orientation, the credibility of NPOs, perceptions of FT products, and attitudes toward the FT brand. The findings of this article confirm that consumers’ buying intentions of FT products depend strongly on the CSO, the perceived functional utilities of FT products, and the evaluation of NPOs. On the contrary, consumers’ attitudes toward the FT brand seem irrelevant to improving their buying intentions of FT products.
Based on these findings, the first relevant implication for the management of FT by NPOs suggests that these institutions work on achieving a better integration and promotion of the FT brand. As discussed in this article, the FT brand is currently not an enhancer of consumers’ buying intentions. We argue that this is possibly due to the existence of too many unknown brands in the market that are not well-integrated or promoted accordingly. Therefore, consumers probably do not incorporate their attitudes toward the FT brand into their decision-making processes because they are not aware that FT is a brand in itself; however, it is not because they are uninterested. Otherwise, if they knew of the existence of a well-integrated and well-promoted FT brand, they could also be willing to integrate it into their decisions, as they currently do with the functional utilities of FT products or their perceptions of the credibility of NPOs. The generic brand licensed by FLO is a good step forward in the coordination of the FT market; yet, further advances are needed.

As a second implication, we suggest that nonprofit importers and distributors seek more effective communication practices by linking them to the ethical concerns of consumers, as this is the key antecedent of buying intentions. Therefore, to increase responsible consumption of these products, advertising and promotional materials should place special emphasis on highlighting how FT allows consumers to meet their main ethical concerns. Communication should particularly focus on issues, such as the positive impact that buying FT products has on the quality of life of the producers, the environmental component of production, or the economic reinvestment generated in the local communities through the creation of new educational, health, social, or infrastructure projects. If this were the case, the very specific features of FT would be highlighted, and this would allow the consumer to distinguish more clearly the distinctive attributes of these products compared with traditional trade.

In addition, NPOs should also improve some of the characteristics of FT products, especially in terms of their shopping convenience. Along this line, consumers frequently fail to engage with FT products due to their scarce availability in retail stores, which does not match consumers’ expectations (Wright & Heaton, 2006). Although it is true that a significant part of the organizations involved in FT is contrary to the marketing of products using the traditional channels of mass distribution, still some alternatives would allow increasing the presence of FT in the market without necessarily resorting to mass distribution. An interesting alternative would be the use of e-commerce, using online stores in the websites of importing and trading NPOs operating in developed countries.

Finally, this study is not without limitations, and future research should consider them to improve the knowledge on FT consumption. First, we used a small convenience sample that represents a limitation from the point of view of the generalization of our findings. More precisely, the majority of participants in the sample were students and, accordingly, in their twenties. In addition, the sample was collected in a university context where participants are expected to have a higher education and income level than the average demographic of a country. Thus, the sample may have been biased in terms of FT awareness and attitudes when compared with a sample of “general” consumers because the University of Cantabria is an FT university that organizes FT campaigns frequently. The fact that the sample was exclusively collected in
Spain, which is not a typical case study for the FT movement, also represents a limitation in terms of how the findings of the study should be interpreted and generalized to larger populations. All in all, we suggest that further research is proposed on the basis of this article and that future researchers replicate the study using more robust samples of consumers that may help them overcome the flaws in our data collection process.

It is also necessary to note that we did not include consumers’ perceptions of for-profit companies in our study. Thus, it would be interesting to implement new studies including these companies and making comparisons between their marketing strategies and the strategies implemented by NPOs. Along this line, previous literature has demonstrated that consumers perceive FT organizations differently depending on whether they are NPOs, governments, or for-profit companies (de Pelsmacker, Janssens, et al., 2005). Thus, it may be the case that the findings reported in this article cannot be directly extrapolated to for-profit companies or governments and, as so, further research is needed to clarify the role that CSO, FT organizations, FT products, and FT brand play when consumers evaluate these other types of organizations.

Finally, we consider that future researchers should also pay attention to moderating factors (e.g., personal traits, socio-economic issues) that could have significant impacts on our model. In this regard, previous literature has already explored some of these factors (de Pelsmacker, Driesen, & Rayp, 2005; Yang et al., 2014), but their findings have not been conclusive so far and further research is needed.

Authors’ Note
An initial version of this work was presented as a working paper of the Collection of Working Documents of the Cátedra Fundación Ramón Areces de Distribución Comercial. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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