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*Narrative Connections:
Promoting the Moral Economy of Fair Trade*

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Abstract

Fair trade is an alternative approach to international trade. It is both a social movement and an economic approach that aims to make trade fair for the many small scale producers disadvantaged in international trade. This thesis explores the discursive devices used by fair trade organisations to promote fair trade. These devices have two roles: to promote an ethical connection from consumer to producer and to involve the consumer in the work of fair trade through purchasing behaviour and political action. This second role refers to the politicisation of consumption whereby shopping becomes an act of political solidarity with disadvantaged producers. I explore these devices through narrative analysis, focusing on a thematic analysis of Trade Aid's publication, *Vital*.

My research is framed by Michael Goodman's (2004) work on the semiotic production of fair trade. The concept of a reflexive consumer is explored. This is the idea that consumer awareness of the conditions surrounding production can lead to purchasing decisions that reflect care for the distant producer. This opening up of the concept of consumption involves an active and engaged consumer who chooses to purchase fair trade because they feel a connection to the work of these organisations. I am interested in the particular form this information takes in *Vital*. I apply narrative research methods to explore the meta-narrative of fair trade promoted in *Vital* that tells the reader about the work of fair trade organisations, the impact this has on the lives of producer and how they can be involved in the story as a consumer and as a global citizen.

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