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**If you think about it more, do you want it more? The
impact of heuristic and deliberative information
processing on consumer preferences for ethically endorsed
products**

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Roman Maciej Konopka

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Abstract

Over the last few decades, the use of endorsing logos on fast moving consumer goods packaging has been on the rise. Logos, such as the Fairtrade, the Heart Foundation Tick, or the Dolphin-Safe have been a common sight on the products found in supermarkets. Although there has been a growing research interest in the role and utility of endorsing logos, there are several fundamental questions that have yet to be addressed.

First, there are two competing views on how endorsing logos may play a role in consumer choice. They may work as distinctive assets that help a brand to be salient in purchasing situations of consumers, who primarily rely on their heuristics in shopping decision making. Conversely, endorsing logos and the claims they convey may be thoughtfully considered by shoppers that in turn leads to a greater loyalty for the endorsed products. Second, there are question marks over how brands are retrieved from memory and these questions are important in understanding the role of endorsing logos. Whilst the prevailing view is that more thoughtful consideration of a well-known brand should further encourage consumer preference (see e.g. J. R. Anderson & Bower, 1973; Keller, 1993), recent research suggests that recollecting more information about a familiar brand has the opposite outcome (Stocchi, Wright, & Driesener, 2016). Further, and most directly pertinent for brand managers, it is not certain that endorsing logos positively influence consumer preferences at all. In particular, there is a body of literature suggesting that the credibility of ethical claims by organisations are increasingly questioned by consumers. These fundamental questions leave the research literature with significant gaps, both from a theoretical and managerial perspective.

The theory and research presented in this thesis seek to close the gaps in the literature by using experimental methods to examine the role of endorsing logos. More specifically, the present research employs a variety of manipulations from the dual-process theory of human cognition to Conjoint Analysis and Best-Worst Scaling experiments. Using the Fairtrade logo as the focal stimulus, the research manipulates deliberation versus heuristics, whilst controlling for factors such as mere familiarity. The research comprises two stages with five ranking-based Conjoint Analysis experiments in stage one (n=379) and a Best-Worst Scaling experiment with Balanced Incomplete Block Design in stage two (n=1,628).

This study's findings contribute to the branding literature and aid managers in several respects. Despite concerns over the credibility of ethical claims, endorsing logos, both familiar and unfamiliar, remain as a useful marketing tool as they have a substantively positive effect on consumer preferences. This effect is detected under both heuristic and deliberative thinking. Furthermore, the positive effect of logos on consumer preferences largely operates through mere exposure to a familiar brand, but the preference can also be substantially increased by encouraging deliberative thinking. However, counter-intuitively, the present research findings imply that less familiar logos benefit more from such deliberation compared to their more familiar counterparts. It is worth noting that encouraging deliberation was achieved in the context of this research and future research is needed to examine how such encouragement can be achieved outside a laboratory environment.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| ACT | Adaptive Control of Thought |
| ACT-R | Adaptive Control of Thought - Rational |
| ANT | Associative Network Theory |
| ATOs | Alternative Trade Organisations |
| BIBD | Balanced Incomplete Block Design |
| BWS | Best-Worst Scaling |
| CA | Conjoint Analysis |
| CBBE | Customer-Based Brand Equity |
| DCEs | Discrete Choice Experiments |
| FLO | Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International |
| FMCGs | Fast Moving Consumer Goods |
| HAM | Human Associative Memory |
| OMEF | Orthogonal Main Effects Plan |
| RP | Revealed Preference |
| RUT | Random Utility Theory |
| SAC | Source of Activation Confusion |
| SP | Stated Preference |
| TASS | The Autonomous Set of Systems |
| WFTO | World Fair Trade Organization |

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