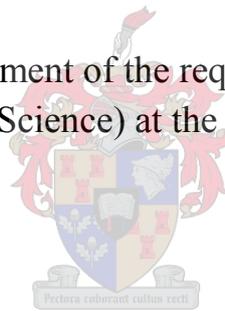


Political Consumerism: Possibilities for International Norm Change

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

Consumers are gradually becoming influential actors in the international arena. The 21st century consumer has taken on a new identity, namely that of a citizen-consumer. A rising awareness of the importance of ethical purchasing behaviour has made political citizen-consumers a vehicle through which change in normative behaviour in the capitalist world economy could be attained. Activists have realised the support that political consumers could give to campaigns that strive to achieve norm change. Consumers have the power to hold multinational corporations (MNCs) accountable for unjust practices, and through their purchasing decisions, pressure MNCs to change the manner in which they operate.

In order to determine to what extent political consumerism could contribute to international norm change, one has to understand how norms emerge, when norms are accepted and at which point norms become internalised. The theoretical framework of the life-cycle of norms is ideal to test the possibilities that political consumerism holds in the quest for norm change. The application of norm life-cycle framework to case studies provides evidence that political consumerism has already announced itself as a vehicle for change. Campaigns such as the conflict diamonds campaign and the Fair Trade movement have already successfully co-opted consumers to support the goals of these campaigns and have achieved some results in changing the behaviour and policies of MNCs. Political consumers have therefore already embarked on the journey towards norm change, but have not yet been able to bring the norm to internalisation.

The study determines which stage in the norm life-cycle political consumerism has managed to reach. Related to this, it asks whether it is in fact possible for activists and political consumers to complete the norm life-cycle and thereby effect norm change to enhance capacity for social justice in capitalism. The study also concerns itself with the persuasion strategies that have been used and could still be used by activists to pursue change in the normative behaviour of consumers and MNCs. Persuasion is central to convincing actors to accept and internalise a new norm. The study situates these persuasion strategies within the norm life-cycle, in order to identify the challenges facing the consumer movement and possible solutions to assist political consumerism to reach its full potential.

Opsomming

In die internasionale arena het verbruikers gaandeweg die rol van invloedryke akteurs begin aanneem, naamlik dié van burgerlike-verbruikers. 'n Toenemende bewustheid van die belangrikheid van etiese aankope het gedurende die 21ste eeu die politieke burgerlike-verbruiker in 'n akteur omskep, wat normatiewe verandering in die kapitalistiese globale ekonomie te weeg kan bring. Aktiviste het besef dat politieke verbruikers steun aan veldtogte kan verleen wat na norm verandering streef. Omdat verbruikers oor die vermoë beskik om multi-nasionale korporasies (MNKs) vir onregverdige gebruike aanspreeklik te hou deur aankoop besluite, kan hul sodoende MNKs dwing om hul gebruike te verander.

'n Begrip van die ontstaan en aanvaarding van norme, kan ook help om vas te stel tot watter mate politieke verbruiking tot internasionale norm verandering bydra. Die teoretiese raamwerk van die lewens-siklus van norme is ideaal om die potensiaal van politieke verbruiking te toets. Die toepassing van die norm lewens-siklus op gevallestudies bewys dat politieke verbruiking alreeds as 'n middel vir verandering uitgekristaliseer het. Veldtogte, soos die konflik diamante veldtog en die "Fair Trade" beweging, het alreeds daarin geslaag om verbruikers te werf om die doelwitte van hierdie veldtogte te steun. Hierdie veldtogte het sodoende daarin geslaag om die verandering van MNKs se gedrag en beleid te bewerkstellig. Politieke verbruikers het hul reeds met die veldtog geassosieer om norm-verandering te laat plaasvind.

Die studie het bepaal watter stadium in die norm lewens-siklus politieke verbruiking reeds bereik het, asook of dit moontlik vir aktiviste en verbruikers is om die siklus te voltooi en norm-verandering te laat plaasvind. Hierdie norm-verandering sal ook die vermoë vir die sosiale regverdiging van die kapitalistiese stelsel verbeter. Die studie het ook die aktiviste se oorradingstrategieë uiteengesit, asook watter strategieë in die toekoms kan gebruik word om die normatiewe gedrag van verbruikers en MNKs te verander. In die aanvaarding van nuwe norme speel oorrading 'n belangrike rol. Die studie plaas daarom hierdie oorradingstrategieë binne die norm lewens-siklus, sodat dit die uitdagings kan identifiseer wat die verbruikers-beweging in die gesig staar. Dit sal daarom vir die studie moontlik maak om werkbare oplossings voor te stel, wat politieke verbruiking tot sy volle potensiaal kan voer.

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Chapter 1

Aim, Scope and Method

1.1 Introduction to the Study

Consumption is without a doubt, key to human activity, life and society. Human beings consume to sustain themselves and satisfy their needs. Consumption is also the most crucial variable in upholding our capitalist economic system. The need for consumption creates demands, which is answered by production and supply. Globalisation and capitalism have given consumers from the developed world the opportunity to demand anything, and have access to everything, that would satisfy their needs. As consumers are gradually moving towards fulfilling all their needs, new needs are created, since consumption is an essential part of human activity and life, which must continue. Once the satisfaction of basic needs are attained, the need for luxury is pursued, and subsequently consumers are moving towards demanding the satisfaction of the most vital need of all – having a sense of purpose. Consumption has grown to reach the top of the Maslowian pyramid, where the final need is the need for self-actualisation and the attainment of morality.

The producers of the capitalist world economy are now compelled to face the challenge of meeting the demand of these consumers. In effect, production is controlled by consumers. Furthermore, with the advent of the “ethical consumer”, consumers can now dictate how products are produced. This makes the consumer a potentially powerful actor in the international system. If consumers can take on the role of powerful economic actors, it could also translate that power into political power, since ultimately; politics determine who gets what, how they get it, when they get it and how much they get.

In order to satisfy the need for the attainment of morality, self-actualisation and purpose through consumption, consumers, with the assistance from social activists, realise that they have to acknowledge their role as responsible international citizens. To assume that role, consumers need to transform themselves into “political

consumers”. Although the literature gives different terms for this role, such as the ethical consumer, the socially conscious consumer, the citizen-consumer, this study will throughout refer to this role using a more encompassing term, namely the political consumer.

Here the interests of the political consumer and the (humanitarian) activist conjoin. Activists are in pursuit of social justice and positive change. The political consumer wants to embrace its new found identity as a responsible citizen-consumer, by means of being conscious of the global society and how their consumption could contribute to either positive or negative change.

Activists are increasingly starting to acknowledge the power of political consumers as a voice in the international society. Through engaging, encouraging or manipulating consumers, activists could transform consumers into political consumers and then mobilise them to become consumer-activists. The consumer-activists would then be the foot soldiers through which activists could execute their agendas for change. Activism is the act whereby a person, individually or in strategic cooperation with others, take steps based on shared values to create a just society (Watts *et al*, 2003: 186).

1.2 Problem Statement

The activist has recognised the potential of using the political consumer as an instrument in executing their agendas, which in the context of this study, entails effecting norm change. The activists need to be entrepreneurial in recruiting political consumers to assist in effecting this norm change, which the activist will have to do through persuasion. Activists will therefore have to be armed with strategies which will encourage and convince political consumers to become consumer-activists and norm promoters. The problem faced by the activist is which strategies to use and how to frame its norm agenda. The activists, who are the norm entrepreneurs, through political consumers, may or may not achieve norm change. It is important to understand how their efforts fit into, what Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998) call, the “life cycle of norms”.

In the context of this study, emerging norms are challenging the existing normative system of global capitalism. However, in order to do so, Finnemore and Sikkink, (1998: 908) argue that activists need to “frame their issues in ways that make persuasive connections between existing norms and emergent norms”. Since the norm proposed by the activists needs to depart from an existing norm, it runs the risk of being usurped by the capitalist “norm” without effecting any transformation. Should the activists decide to utilise political consumers to challenge the capitalist system, it will mean that activists will have to fight capitalism using capitalist agents, namely consumers.

Activists who pursue change and justice in the capitalist system could be differentiated as either pragmatists or radicals (Golding, 2009: 1). Pragmatists aim to effect positive change for marginalised groups using a strategy of cooperation, partnership and rewarding those who comply. Radicals on the other hand, aim to fundamentally change the capitalist system by challenging the status quo, and are therefore different from pragmatists in the degree of change that they seek (Derville, 2005: 528). They attempt to do so using an aggressive or even hostile approach of naming and shaming, using threats and insults.

In most instances, efforts to change the capitalist system in its entirety could be a futile exercise. For instance, should activists try to internalise a new norm, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) or the distribution and consumption of Fair Trade products, this new norm could during its tipping point become simply another method for multinational corporations (MNCs) and other economic agents to fuel competition in the capitalist world economy. Alternatively, pressure could be placed on weaker economic agents to comply with the new norm, for example through CSR, without fully embracing or implementing it. The pragmatists however, could manage to create a niche within which justice can be attained for selected marginalised groups in the capitalist world economy. Should this be achieved, the pragmatists would have been successful in its aim, but not successful in effecting norm change as such.

1.3 Research Question

This study poses two questions. Firstly, it asks which stage in the norm life-cycle political consumerism has managed to reach. Related to this, this study asks whether it is in fact possible for activists and political consumers to complete the norm life-cycle and thereby effect norm change to enhance capacity for social justice in capitalism.

The position of political consumerism within the norm-life cycle and the challenges it faces in completing the norm-life cycle could be answered by posing a second question, namely, which strategies have been used and could still be used to by activists to pursue change in the normative behaviour of economic agents, such as consumers and multinational corporations (MNCs).

1.4 Conceptualisation

The following section will explore how the notions of political consumerism and the political consumer, consumer activism and the consumer activist as well as the citizen-consumer are conceived. Although the focus will be on conceptualising the above-mentioned terms, it is important to note that other terminology such as conscientious commerce, ethical shopping, ethical purchasing behaviour, ethical consumption and critical consumerism are also used in the literature on political consumerism. It is imperative to keep in mind that throughout this study, the consumers that are referred to are consumers from the developed world.

A brief overview of existing literature on political consumerism will establish a point of departure for this chapter. This chapter shall provide a historical overview of political consumerism by means of reference to the Anti-Slavery movement. Thereafter, political consumerism and its related concepts will be compared and contextualised. Emphasis will be placed on methods that are at the disposal of political consumers, such as the “buycott” and boycott strategies.

This study will position the political consumer within the power relations between agents who have the potential power to effect norm change. These actors include activists, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), celebrities and multinational

corporations (MNCs). It will correlate the dynamics between these actors, or agencies, within this new norm dynamic and highlight the role of the political consumer.

1.4.1 New Social Movements

Consumers (alongside activists, celebrities, corporations, brand names and labels) are increasingly playing a part in the struggle for global social justice and reforming corporate globalisation and capitalism. Kozinets and Handelman (2004: 691) describe this phenomenon as a special type of social movement, which aims to effect changes in the principles, practices and policies of organisations, businesses, industries and governments. Some more radical movements could also try to fundamentally change the ideology and culture of consumerism. Kozinets and Handelman (2004: 692) believe that political consumerism falls within the category of New Social Movements (NSM). The rise of such movements is “specific responses to the totalising and hegemonic culture defined by capitalist markets”.

New Social Movements (NSM) theory was primarily developed by four theorists, namely, Manuel Castells, Alain Touraine, Alberto Melucci and Jurgen Habermas (Buechler, 1995: 443). NSM theory comprises two elements. Firstly, it correlates a special relationship between the rise of contemporary social movements and the larger economic structure and secondly, it is concerned with how issues of identity and personal behaviour determine the nature of this relationship (Pichardo, 1997: 411). “New” Social Movements differs from Social Movements in terms of its identity, adversary and its societal goal (Castells, 1997: 71). During the industrial era, social movements mainly departed from a Marxist’s approach, driven by the working class. Post-1965 has seen the rise of “New” Social Movements that comprise a diverse group of actors who are not bound by the “corporate profit motive” and that are concerned with issues surrounding the quality of life, such as environmental concerns, peace and justice (Pichardo, 1997: 412, 416).

Pichardo (1997: 412) believes that the rise of NSM is a result of the shift to a post-industrial economy; alternatively described as the post-material age or mature capitalism. In this new era, NSM calls for the transformation of social and economic

institutions that allows for more “individual choice and collective self-organisation outside the economic commodity cycle or bureaucratic political organisation” (Kitschelt, 1993 in Pichardo, 1997: 416), or the “privatisation of social problems” (Beuchler, 1995: 445). These demands sprout out of people’s resentment over the loss of control over their lives, their environment, their jobs, their economies and their governments (Castells, 1997: 69). Political consumerism gives people the opportunity to regain that control and live out their identities with a sense of purpose.

1.4.2 Historical Roots: The Anti-Slavery Movement

Political consumerism is often viewed as a recent phenomenon with its roots in the 20th century. However, the anti-slavery movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is viewed by many as a landmark in human rights movements and the start of consumer activism (Micheletti, 2007; Glickman, 2004). The anti-slavery movement came at a time of “enlightenment thought” when rationalist thinkers criticised slavery for violating human rights. The Quaker and other evangelical religious groups also propagated the abolition of slavery in light of religious principles and the desire to Christianise slaves and Africans (Micheletti, 2007: 133).

The fight against slavery could be viewed in two phases, firstly, the abolition of the slave trade, and secondly, the abolition of the system of slavery in its entirety. The British Slave Trade Act of 1807 made slave trade illegal in the British Empire. The act abolished the trade in slaves, but it still allowed people to own slaves. After this time, abolition-activists started to build on the newly established norm, and took on the task of abolishing slavery in its entirety, and were successful in 1833 when slavery was finally abolished in Britain and in the United States in 1865.

The anti-slavery movement had its roots in the United Kingdom, Europe and North America, places that are until today the operating fields of political consumers. In Britain, the movement took flight in the 1790s and thereafter spread to the United States in the 1820s. The movement commenced with the formation of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1787 in Britain. Although there were efforts to abolish slavery

before that time, the formation of the Anti-Slavery Society is said to be the first concerted and organised effort at ending slavery.

In 1792 the British Parliament rejected an abolition bill which sparked a consumer boycott of slave-produced products by approximately 500,000 consumers (Micheletti, 2007: 128). The most prominent product associated with slavery during that time was sugar, which was the primary target of the boycott. The anti-slavery activists utilised consumers for their cause in two ways, namely through boycotting and buycotting (Glickman, 2004). Apart from the boycotting of slave-made goods such as sugar, there were also initiatives to buycott “slave-free produce” that promoted alternatives to slave plantation sugar. Scholars of political consumerism (such as Katz-Hyman, 2008; Glickman, 2004 and others) believe that today’s Fair Trade and anti-sweatshop campaigns found their roots in the English abolitionists’ efforts.

1.4.3 Brief Literature Review on Political Consumerism

The majority of the literature consulted, conceptualises political consumerism as a form of political participation in governance through the marketplace. Since the late 1980s, literature on consumerism and participation in government has started to emerge. However, since the start of the 21st century, the literature has seen an evolution and expansion of the term political consumerism. The term was broadened to include the idea of socially conscious consumerism, which does not only occupy itself with governance, but also its function in humanising the workings of the capitalist world economy (Jacobsen and Dulsrud, 2007: 469). Academics has recently started to pay more attention to the elaborated conceptualisation of political consumerism to include related concepts such as ethical consumerism, socially conscious consumerism, conscientious commerce and the notion of the citizen-consumer.

Leading writers on this new expanded concept of political consumerism and political consumers as agents of change include Micheletti (2003); Micheletti *et al* (2004; 2007; 2008); and others such as Vogel (2005), Scammell (2000) who focuses on the concept of the “citizen-consumer” and Friedman (1996) who distinguishes between the

consumer methods of boycotting as opposed to boycotting. Writers that have highlighted the new power shift to consumers within the capitalist system, include Baudrillard (2005) and Young (2006).

1.4.4 Political Consumerism and the Citizen-Consumer

Political consumerism entails the use of the market as an arena for politics, where consumers bring their political concerns to the marketplace, using the power of the individual's consumer choice to protest institutional practices that are objectionable (Michelletti and Stolle, 2008: 750). Collectively, individual choices have the potential to form political movements that could potentially change institutional practices that are objectionable (Jacobsen and Dulrud, 2007: 471). Examples of political concerns that are brought into the marketplace include labour, environmental, human rights, poverty, health and women's interests.

Consumers are becoming more aware of their political power and find it to be an attractive way to deliver social comment, or to attempt to change market practices that are deemed ethically, politically or environmentally questionable (Scammell, 2000). In 2006, American Express estimated that in Britain alone the number of conscience-driven consumers totalled 1.5 million and the figure is expected to reach 4 million by 2009 (Bishop, 2006).

Consumer power has evolved to be more than just the ability to protect consumers' rights, with consumer activism seeing a shift from "consumer rights" to "consumer duties" (Jacobsen and Dulrud, 2007: 469). It is important to note that the terms political consumerism and consumer activism are often used interchangeably. One should however be cautious of the different connotations of each of these terms. Activism is not necessarily political per se. Consumers could be active in trying to protect certain cultural values or aesthetic needs, such as art or a particular genre of film. Buycotts and boycotts are therefore not necessarily limited to motives of social change. For the purpose of this study, the conceptualisation of activism by Watts *et al* (2003) will be used. Watts *et al* (2003: 186) defines activism as the act whereby a person, individually or in strategic cooperation with others, take steps based on shared

values to create a more just society. The goals of activists could include reforming how society or institutions operate, or creating new societal institutions based on alternative principles and norms.

One should carefully apply the terms political consumer and consumer-activist when discussing political consumerism. Political consumption does not necessarily promote public participation in activism or advocacy for global justice, but could be limited to simply a private individual commitment by consumers (Richey and Ponte, 2008: 717). Activists (alongside celebrities) often set the consumer agenda, based on their interests or causes. The political consumer could be unaware that he or she is being utilised as a vehicle or tool by activists to achieve their own agendas. Jacobsen and Dulsrud (2007: 470) argue that activists and celebrities are the actors who are trying to impart these responsibilities on consumers. The consumer activist could be perceived as the more informed and dedicated political consumer.

Consumer power has reached a point of consciousness that is able to effectively pressure corporations to take on a social responsibility regarding their policies and practices (Micheletti and Stolle 2008: 750). Jacobsen and Dulsrud (2007: 469) echo this belief by saying that the active conscious consumer is the “celebrated new hero and hope for an ethically improved capitalism”. Le Billon (2006: 779) is convinced that consumerism is both a problem for, and a solution to global suffering and inequality. Therefore, the consumer movement not only calls on MNCs to be responsible, but it also recognises that they as consumers also have a responsibility to make well-informed and considerate purchasing decisions.

Scammell (2000) refers to the development of the “citizen-consumer”, where consumers vote with every purchase made (“voting at the checkout counter”). The concept of the “citizen-consumer” is a combination of two opposites. The definition of a citizen is someone who, as a member of society, enjoys the identity and status of having the right to participate, and be represented, in politics (Baylis and Smith, 2005: 770). The ideal citizen is public-spirited and concerned with the collective good of society, whereas the consumer is self-centred and seeks to satisfy its own interests (Scammell, 2000: 352). The merger of these two opposites results in an affinity for the

ethical and responsible participation in capitalism. Richey and Ponte (2008: 720) refer to this relationship between consumption and citizenship as “stakeholder capitalism”.

Micheletti and Stolle (2008: 751) proposes that this transformation to selfless consumerism and the development of consumer social consciousness is the result of globalisation, the global reach of corporations and the adoption of post-materialist values by Western citizen-consumers. Political consumerism has become a global political force and is a result of the effects of capitalism on society. Just as the anti-slavery movement was a result of the rise of capitalism, so is buyer-orientated corporations’ consideration of global social values a result of late or mature capitalism. Although this study focuses on the social justice concerns of the consumer, the activities of this type of consumer are intrinsically political, since it contributes to policy-making and to the allocation of resources, as well as the actual distribution of resources. In summarising the concept of politics, it can be concisely defined as who gets what, when and how (Lasswell, 1936). This is precisely the politics that involves political consumers. Through consciously purchasing certain products, it contributes to the redistribution of resources, be it through donations from corporations, empowerment through Fair Trade or reinforcing ethical values.

Not only are these consumers political consumers, but they are also social consumers. Social consumers comprise a cosmopolitan social consciousness and an awareness of the need for global justice. Consumers are no longer viewed as simple “brainwashed” slaves of capitalism, but rather as “potentially sovereign, morally responsible political actors” (Jacobsen and Dulrud, 2007: 470). Political consumerism creates new arenas for responsibility-taking. This resulted in the formation of new political and ethical identities (Lyon, 2006: 455).

Jacobsen and Dulrud (2007: 469, 472) caution that there is no universal generic model of the political consumer, and should therefore not be studied as such, arguing that consumer power differs within the distinct contexts in which consumers operate.

1.4.5 Political Consumers and Related Actors

Political consumers are able to be active through their interaction with both activists and multinational corporations (MNCs). The activists provide consumers with information and inspiration to transform themselves into political consumers and consumer-activists.

As mentioned earlier, there are two types of activists that could inspire consumers, namely pragmatists and radicals. Each type of activist groups finds support from different target audiences. Pragmatist could perhaps earn more support from conservative professionals who believe in operating in a logical and controlled manner in an established global society, where radicals are more likely to gain support from the youth who often illustrate a “revolutionary” and “anti-establishment” sentiment. Derville (2005: 530) believes that the radical activist offers consumers the opportunity to recast their identity and reconstituting their worth. Participating in the struggle to achieve a social aim or to effect norm change, provides the consumer with a sense of belonging to a greater cause and being part of a “family” that shares their values.

Unlike pragmatists, the radicals operate outside the system to express their objections, through using agitating communication with organisations that contribute to the phenomenon that they oppose. It could be argued that radicals are “rebels” who are unwilling to act in a rational manner and be perceived as uncooperative and uncompromising. Derville (2005: 527) believes that we should not overlook or shun the role and strategies of the radicals. Derville highlights that radicals play a part in the political arena which assist in making the pragmatists’ requests appear more reasonable in comparison. In effect, the pragmatist needs the radical to promote its efforts to successfully persuade and eventually, to effect norm change.

Pragmatists tend to be dedicated to effect norm change related to a particular issue, whereas radicals perceive existing political structures as ineffective. The radicals believe that all the issues pursued by the pragmatists are the consequence of global capitalism (Blood, 2000: 168), therefore, should the global capitalist system be transformed, there would be no need for the single-issue campaigns of the pragmatist. Kozinets and Handelman (2004: 703) believe that it is easier to study the work of

pragmatists who target specific issues, whereas the work of the radicals aiming to achieving a broader goal of consumer culture change is more difficult.

Another differentiation could be made between activists who are self-directed and those who are other-directed (Derville, 2005: 529). The self-directed activists engage in activism based on their own identities in order to achieve, amongst other things, the attainment of morality, self-actualisation and purpose. The other-directed activists are driven by the desire to help others in protecting the rights of the disempowered and the attainment of global justice. One of the main problems relating to the work of activists is that activists often have different ideas about which outcomes can be called successful. Therefore, “changes in corporate behaviour may be regarded as victories by some activists or as public relations ploys by others” (Bennett and Lagos, 2007: 201).

The second actor that the political consumer interacts with is the multinational corporation (MNC), which is usually at the receiving end of consumer-activism. MNCs are known to have the potential to be more powerful than the state by having the power to undermine the sovereignty of the state. In addition, MNCs have the power to shape the public agenda through their control of the media and advertising. The ability of MNCs to disseminate new technologies and manage practices through changes in the production methods and the performance of domestic industries, allows it to be potential “agents of cultural change” (Koenig-Archibugi, 2004: 234).

As a result, activists, through the political consumer, increasingly hold the MNC accountable, rather than the state. For example, MNCs are often the target of environmental activists. Where it is increasingly more difficult for the state to regulate the activities of MNCs, MNCs now faces restraints by the activist and the political consumer.

Whereas MNCs are increasingly being viewed as governors of the intra-state system, so are consumers seen as voters (citizen-consumers). Through purchasing, citizen-consumers vote on how they want resources to be utilised and distributed. Concerning some issues, celebrities could enter the arena as the representatives of the citizen-consumers and as the mediators between the MNCs and the citizen-consumers. The

phenomenon of celebrities increasingly acting as representatives of humanitarian goodwill, as well as the trend setters in fashion, is referred to by Poniewozik (2005) as “charitainment”. Activists also utilise the citizen-consumers as a tool to pursue their interests with MNCs, since the consumer role is easily manipulated and can be moulded by role models, activists and other civil society organisations (Jacobsen and Dulsrud, 2007: 473).

MNCs also use politicised consumption as an entrepreneurial or marketing strategy to lure and appease citizen-consumers, as well as to contest their own capitalist image. Corporate success in the developed world is becoming coupled with treating the consumer as a concerned citizen (Scammell, 2000: 353-354). As Micheletti and Stolle (2008:750) aptly say and state: “capitalism is helping capitalism to develop a face of social justice” by making socially conscious consumerism fashionable. Richey and Ponte (2008: 725) reiterate this by saying that with political consumerism, “something can be done about poverty and disease without undermining the basic cultural and or economic structures of the capitalist system”. This is not to say that political consumerism does not put any pressure on capitalism. It does put some pressure on corporations by creating a “trap of social justice” (Micheletti and Stolle, 2008: 759). This entails the pressure placed on corporations to produce cheaper goods, in a socially responsible manner and still make a profit in order to sustain itself as capitalism.

Ultimately, the relationship between these three actors could either transform capitalism, effect changes to a limited extent or achieve nothing at all; depending on whether actors successfully seize the opportunities presented by political consumerism and utilise effective strategies to effect norm change.

1.5 Methodology

This study will be qualitative in nature and will be part descriptive and part explanatory. It will firstly describe and conceptualise the phenomenon of political consumerism and the theoretical framework of the norm life-cycle. Case studies will be used to illustrate political consumerism in practice and its current position within

the life-cycle of norms. Then it will continue to provide possible reasons why political consumerism has managed to enter the norm life-cycle, but not been able to reach the stage of norm internalisation.

This analysis will primarily make use of secondary sources and, where possible, of primary sources. This study will consult primary sources such as policy documents and press statements from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activist groups that concern themselves with effecting change through political consumerism. Reference will also be made to online content such as the web pages that organisations use to communicate their agendas to consumers.

This study selected two case studies for inclusion. They are the Fair Trade movement, and the campaign against conflict diamonds or “Blood Diamonds”. The selection of the first case study was done to provide an insight into the workings of the “boycott” strategy, most likely to be employed by the pragmatist activist who believes in cooperation and rewarding those who comply. The second case study will illustrate the strategies used to implement a boycott in order to achieve a social aim, or change a practice in the capitalist world economy. The radical activist, who names and shames those who are involved in practices that are detrimental to social justice, generally uses the boycott method.

A boycott constitutes “efforts by consumers to induce shoppers to buy the products or services of selected corporations in order to reward these firms for behaviour that is consistent with the goals of the activists” (Friedman, 1996: 439-440). A boycott, on the other hand, seeks to punish firms for misdeeds, whereby consumers consciously decide not to purchase a certain product or products from a particular firm or label.

In addition, both these case studies cover a range of social justice issues. It covers the issues of empowerment through trade, as well as matters related to human security. Yet, both case studies primarily address norms related to trade – what trade should be and what trade should not be about. The activists’ efforts pertaining to these case studies aim to introduce new labels, certification schemes and controls into capitalist production and trade. Labels such as “Fair Trade” or “conflict-free”, give consumers

the opportunity to identify themselves with new ideas, which could lead to norm acceptance and ultimately behaviour change.

The use of the case study method is primarily associated with qualitative methods of analysis. One could make a distinction between a case study and a cross-case study. The case study comprises one or a few cases, where the cross-case study comprises several cases. Both of these have their advantages and disadvantages. Using the case study method could enable the researcher to make an in-depth study of a case; whereas the cross-case study does not afford the researcher the time to make in-depth investigations. However, the cross-case study method will allow the researcher with more evidence to prove a particular trend.

This study has selected the case study method, since it primarily aims to identify the different stages and processes of political consumerism by applying the norm life-cycle framework to a consumer campaign. This study does not aim to identify broader trends, but to test the viability of placing political consumerism within the norm life-cycle. In order to do so, an in-depth study of a case is necessary in order to unpack all the stages of political consumerism within the norm life-cycle.

The purpose of selecting two case studies for this study is not necessarily for comparative purposes. Both the boycott and buycott methods form part of the process of persuasion, which falls within the framework of the norm life-cycle. Thus, in order to effectively apply the framework of the norm life-cycle, cases had to be selected that could incorporate both paths of persuasion.

Gerring (2007: 6, 7) states that the methodological status of the case study is still highly suspect and points out several criticisms of the case study method. These include the biased selection of cases; weak empirical leverage that result from too many variables and too few cases; the subjective conclusions that are often made from case studies; and non-replicability. This study however does not aim to generate a hypothesis, but rather to test a hypothesis – whether there is a place for political consumerism within the norm life-cycle. Therefore two of the major consumer campaigns were selected test the framework, which if proven successful, could in fact be replicated using other case studies.

The case studies will be analysed within the theoretical framework of constructivism, and more specifically, within the context of norm dynamics. The case studies will illustrate the actors involved in the process of framing and constructing new norms that challenge existing norms within the sphere of global consumption and the capitalist world economy. Although the study of international norms could focus on state- or non-state actors, this study will focus on the role of non-state actors in international norm creation. The norm creators, or norm entrepreneurs, are the activists, whereas the consumers are the actors that form the potential vehicle to achieve norm internalisation.

Finally, the successes and failures of the persuasion strategies used by these actors will be outlined in Chapter 5 using Friestad and Wright's (1994) Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM). The PKM is used simply to present the findings of this study and the resulting practical suggestions in a structured manner and not to introduce any new elements to the study.

1.6 Theoretical Approach

Political consumerism will be investigated from a constructivist perspective, with its emphasis on the role played by norms, and in the context of Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) proposition of a norm life-cycle (which will be explained in Chapter 2). Constructivism is concerned with the relationship between agents and structures, which is ideal to analyse political consumerism, since several agents (consumers, activists and corporations) relate to the capitalist structure. In order for scholars to generate substantive claims from the constructivist approach, they need to delineate who the principle actors are, their identities, their interests, their cultural environment and social capacities; and how they construct their social reality and influence normative structures and ideas (Barnett, 2005: 258, 259).

Political consumerism could further be related to constructivism through New Social Movement (NSM) theory. Beuchler (1995: 441) states that NSM theory could be viewed as an element of social constructivism, which studies collective action by emphasising the role of framing activities and cultural processes in social activism.

1.7 Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose and significance of this study is two-fold. On a macro level, the purpose of the study is to determine to what extent activists, through the political consumers, are participating in effecting international norm change. It will also investigate how and to what extent norm dynamics are present in a transnational arena, as opposed to the international state-system. This investigation is significant since it will outline the possibilities and limitations of political consumerism in effecting norm change.

On a micro level, the purpose of the study is to outline challenges facing the activist in mobilising consumers, best practices identified from selected case studies, as well as suggested persuasion strategies that norm entrepreneurs could use in pursuing their agendas. This facet of the study is significant, since the outcomes thereof could be used as a reference or practical guideline for activists who are engaging consumers and MNCs.

In addition, this study will alert readers of the potential power that they hold as consumers, the perceived responsibility that they have as well as their exposure to the positive or negative manipulation by activists.

1.8 Limitations

The scope of this study will be limited to the sphere of the transnational arena, with a focus on the life-cycle of norms amongst non-state actors, such as NGOs, consumers and MNCs, as opposed to state actors. Secondly, this study will be limited to the dynamics of political consumerism and consumer activism within a humanitarian and social justice context. It will not include the dynamics of consumer activism that focuses on consumer rights. The third limitation placed upon this study relates to the time dimension considered. This study will look at developments in political consumerism from the 1980s onwards. Although mention have been made of the historical roots of political consumerism, which traces back to the Abolition movement in the late eighteenth century, this study will focus on more contemporary developments in political consumerism.

The fourth limitation relates to the use of the case study method. Although the selected two case studies will sufficiently be utilised as a method to determine the viability of studying political consumerism within the norm life-cycle, it will place limits on the conclusions that could be drawn. It will, for example, not be able to draw conclusions about whether the boycott or boycott method of persuasion is more effective. In order to make such conclusions, we would have to employ the cross-case study.

1.9 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 has identified the context of the research, the research questions and methodology, the areas of interest and the purpose and significance of this study. In addition, it has conceptualised political consumerism, as well as the central actor that this study is investigating, namely, the political consumer and its related actors.

Chapter 2 proceeds to provide an outline of how international norm change occurs, through the norm life-cycle, as proposed by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998). This chapter will explain that political consumerism needs to evolve through two norm life-cycles, in order to effect norm change. These two consecutive cycles forms part of a whole. Within the context of the different stages of the norm life-cycle, this chapter continues by outlining the various tactics that activists use to interact with consumers and tactics used to transform the consumption behaviour of consumers, and ultimately to attempt to achieve norm change. These tactics will be identified in three stages, namely awareness, advocacy and activism. Firstly, activists use tactics to create awareness and subsequently to establish an agenda. The second stage entails advocacy, framing and persuasion tactics used in the lobbying and mobilising of consumers, as well as MNCs. Finally, there are the tactics used to execute the agenda, through the engagement of MNCs by activists and political consumer-activists.

Chapters 3 and 4 apply the norm life-cycle framework to the selected case studies in order to determine each movement's progress within the norm life-cycle. Both case studies conclude that norm internalisation has not yet taken place in both the cases of Fair Trade (Chapter 3) and the conflict diamonds campaign (Chapter 4). The conflict diamonds campaign has, however, made more progress within the norm life-cycle than the Fair Trade movement. Currently, the Fair Trade movement's growth within the

norm life-cycle is hampered by the challenges in reaching a “critical mass”. The conflict diamond campaign has managed to reach the stage of norm cascading, but still struggles with the second round of norm negotiations which aims to establish terms for the full implementation of the norm, which, if successful, will ultimately reach the stage of norm internalisation.

A further contrast that will become clear during the analysis of the case studies is the difference in how political consumerism was utilised by activists. In the case of Fair Trade, the movement is highly dependent on consumers, and consumers have been involved throughout most of the process. During the conflict diamonds campaign, consumers did not play a central or active role, but activists managed to effectively use the threat of a consumer boycott to achieve their aim.

Chapter 5 draws conclusions from the aforementioned case studies and the study as a whole. It draws conclusions relating to the two research questions posed. On the macro-level, conclusions are made as to what extent political consumerism has been able to act as a vehicle for international norm change; which stage in the norm life-cycle it has been able to reach thus far, as well as possible explanations for the position that political consumerism finds itself in the norm life-cycle. The challenges facing activists and political consumers to effectively participate in the norm life-cycle will be outlined using Friestad and Wright’s (1994) Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM). Possible solutions are also mentioned in this chapter. On the micro-level, the conclusion draws on the case studies to summarise best practices by activists, as well as shortfalls in activists’ efforts at norm persuasion. The conclusion will lastly draw the reader’s attention to prospects for further research.

Chapter 2

Political Consumerism and the Norm Life-Cycle

2.1 Introduction

Following the conceptualisation of political consumerism and the political consumer in the previous chapter, this chapter will proceed with contextualising political consumer and its related actors within the process of norm change. This chapter will draw from a constructivist approach in outlining the “life-cycle of norms” as proposed by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998). The dynamics of and the processes undergone in the interaction between activists, consumers and multinational corporations (MNCs) will then be placed within the context of this norm life-cycle. Consideration will be given to the interaction between the activist or norm entrepreneur, the political consumer and the MNC in order to determine which stage in the norm life-cycle they have collectively reached.

In an era approaching the consolidation of globalisation and the diminishing power of the nation-state, activists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are increasing directing their grievances towards MNCs. Koenig-Archibugi (2004: 235) highlights that anti-corporate activism has grown into a mass movement where activists create networks at the same global scale as the MNCs that they target. This poses a significant challenge to MNCs, as activists and consumers aim to close the accountability gap between global civil society and MNCs, and in turn, try to change values and accepted standards of behaviour.

The process of interaction and dialogue between the activist and MNC is initiated by the activist and sustained by political consumerism in three stages, namely awareness, advocacy and activism. The first stage (awareness) is the process whereby the activist creates, frames or selects a particular issue or norm to put on the agenda. The second stage (advocacy), is the process whereby the activist promotes the norm and lastly, activism, is the implementation of norm change or the execution of the agenda.

2.2 The Life-Cycle of Norms

Constructivists' thoughts about norms and ideas involved in the shaping of international actors' decisions and behaviour are increasingly challenging "dominant state-centric paradigms" that focus on material power (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 887). Therefore, it is important to investigate the phenomenon of transnational consumer behaviour. Such an investigation will establish how these movements manage to challenge norms and ideas that value material power, by trying to initiate norm change through shifting attention to norms and ideas that value non-material power, such as social responsibility, citizenship and identity. Norm shifts are to the ideational theorist what changes in the balance of power are to the realist (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 894).

This study proposes that the movement of political consumerism has to evolve through two norm life-cycles. The first cycle would entail the process whereby activists have to persuade consumers to internalise the norm of socially responsible purchasing behaviour. Once that is achieved, a second life-cycle commences where activists, alongside political consumers, start to persuade capitalist agents such as MNCs to internalise new norms of behaviour within the capitalist system.

The definition of a norm is a "standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity" (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 891) or "collective expectations about proper behaviour for a given identity" (Payne, 2001: 37). Within the capitalist identity, accepted behaviour constitutes the pursuit of wealth by the individual, or the guarantee of freedom to pursue individual interests. Activists and political consumers are working towards challenging, and even changing, the accepted appropriate behaviour of capitalist agents. Through their campaigns and consumption practices they try to introduce new values into the system; values such as collective responsibility for the greater societal good.

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 891) outline the different categories in which norms could be placed. These include regulative norms, which maintain order; constitutive norms which create new actors and interests; and evaluative or prescriptive norms which prescribe what is appropriate. Different consumer movements introduce either one or a collection of these types of norms. One could ascribe regulatory norms to the

radical activist who tries to change the rules and appropriate behaviour that maintain the global economic system, namely capitalism. Both the radical and pragmatist could be involved in introducing or changing constitutive norms. Both these types of activists aim to reinforce and strengthen the role that new actors (activists, consumers and MNCs) play in advancing particular interests. The introduction of evaluative or prescriptive norm change could be attributed to the pragmatist activist. These activists wish to instil the values of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as appropriate behaviour for capitalist agents, such as the MNC.

Whether a particular norm is “good” or “bad” is highly subjective, since it depends on the perceptions, beliefs and identity of those who promote the norm. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 889) question how ideas about justice and good are shaped and determined. Agents, who translate ideas into normative structures, drive collective expectations about proper behaviour (Payne, 2001: 38).

Boli and Thomas (1998) (cited in Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 907) highlight five principles that are central to global culture and identity. These are universalism, individualism, voluntaristic authority, rational progress and global citizenship. Within the context of these five principles, certain social phenomena and norms are more likely to draw attention and concern than others. These include prevention of bodily harm, the protection of vulnerable or innocent groups (such as the disadvantaged, women and children), the promotion of equality of opportunity and ideas of human dignity. Judging by current and successful norm-related campaigns from the past, such as the campaign to ban landmines, the anti-apartheid movement, the abolition movement, and the suffragettes, norm entrepreneurs who focus on these issues are more likely to succeed in effecting norm change and behaviour. The principles underlying these issues and violations transcend cultural and political contexts.

However, there is no good theory to explain the persuasiveness of a particular normative claim over others, nor the specific conditions under which specific ideas are selected (Payne, 2001: 38). By establishing a clear causal link between the cause and effect, norm entrepreneurs are more likely to reach their target audience. For example, there is a direct causality between landmines and human bodily harm; whereas the link between unfair trade practices and poverty might not be so clear to a target audience.

There are no accurate instruments to measure norms. It is also a challenge for researchers to determine at which point a norm could be classified as an accepted norm. According to (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 891, 892), the best approach to study norms is by studying the “extensive trail of communication among actors”. This approach to studying norms, point to the process of persuasion which is central to determining the level of progress within the norm life-cycle. Bearing in mind that communication is a two-way process, norm entrepreneurs should be cautious of the likely reception and response of a target audience. Elgstrom (2000) believes that more attention should be given to the phenomenon of norm resistance. Norm resistance manifests itself in a negative response to the persuasion efforts of activists. Should the activists’ target audience emit a negative response, activists need to revise their persuasion strategy or engage in a process of norm negotiation. These negotiations occur in two forms, namely text (or policy) negotiations and implementation negotiations (Elgstrom, 2000: 457).

The study of communication should revolve around investigating the persuasive messages, dialogue and negotiations that attempt to change appropriate behaviour. Therefore, persuasion is the key mechanism for constructing, reconstructing and deconstructing accepted social ideas, systems and behaviour. The definition of persuasion, or rather moral persuasion, is the process that facilitates norm spread, which causes changes in preferences and interests that result in desirable behavioural change (Elgstrom, 2000: 459).

The framing of issues in a particular manner is essential to ensure successful persuasion (Payne, 2001: 38, 39). Framing is the provision of a “singular interpretation of a particular situation” which will serve to indicate the appropriate behaviour for that context (Payne, 2001: 43). If frames are related to accepted ideas, persuasion is more likely to be successful. Norm entrepreneurs often create frames to appeal to a specific target audience. Different norm entrepreneurs could use different frames to pursue the same issue or norm, which could result in the creation of counter-frames and even “frame contests” (Meyer, 1995 in Payne, 2001: 44; Bennett, 2003: 154).

In an effort to reconcile the different frames put forward by norm entrepreneurs, Payne refers to the creation of a “master frame” (2001: 51). Master frames might unite

activists in their efforts, but the creation of a more encompassing frame could also damage their efforts. Here Payne uses the example of “social justice” master frame for the case of labour standards. On the one hand, new norms to protect child labourers, could force children to seek alternative methods to survive, such as prostitution. This frame could therefore “hurt the very people that they (activists) were supposed to help”. Another example could be that the acceptance of better labour standards and higher wages for workers in developing countries could reduce investments in those countries (Payne, 2001: 51, 53). Another more successful “master frame” proposed by Blood (2000: 168) is that of “oppression”, which for example, united activists with different causes at the Seattle protests against the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

One can illustrate the conflict caused by the common use of “empowerment” as a master frame by comparing the Product RED Initiative and the Fair Trade Movement. This is an example of how a particular frame could be interpreted in different ways, lead to different persuasion strategies, as well as different outcomes concerning norms. Both these initiatives aim to assist Africans, therefore using a frame of “empowerment”. However, their methods differ in that Product RED advocates “empowerment through redistribution”, where Fair Trade calls for “self-empowerment”. Product RED is a label used to encourage MNCs to give a percentage of their profits to the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Product RED largely remains a fundraising campaign, rather than an empowerment initiative. At the RED launch in Davos in 2006, the creators of RED said that they “do not think that trade is bad; we are for labour issues; labour issues are very serious but six and a half thousand Africans dying is more serious” (Bono, 2007). RED therefore simplifies the solution to Africa’s social ills in searching for a quick-fix “charity” solution. No long-term investment is made to empower Africans to sustainably manage HIV/Aids and combat poverty.

This charity motivation serves the interests of the RED corporate partners, since it is clearly preferable for them that consumers purchase their products, rather than Fair Trade products produced by Africans in Africa. Bishop (2006) considers the possibility that this could in fact be detrimental to RED partners since conscience driven consumers might perceive RED as just another profit-making initiative. It is not

easy to convince conscious consumers who purchase Fair Trade products and other ethically produced products that the capitalist profit motive is the best way to make a difference in Africa.

Payne sees framing as the first stage of the norm life-cycle, since the frame provides the context within which the process of persuasion will commence. This chapter will provide, as a point of departure, a summary of Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) analytical framework for the study of norm dynamics. They propose that "norms evolve in a patterned life cycle". In this life cycle, actors engage in "strategic social construction" where actors "reconfigure preferences, identities or social context" (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 888). This life cycle has three phases. The first is norm emergence, second, norm acceptance and third, norm internalisation.

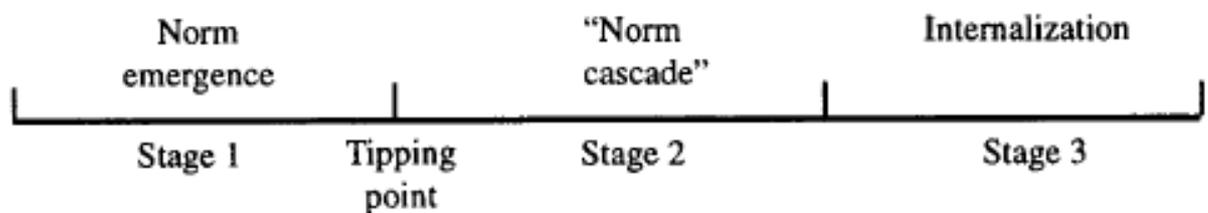


Figure 1: The Norm Life-Cycle

(Source: Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 896)

2.2.1 The First Phase: Norm Emergence

The first phase entails the process of persuasion by norm entrepreneurs. We could refer to norm entrepreneurs as “meaning architects” or “meaning managers”. Norm entrepreneurs aim to convince a large group of actors or individuals to embrace a proposed norm. Norm entrepreneurs therefore need to get the norms that they advocate on the agenda of major actors. To achieve this, activists need to convince the major actors or decision makers that it is in their own interests to adopt the proposed norm or persuade them of the “moral superiority” of the norm (Elgstrom, 2000: 460).

They do so by framing and even “dramatising” an issue. Norms usually emerge in a “contested normative space where they must compete with existing norms”. In the context of this study, emerging norms are challenging the existing normative system of global capitalism. A new norm therefore emerges “within the standards of appropriateness which are defined by prior norms” and activists therefore have to make “persuasive connections between existing norms and emerging norms”. For example, this could entail using capitalism, through an actor that participates in capitalism (the consumer), to either fight capitalism or transform it. The promotion of new norms is therefore challenging, since it has to question already existing “standards of appropriateness”, yet cannot deviate too far from existing norms (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 897, 898, 908). Pollay (1986 in Golding and Peattie, 2005: 157) questions whether marketing strategies aimed at transforming consumers into political consumers truly influence society’s values, or whether it is merely acts as a mirror to reflect consumers’ self-image.

Several factors could motivate norm entrepreneurs (and norm conformists) to believe in a particular norm. These include empathy, altruism, ideational commitment and religion (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 898). Empathy entails the interest in other’s welfare; altruism entails the entrepreneur to take actions that will benefit others regardless whether those actions could affect the well-being of the entrepreneur. Ideational commitment is seen as the main motivation behind norm entrepreneurs and activists’ actions, where their actions are rooted in their own values and beliefs. Therefore, the possible motivations of consumers need to be taken into account when a norm entrepreneur attempts to frame a particular issue or norm.

Strengthening frames would entail having the support of a larger institutional structure. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 896, 899) believe that it is crucial that norm entrepreneurs have access to organisational platforms to support their efforts. Norm entrepreneurs could either create their own international platform, through establishing their own Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) or making use of an already existing platform where they could make use of that organisation's networks, audiences and expertise.

Just before norm acceptance occurs in the second phase of the norm life-cycle, the norm reaches a "tipping point". The tipping point could be described as the "threshold of normative change" where norm entrepreneurs have persuaded a "critical mass" of actors (state or non-state actors) to recognise and adopt new norms (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 895, 901). Successful persuasion could be observed as a significant behaviour or rhetorical change in a key group (or "critical mass") of actors (Payne, 2001: 41). It is not clear what exactly a "critical mass" entails. A critical mass is not just dependent on the size, but also on the specific actors that adopt the norm; for example, the conforming of powerful actors could greatly contribute to the acceptance of the norm.

In the context of this study, a "critical mass" could entail either a number of large and powerful MNCs or a large group of wealthy consumers who have considerable purchasing power. An example of a critical mass could be American fast food consumers. It is estimated that in 2007, the popular American fast food chain, McDonalds, sold meals to 27 million people per day in the United States alone. Other statistics indicate that one in four Americans consume McDonalds every year (Business Week, 2007). Following the release of the documentary "Supersize Me", in which McDonald's corporate and unhealthy food practices were criticised, McDonalds was compelled to improve their corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices and to include healthy meal options on its menu. The producers of the documentary and anti-globalisation activists have managed to persuade a critical mass of American fast food consumers to think critically about the purchases that they make at McDonalds.

It is, however, not a given that all emerging norms will reach this tipping point or complete the norm life cycle. Whether or not a norm will reach the tipping point could

either be dependent on the quality of the norm, or the quality of the actors that are promoting the norm. Payne (2001: 41) argues that the effective use of levers by norm entrepreneurs could increase their chances of success. In a state-centric context, this could entail linking an issue to money, trade or prestige. However, within the non-state context of this study, leverage would be linking a norm to the attainment of purpose, morality and self-actualisation. Leverage in practice could be to make use of role models (be it celebrities or moral leaders) to entice target audiences to embrace a norm. Celebrities could also be used as platforms to launch a cause, where the celebrity's fan base could be an already attentive audience to commence the process of awareness creation. In addition, popular culture is already a part of life-style politics and identity (Street, 2002: 437, 440), which makes celebrities effective channels through which to communicate political awareness.

Once a norm has established a "bureaucratic presence", the process of socialisation could commence (Elgstrom, 2000: 460). A bureaucratic presence entails the point where activists have managed to put the issue or norm on the agenda of international organisations for consideration. In the case of norm change in a non-state context, this presence could perhaps be described as a "cultural presence" amongst consumers, or a "corporate presence" amongst the targeted MNCs.

2.2.2 The Second Phase: Norm Cascade and Socialisation

The second phase of the norm life-cycle entails a socialisation process whereby norm-conforming actors exert pressure on the rest of the population to conform and marginalise those who do not conform. In the case of multinational corporations (MNCs), this marginalisation could entail the loss of profit and damage to brand image. Actors are therefore enticed to conform in order to enhance their own self-esteem and image. Numerous ways exist to enhance the socialisation process. For example, by ridiculing those who do not conform, peer pressure, the emulation of heroes or role models and praise for behaviour that conforms to the norm (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 902, 903).

In some cases, the pressure might be so intense, that actors could make false statements or token gestures in order to avoid judgment by others. Coercive

compliance does however not reflect authentic persuasion or legitimacy (Payne, 2001: 41, 42). In the case of the MNC, this could mean the adoption of corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies, simply for the sake of conforming and avoiding marginalisation, or in the case of the consumer, to haphazardly make ethical purchases just to gain acceptance from their peers and to be fashionable.

Elgstrom (2000: 461) reminds us that the process of norm negotiations and persuasion does not end once the norm has been accepted or approved. A second round of norm negotiations then commence where activists, alongside the norm conformists, work towards solidifying and stipulating the guidelines for the universal acceptance and implementation of the norm.

2.2.3 The Third Phase: Norm Internalisation

The third phase, norm internalisation, is when the norm reaches a stage where it is no longer contested and is accepted as a given. At this stage behaviour according to the norm is no longer questioned (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 904). For example, in the case of establishing and accepting new norms in relation to corporate accountability, a prelude to internalisation could be when governments, international organisations, NGOs, activists and corporations collectively establish mandatory international regulations. This has been attempted in the past, but without success.

Such initiatives include (but never adopted), the establishment of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC) and a code of conduct for MNCs in 1978. Others include the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which issued the Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises in 1977. Koenig-Archibugi (2004: 247, 249) rightly indicates that the strong opposition of MNCs has managed to make codes like these ineffective, preventing norm internalisation from taking place. All that was achieved is the acceptance of a practice of voluntary self-regulation by MNCs.

This chapter will now proceed with providing an outline of how activists or norm entrepreneurs pursue norm change in practice. This practical process falls within the theoretical framework of the norm life-cycle, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Firstly, awareness of certain issues is created, which is the stage where norm emergence occur. Following the creation of awareness, there is a period of advocacy. Advocacy is the process just before and after the “tipping point” where other actors are recruited to participate in the activism phase. Following the advocacy phase, the process of activism occurs, for example, when boycotts and buycotts are being implemented. Should the activism phase be successful, the new norm could possibly reach the point where norm internalisation takes place.

1: Activist-Consumer Cycle		2: Consumer-MNC Cycle	
Agenda-setting Framing	EMERGENCE	AWARENESS	Agenda-setting Framing
Persuasion <i>negotiation</i> ↓ ↑ <i>response</i> Target Audience		ADVOCACY	Persuasion <i>negotiation</i> ↓ ↑ <i>response</i> Target Audience
Reactive			Buycott
Proactive			Boycott
Critical Mass TIPPING POINT ↓ Cascade / Socialisation	ACCEPTANCE		Critical Mass TIPPING POINT ↓ Cascade / Socialisation
			↓ <i>negotiation</i> ↑ <i>response</i>
Ethical purchasing behaviour	INTERNALISATION	ACTIVISM	Institutionalised enforceable accountability mechanisms

Figure 2: Political Consumerism's Two Norm Life-Cycles

2.3 Awareness: Tactics Used to Create an Agenda

Before the activist can embark on any sort of activism, it needs to create awareness or raise consciousness about a selected issue. With the selection of a social issue and creating an agenda or awareness of a specific cause, one has to pose the question which issues are considered as “shameful”? Which issues or violations are more shameful than others and which issues will generate sufficient interest and compassion from political consumers? Ultimately, it is the norm entrepreneurs who decide on which issues and norms to pursue, but then again they have to base their decisions on which issues are most likely to touch the political consumer in such a way that it will support the activist’s cause and give norm change a viable chance at succeeding. Issues which are more likely to draw the attention of consumers are issues that are widely recognised and newsworthy. Such issue can be connected to a range of lifestyle concerns, such as environmental quality, human suffering or corruption and inequality (Bennett, 2003: 153). These include violations that cause physical harm to the human body, the violation of fundamental freedoms, the reckless dominance of capitalism and self-interest, violations that are contrary to religious principles. Furthermore, the conversion of consumers into political consumers may be attained through equating consumption to murder (such as the consumption of “blood diamonds”) as well as big disasters (natural or others) and scandals.

Physical harm or destruction of the human body is more likely to touch a nerve with consumers than an issue such as poverty. Winston (2002:84) points out that the majority of people would not like to consume products such as diamonds, if it were associated with amputated limbs. On the other hand, consumers are not likely to stop consuming a luxury product such as diamonds just because it is seen as gluttonous in comparison to people not being able to afford food. Destruction of the human body is also a more intrusive issue compared to the anti-fur campaign which revolves around harm to animals.

Another issue that has received consumers’ attention and action throughout history is products that are produced under abusive labour conditions. Labour issues such as slavery and sweatshops are human rights violations and take away the workers’ personal freedom. In a global society where liberal democracy is highly valued and

widely accepted, the denial of personal freedom is an issue that would draw the attention of global citizens who have themselves embraced the right to freedom.

Micheletti (2007) believes that the negative effects of capitalism could be a moral force and could contribute to mobilising consumers. Not only is capitalism the cause of many social ills, it is also the vehicle through which activists and political consumers seek to transform the guardians of capitalism – the MNC. Consumers, as capitalist entities, could hold MNCs accountable to the principles of capitalism, one of which views labour as a commodity which should be purchased at the market price. Slave labour and the existence of sweatshops are therefore contrary to the principles of capitalism, a system that is essential to the survival of MNCs. In addition, self-interest in a competitive capitalist system is also a powerful force to make an issue an agenda item. For example, during the 1960s and 1970s, North America experienced a rise in unemployment caused by textile and other factories moving to low-wage developing countries.

Another method that activists use to gain the attention of consumers in order to communicate their message is to “create inconsistencies between an audience’s beliefs and its actions”. Derville (2005: 53, 532) refers to this as “using messages that will resonate with the rationale people use to make decisions”. Creating an appropriate frame will serve as a point of reference for the consumer and will streamline the communication process between the activists and its target audience.

2.4 Advocacy: Tactics Used to Promote the Agenda

2.4.1 Lobbying the Consumer

Before activists are able to execute their agendas, they need to recruit foot soldiers (consumers) during the “first norm cycle” that will assist the activist during the “second norm cycle”. Recruiting consumers is part of the “first norm cycle” whereby activists have to instil norm acceptance amongst consumers. Activists use two approaches to gain the participation of consumers towards a cause. The first approach is a proactive approach where activists guilt or shame consumers into not purchasing a certain product; highlighting that consumers are causing the suffering of others by supporting a certain brand or product. Here activists argue that it is not just MNCs but

also the consumer who is responsible for the nature of consumption and resulting social evils (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004: 698). The second is a reactive approach, where the activists use the “vanity” and brand consciousness of consumers by framing certain products as fashionable (Refer to Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 for examples of these approaches). In addition to effect social change, activists believe that it is their duty to awake the “unaware, automatic and unthinking” consumer. By doing so, activists can utilise the awakened consumer to achieve their goals.

Activists apply the proactive and reactive methods by targeting brands and labels. Activists appeal to consumers to question the brands and labels that they so ignorantly conform to and to explore and understand the meaning behind brands and labels. The concept of branding is not a new idea. In 1787 the Anti-Slavery Society designed a seal for the organisation, which depicted an African in chains with the motto “Am I not a Man and a Brother” written below. At first, the seal was produced as a “tie-in product”, something which people could use to identify themselves as supporters of the cause. Later on these products included bracelets, ornamental hairpins and other accessories (Katz-Hyman, 2008: 220). This initiative could be related to the present-day White Band bracelet promoted by the Make Poverty History campaign. The White Band Campaign is a worldwide symbol where people show their commitment to ending poverty by purchasing and wearing the white bracelet. This has become a fashion symbol with celebrities, actors, supermodels and others who have participated in poster campaigns showing these celebrities wearing the White Band.

The first approach, the proactive approach, is when activists damage the brand or image of MNCs in the hope that the consumer would reject or lose interest in that brand. One of the most notorious examples of a reactive approach is the Nike sweatshop email, created by Jonah Peretti. Nike provided consumers with the opportunity to have customised shoes made, with individual names or words printed on the shoes. Peretti ordered a pair of shoes with the word “sweatshop” printed on them. Nike refused the request and Peretti circulated the email communication with Nike. The email soon spread across the world and filtered into the mainstream media.

Corporations who have succeeded in branding themselves with a certain image or reputation are more vulnerable to revealing research and reports that question their

brand and image. Activists could “hold a corporate logo hostage”, by persuading consumers that that label or brand does not accommodate their identity as responsible enlightened citizens (Bennett 2003: 152). Consumers, who mostly tend to subscribe to the branding culture, could be mobilised by putting that brand name into question. Consumers who compete against each other to obtain the most fashionable brands, often prides themselves on having achieved ownership of that brand and to be called “fashionable” by their peers. However, when the reputation of that brand deteriorates, the consumer is likely to view the purchase of that product as not in his or her interest in the quest to become fashionable; or as Bennett and Lagos (2007: 199) state, the brand has “lost its cool”.

The activists could then step in and sell their own brands by convincing the brand conscious consumer that this new brand (for example Fair Trade labels), is fashionable. This is a more reactive approach to mobilising consumers to support the activist agenda. With the proactive approach, consumers therefore stop purchasing a certain product, not because they want to make a statement, but because they cannot make a statement by consuming that product. Put differently, it is not so much that the consumer has an interest in the particular social cause, but because it has lost interest in the product because of the damage to its brand.

Activists often use “life-style” brands to drive “logo campaigns” by creating a political relationship between brands and consumers (Bennett and Lagos, 2007: 194). The activists could either create a negative or positive relationship between brands and consumers. The negative relationship falls within the category of the proactive approach, where the positive relationship forms part of the reactive approach. Logo campaigns are an easy way to create norm acceptance amongst consumers, since branded political communication could use the advertising work that was already done by the companies. In addition, by using logo campaigns activists could avoid conventional communication which could hamper communication with consumers who seek to avoid unpleasant political intrusions in their private lives (Bennett and Lagos, 2007: 203).

The second approach used by the activist, the reactive approach, is what Micheletti (2007: 126) refers to as “moral-suasion”. This entails highlighting the common

humanity and universal responsibility of all people towards each other. This also includes bridging the distance between the consumer and the parties affected by the injustices caused by MNCs. Activists try to convince consumers that they are depended on others, such as the sweatshop workers who provide them with the products that they consume every day. Should the consumer not contribute to the well-being of these distant parties, then it will ultimately affect their own consumption. The activist tries to illustrate that the consumer and the sweatshop worker or conflict diamond miner, are closer and more connected than they would like to believe. Although there is a moral element to this approach, the underlying factor of self-interest comes into play. Micheletti (2007: 134) quotes political activist Saul Alinsky who pointed out: “The only time that you stand up for moral indignation is when it serves your purpose”.

2.4.2 Methods through Which Consumer Power is Exercised

Friedman (1996) contrasts two forms of consumer activism, namely the boycott and the “buycott”, where the former is a negative behavioural model for consumer activism and the latter, a positive model. Boycotts place corporations on a “black list” whereas buycotts places corporations on a “white list” (refer to p.14 for further explanation).

The boycott method could be tracked back to the Anti-Slavery movement. In the United States, the 1830s saw the development of “free-produce” stores, which only sold products that were not produced by slave labour. Some of these free-produce products were labelled with the Anti-Slavery Society’s seal. These stores were not only a channel through which consumers could participate in the abolition campaign, but it was also an entrepreneurial initiative for investors. These retailers in effect benefitted from the buycott strategy, since they were able to sell the products that consumers were buycotting. Katz-Hyman (2008: 221) states that it is not quite clear why businesspersons and shop-owners would embark on running free-produce stores, considering the difficulties in obtaining slave-free produce. In addition, should the activists achieve their goal and have slavery abolished - the store would no longer be relevant. Perhaps retailers opted for a compromise where it would rather receive the consumers’ favour and deal with some of the operational difficulties, instead of being

boycotted and shunned while not having the operational difficulties of sourcing free-produce.

Friedman (1996: 444) places boycotts into different categories. This study makes a distinction could be made between beneficiary boycotts and conscience boycotts. A beneficiary boycott refers to an initiative where the sponsors and beneficiaries are from the same constituency. A conscience boycott is where the sponsors and the beneficiary are not from the same constituency. An example of a beneficiary boycott is when trade unions call for the purchase of union-labelled products. An initiative where environmental activists call for a boycott of products that are ozone-friendly is an example of a conscience boycott.

A second distinction that can be made is between single-target boycotts and multiple-target boycotts. A multiple-target boycott is when consumers are encouraged to purchase products or services from several corporations that comply with the activists' requirements. An example would be the purchase of cosmetics from any company that do not test their products on animals. A single-target boycott is however less common and sees consumers buying a single product from a one specific company.

This study would also like to highlight the distinction between boycotts where consumers reward corporations for their policies and boycotts where consumers reward corporations for their charitable contributions. Put differently, it is the distinction between corporations who "do the right thing" and corporations that "give extra".

Historically, the application of political consumerism was mostly to promote self-centered or own interests (Micheletti and Stolle, 2008: 751). The purpose of the boycott has seen a transformation from aiming to benefit the consumer (by boycotting high prices or calling for better quality goods), to become more "other-orientated" in promoting the greater societal good.

In light of corporations' desire to promote its image, boycotts rather than boycotts, are more desirable to corporations. Although boycotts are more attractive for corporations, Friedman (1996: 450) indicates that boycotts could be less attractive for activists groups, given the protest character of such groups. Micheletti and Stolle (2008: 751)

disagree, saying that activists are increasingly more hesitant to use boycotts, because of its potential negative effects, such as job-losses, shifting of operations to other countries and a decline in investment.

Boycott campaigners make use of different methods to promote the boycott. These include public pleas, labelling schemes, shopping guides (such as the “Shopping for a Better World” publications) and consumer reports. The labelling of products requires that the product subscribe to activists’ criteria, and therefore a good relationship between the activist group and the company (Micheletti and Stole, 2008: 752). This opens avenues for cooperation between different actors within the field of sustainable development. Boycotts are therefore potentially more productive than boycotts.

2.4.3 Lobbying the Multinational Corporation

In addition to lobbying consumers during the “first norm cycle”, activists (through consumers) also lobby multinational corporations (MNCs) during the “second norm cycle”. As mentioned, activists are increasingly directing their advocacy towards MNCs, who are perceived as being the actors who violate the social agenda, as well as the actors who have the power to change norms and behaviour in the global society. Winston (2002) highlights the reason for engagement with MNCs, namely, the power shift from nation-states to MNCs, the lack of accountability by MNCs and a mounting anti-corporate-globalisation movement. Winston believes that the period of shifting attention to MNCs commenced in the 1970s, where before that time, the only obligation of the MNC was to generate profit. The 1970s saw the start of a transformation of social structures and identity processes associated with economic globalisation, a period which could be described as “late” or “post” modern society (Bennett, 2003: 146).

Activists use several methods to lobby and pressurise MNCs to take up their agendas. These methods could be placed in two categories, ascribed to two different types of activists; those who engage (the pragmatists) and those who confront (the radicals) (Winston, 2002: 71, 72). The type of methods used will therefore depend on the type of activist. Engagers believe in conducting a dialogue with MNCs in an effort to make MNCs allies in promoting the activists’ cause. The confronters on the other hand,

believe in stigmatising and shaming MNCs and threaten their business interests in the case of non-compliance. An example that Winston (2002:81) highlights, is the magazine “Multinational Monitor” which annually publishes a list of the Ten Worst Corporations¹.

Winston (2002: 77, 86) outlines these tactics in an engagement to confrontation spectrum. The different degrees of activists’ methods include (from engagement to confrontation), dialogue, advocacy, the filing of shareholder resolutions, boycotts, moral shaming, calls for boycotts, advocacy of government-imposed regulations and litigation. Winston warns that selecting the appropriate tactic would depend on the nature and origin of the MNC, stating that confrontation, protest and public accusations are forms of “Western behaviour”, where Asian culture places more value on interpersonal relations and skilful actions that will maintain social harmony.

Activists also make use of academic or expert opinion and research to scientifically lobby shareholders in companies; threatening shareholders with the damaging effects that these opinions could have on their shares, and in due course, their financial interests. Ultimately, directors of companies are accountable to shareholders and not to the public, since the shareholders delegate authority to the directors. Koenig-Archibugi, (2004: 236, 237) does, however, point out that recent times has seen the development of internal accountability and external accountability dynamics in MNCs. Internal accountability being the shareholders and external accountability being to the wider group of people affected by the MNCs’ actions and decisions. Internal accountability remains stronger than external accountability, which is exactly what activists are attempting to change.

One method to achieve the accountability of MNCs (and states) to civil society is through sanctions. This would entail political consumers boycotting the products or services of the MNC or a particular country. Political consumers can however not act on their own, since they require relevant information from activists and watchdogs (Koenig-Archibugi, 2004: 238).

¹ Available online at: <http://www.essential.org>

2.4.4 Communication and Target Audiences

Communication forms an essential part of persuading actors to accept a new norm or effect norm change. Micheletti (2007: 126-130) lists several methods through which anti-slavery activists in the 18th and 19th centuries communicated their messages to consumers and other role-players in society. These include distributing pamphlets, giving public lectures, street theatre, giving popular tunes anti-slavery lyrics, petitioning governments, engaging in civil disobedience, and most importantly, engaging the retail market. The retail market is essentially the arena that connects the producer and the consumer. Another method used was the hosting of dramatic events such as the act by an anti-slavery activist, William Lloyd Garrison, who publically burned the American constitution at a rally and called on people to boycott voting, because the constitution did not guarantee the freedom of everyone (Micheletti, 2007: 127). Here, comparisons could be drawn between dramatic events like these and events such as the G8 protests and the “Battle in Seattle” demonstrations against the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Although it is almost needless to list all the methods through which the activists could communicate their messages today, it illustrates the vast communication channels available to the activists and the potential amount of people they could reach. The activists could communicate their message and appeal through many creative avenues, primarily based on the use of the internet. These include websites, emails, online video clips illustrating the suffering of people affected by an MNC, online pop-ups, online discussion forums, newsletters, toolkits for groups who would like to mobilise their own communities for the cause, to mention just a few. The internet is making it easy for anyone to participate in advocacy and activism, such as the availability of template letters and lists where people can voice their opinion and support a cause through a click of a button.

The media and journalists are increasingly consulting activists’ websites and using them as authoritative and reportable sources (Blood, 2000: 161). However, although the internet could be a very effective way to communicate activists’ messages, it could also create a bad reputation for activists in general. Blood believes that a new kind of activist group is emerging through the internet; a group that is more radical and overtly

anti-capitalist. These activists also use more dubious methods of cyber-communication and activism, such as “rumour emails”, e-terrorism and e-warfare. E-terrorism and e-warfare entails “hacking” into target companies’ websites, creating viruses to block consumers’ access to those websites and overall making target companies’ operations difficult (2000: 163). In doing so, radical activists jeopardise the work and reputation of the pragmatist activists.

Radical activists tend to use militant communication tactics such as rancorous rhetoric that sometimes provoke violent actions, such as harassment, sabotage and vandalism against the activists’ targets. Pragmatists, however, soften their demands by appealing to consumers to “take things one step at a time”, since taking on a new identity are “big steps for people to take” (Derville, 2005: 529, 531).

To summarise the process of communication between activists and consumers, one could refer to the mechanisms of human agency as outlined by Bennett (2003: 149). These are brokerage, which creates social links; diffusion, which is the transfer of information across those links; and attribution of similarity, which entails creating a sense of mutual identification amongst activists and consumers.

Activists have at least three audience groups that are particularly susceptible to the activists’ message, namely women, wealthy habitual shoppers and students. Firstly, women, either high-end fashion-conscious professionals or middle-class housewives, are accepted to be the largest group of consumers. The abolition activists also targeted women as a potentially powerful consumer audience. This campaign came at a time when women were eager to promote their own political agency and fight against their own oppression (Micheletti, 2007: 128). Therefore, women could, more than men, identify more with the plight of the slave. In addition, women are the homemakers and caregivers and take responsibility for most of the shopping duties. Women were therefore a core group that successfully contributed to the abolition of slavery through political consumerism, through either boycotts or buycotts. The anti-slavery activists also targeted religious people challenging their religious principles and equating abolition with redemption.

The second target group is students. Advocacy, campaigning and protests are part of student culture on university campuses. Students are in general notorious for demonstrations, protests and strikes. The most fashion-conscious sector of society is the youth, who could play a significant role in creating new consumption practices. Here one could refer to the Fair Trade coffee drives at campuses at in the United States. Thirdly, there are the wealthy habitual shoppers who have extra money to spare and who can afford to engage in the luxury of political consumption.

2.5 Activism: Tactics Used to Execute the Agenda

The activism phase commences during the latter part of the norm cascading phase. The activism phase aims to solidify and increase the number of norm conformists during the norm cascade or socialisation process. The activists, political consumers and other converted norm conformists use tactics such as boycotting and boycotting to recruit as many actors as necessary in order to start the process of norm implementation negotiations. The activism phase then aims to move the norm from the second phase in the norm life-cycle (cascade) to the third phase (norm internalisation). The successful internalisation of a norm would mean that norm implementation negotiations were successful and that an encompassing set of enforceable regulations to protect the new norm were put in place.

At present, there exist no international legal regulations that are binding on MNCs' behaviour and conduct pertaining to human rights and other obligations (Winston, 2002: 72). The reason why this is the case, could perhaps be ascribed to the nature of the global capitalist economy, where too much regulation could cause countries with stringent regulation to lose investors. Activists have resorted to promoting the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) amongst MNCs, in the hope of moving as close as possible to the stage of norm internalisation. This is a sign that norm internalisation has not yet taken place with regards to fairer corporate practices. CSR remains a voluntary practice and not a given.

CSR is a voluntary resolution by MNCs to implement reforms or activities to conduct themselves in a responsible manner when doing business and taking to heart their part in the execution of the activists' agendas. One could ask the question, why would the

profit-driven MNC voluntary implement CSR? Perhaps it would be incorrect to refer to CSR as “voluntary”. It is at this point where the political consumer enters the process. After the activists have placed an issue on the agenda and advocated the issue with the MNC, the activist then calls on its reinforcements, the consumer contingent. The consumers assist in the battle through placing further pressure on the MNCs either through pressure (making use of the boycott) or positive persuasion (the boycott).

Additionally, consumers now take over from the activist by transforming into consumer-activists, in ensuring the sustained implementation of CSR by MNCs. As stakeholders in the business of MNCs, the consumers participate by transforming the objective of MNCs from achieving a bottom line of profit to a triple bottom line consisting of the financial account, the environmental account and the social account.

Winston (2002: 76, 77) reminds us that CSR is not the only strategy to execute the social agenda. Where the engagers (pragmatists) make use of CSR, the confronters (radicals) believe in “economic coercion through binding legal obligation”. The confronting activists are working towards compelling governments to enact, which Winston refers to as, Enforceable International Legal Standards (EILS), which will compel MNCs to be accountable, rather than merely conducting a public relations exercise through CSR. The confronting activists believe that CSR is often a cover to avoid strict regulations and legal action. In addition, without proper monitoring, MNCs could get away without fully implementing the stipulated principles thereof.

One initiative was launched at the Davos Economic Forum in 1999 with the aim of creating a universal standard for the conduct of MNCs. This initiative was called the Global Compact (GC) Partnership and Guidelines for Cooperation. Then Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) Kofi Annan stated that the GC is a step towards preventing a “popular backlash against corporate globalisation”, should the corporate world not respect and promote human rights. Several activists and NGOs have however criticized the GC for its lack of verification and enforcement mechanisms (Winston (2002: 78). Koenig-Archibugi (2004: 255) argues that compacts like these merely create “shared understandings” instead of effective accountability mechanisms with appropriate enforcement instruments.

Another method used by activists and MNCs to ensure the implementation of a social agenda, is the use of labelling schemes. Micheletti (2007: 135) lists some of the types of labels that are used on products to ensure that the production of the product meets the requirements set by the activist. Some of these include eco-labels, anti-animal cruelty labels, organic labels, Fair Trade labels and marine and forest stewardship labels. Once again, the adherence to labelling schemes by MNCs, are not compulsory or accepted as an uncontested practice. This is evidence that norm internalisation has not yet taken place with regards to capitalist behaviour that should take undisputed responsibility for the greater societal good.

Chapter 3

The Buycott:

The Fair Trade Movement

3.1 Introduction

This chapter takes an in-depth look at political consumerism's "buycott" strategy as a method of persuasion by norm entrepreneurs (refer to p. 14). The Fair Trade Movement will be utilised to position this strategy within the life-cycle of norms and to determine best practices. Consideration will also be given to the challenges associated with this strategy.

Note that although there are several Fair Trade products on the market, such as bananas, tea, honey sugar and rice; this case study will make specific reference to fairly traded coffee. Coffee is the world's top fairly traded product, representing about 66% of all Fair Trade sales (McDonagh, 2002: 654; Reynolds, 2002: 412). This case study was selected since it specifically targets the establishment of new norms to make capitalism and trade more socially responsible, by addressing the purchasing practices of multinational corporations (MNCs) and consumers.

Firstly, this chapter will explore the concept of Fair Trade, after which a brief historical overview of the movement will be provided. Thereafter, the Fair Trade movement will be positioned within the norm life-cycle, in order to identify the different stages in the norm life-cycle that Fair Trade has been able to reach. The analysis will indicate that Fair Trade has moved through the first stage of norm emergence and that it has managed to reach a point of norm acceptance. The socialisation phase is, however, slow as will be indicated in this chapter; which means that Fair Trade has not yet reached the norm internalisation stage.

This chapter will conclude by outlining several challenges that are hampering Fair Trade's progress within the norm life-cycle. Finally, some suggestions will be made on how these challenges could be addressed.

3.2 Defining Fair Trade

The Fair Trade movement could be conceptualised as a non-profit, transnational advocacy network (Levi and Linton, 2003: 419). Alternative Trade Organisations (ATOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) made the term “Fair Trade” prominent. The term emphasises the unfairness of the current trade regime (Bird and Hughes, 1997: 159). Literature on Fair Trade provides several definitions for Fair Trade. Activists divide these into two categories, namely the pragmatists’ definition and the radicals’ definition (Golding, 2009: 1). The pragmatists aim to support disempowered producers, where the radicals want Fair Trade to serve as an alternative to both free trade and protectionism, as well as to realise the total transformation of conventional international trade (Lyon, 2006: 454). Fair Trade could perhaps be best summarised as a new norm aiming to change the concept of the “invisible hand” to working “hand in hand” within the world economy (European Fair Trade Association, 2001: 1).

The European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) defines Fair Trade as “an alternative approach to conventional trade, which aims to alleviate poverty in the Southern hemisphere” by providing disadvantaged producers access to Northern markets (Loureiro and Lotade, 2005: 130). Lyon (2006: 452) defines Fair Trade as “a form of alternative trade that seeks to improve the position of disempowered producers by ensuring that they are paid fair prices for their goods and that those financial benefits are used to promote sustainable development in their communities”. In order to achieve that, disempowered producers sell their produce at an “ethical premium” to consumers in developed countries (Bird and Hughes, 1997: 161). Another definition put forth by Golding and Peattie (2005: 155) is that Fair Trade “challenges the dominance of the consumer and investor interests, through the recognition of the producer as a key stakeholder”.

Fair Trade comprises several elements. These include purchasing goods directly from producers through long-term purchasing agreements, providing market information to the relevant parties, providing technical assistance and ensuring that producers meet labour, health and environmental standards (Bird and Hughes, 1997: 161). Fair Trade focuses on creating new North-South trade relationships, or new consumer-producer links (Raynolds, 2000: 297, 299), which seeks to “humanise” the trade process

through shortening the producer-consumer chain (Raynolds, 2002: 404). The establishment of these trade relationships have grown over fifty decades; developing from being simply “goodwill” selling to consolidated networks between producers, buyers and sellers.

3.3 History of the Fair Trade Movement

Lyon (2006: 454) traces the Fair Trade movement back to 1946 when the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in North America founded a Fair Trade handicraft retail outlet, Ten Thousand Villages. The Ten Thousand Villages project was initiated by a North American businesswoman who observed the poverty in Puerto Rico while she was travelling through the region in 1946. She decided to create market opportunities for the handicrafts of Puerto Ricans in North America. Initial sales were made out of the trunk of her car. The project has grown into a global organisation which allows consumers to purchase a variety of handicrafts online from disempowered artisans from several developing countries (Ten Thousand Villages, 2009).

Following this initiative, the 1950s saw the founding of alternative trade organisations in Europe. These include Twin Trading, Fair Trade Organisatie and SOS Wereld Handel. Raynolds (2000: 301) traces the beginning of the Fair Trade movement back to the 1960’s when human rights movements in Europe used Fair Trade as a “trade not aid” strategy.

In 1986 the Fair Trade coffee company Equal Exchange was established in the United States. The first Fair Trade consumer label, Max Havelaar, was created in the Netherlands in 1988. The creation of the Max Havelaar label was in response to the dire conditions facing Mexican coffee farmers. It worked with mainstream coffee roasters to connect them with disempowered coffee producers. The label formulated a set of criteria for companies that purchase, process and sell coffee. Companies would only be allowed to carry the Max Havelaar seal of approval if they adhere to the strict criteria. The Max Havelaar initiative proved that Fair Trade labelling is a viable concept, which encouraged other countries to establish their own Fair Trade

Associations (Micheletti, 2003: 96). This era also saw the creation of the Fair Trade labels, Fairtrade Mark and Transfair (Raynolds, 2002: 410).

In 1989, a group of alternative trade organisations joined together in forming the International Fair Trade Association (IFAT). Traidcraft, Oxfam, Christian Aid, World Development Movement and The New Consumer founded the Fair Trade Foundation (FTF) in 1992. Licensees pay 2% of retail value to the FTF for the use of the FTF mark (Bird and Hughes, 1997: 163). The establishment of other organisations followed, such as Transfair USA, which was created in 1996.

The Fair Trade Labelling Organisation (FLO) was formed in 1997 as an umbrella certification group. The FLO certifies several commodities, which include coffee, cocoa, tea, bananas, honey, sugar, rice and wine. Certification of Fair Trade products involves adhering to certain social, labour, health and environmental standards, as stipulated in the International Labour Organisation Conventions and the United Nations' Agenda 21. Products could also be labelled as organic or shade grown. By 2009, the FLO had 746 Fair Trade certified producer organisations in 58 producing countries, most of which are located in Latin America and the Caribbean (FLO, 2009).

3.4 Fair Trade Coffee

3.4.1 Putting Fair Trade Coffee on the Agenda

Coffee is the second highest traded commodity next to oil (Lyon, 2006: 457; Loureiro and Lotade, 2005: 130, Levi and Linton, 2003: 409). A volatile coffee market and fluctuating coffee price therefore has a global impact on several agents, be it producers, coffee roasters, distributors, retailers or consumers. The impetus for the creation (or promotion) of Fair Trade coffee is largely due to the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement in 1989. The agreement was created to address price stability in the coffee market, but it was dismantled in 1989. In 1993, the Association of Coffee Producing Countries (ACPC) proposed a “retention plan” aiming to convince producers to stall the release of their coffee beans into the international market. The aim of this approach was to control coffee prices by regulating supply. Their efforts were futile and the ACPC disbanded in 2002. In light of the failure of

these grand efforts, a last resort could be to use consumers to strategically use their purchasing power to regulate the market (Levi and Linton, 2003: 415).

The Cafédirect coffee brand was created in 1992 by a group of British ATOs, comprising Equal Exchange, Traidcraft, Oxfam Trading and TWIN Trading (Bird and Hughes, 1997: 163). The creation of Cafédirect was encouraged by the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement. The description given to Cafédirect is a medium-sized profit re-investment company, although it is often perceived as an NGO (Wright, 2004a: 666). The group works with 39 grower organisations across thirteen developing countries, benefitting more than 260,000 farmers and their communities (Cafédirect, 2009).

Cafédirect works with member ATOs and their volunteer lobbyists and by doing so, manages to reduce the costs of its promotional spending (Bird and Hughes, 1997: 165). By 1994, Cafédirect became the first Fair Trade coffee brand to have become widely available in supermarkets. In 2008, Cafédirect gained the rank of being the United Kingdom's fifth largest coffee brand (Cafédirect, 2009).

After a long campaign by Global Exchange, the popular franchise Starbucks agreed in 2000 to make Fair Trade coffee available in several of their stores (De Pelsmacker *et al*, 2005: 367). Starbucks' new commitment to CSR and Fair Trade has grown ever since. In 2009, Starbucks has entered into an agreement with the Government of Rwanda, which will see Starbucks supporting coffee producers in Rwanda and other areas in East Africa. The company will work through the Rwanda Farmer Support Centre (FSC) to increase the number of farmers supplying to Starbucks (Business Wire, 2009).

3.4.2 Advocating Fair Trade Coffee

Fair Trade coffee organisations have managed to transform coffee from being a “boring bulk commodity” into a fashionable specialty product that is “pre-packaged with lifestyle signifiers” (Raynolds, 2002: 413). Consumers are encouraged to purchase more than just coffee; they are encouraged to buy into “the idea of a fairer world”. According to an analysis of Fair Trade coffee advertisements conducted by Wright (2004a: 668), it was observed that consumers are persuaded to purchase Fair Trade coffee because it will allow them to discover and experience adventure in the unknown lands of the disadvantaged producers. It appeals to the “enlightened” global consumer’s “cultural capital”, which entails a love for travel and tourism.

Similar marketing or persuasion strategies occur in the “Product RED” brand initiative. The initiative gives MNCs the opportunity to manufacture special versions of their products which may use the RED label, providing that the companies give a percentage of the profit to Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). The creator of this brand initiative, the Irish musician Bono (2007), stated that in addition to raising funds, RED also tries to change perceptions of Africa by describing Africa as an opportunity, an adventure and not a burden. The Product RED Manifesto (Product RED, 2008) calls on consumers from the developed world to use their consumer power to make purchasing decisions that “can change the course of life and history on this planet” and at the same time becoming “good-looking Samaritans”. The RED creators also refer to the RED campaign as “making a different kind of fashion statement”. When Bono announced his RED initiative at the 2006 World Economic Forum in Davos, he stated, “it is sexy to want to change the world” (Dakss, 2006).

It is arguable whether RED really makes Africa, the continent, “sexy” to consumers. What it does, however, do is to make the action of *saving* Africa sexy. As Hintzen (2008: 80) argues, “profligate consumption becomes the means to Africa’s redemption and to the personal salvation of the consumers”. It reinforces a colonial stereotype that Africa needs to be saved, a task that is a continuation of the “white man’s burden”, or as Magubane (2008: 1) calls it, “the Red man’s burden”. Hintzen (2008: 77) supports O’Manique (2008) in proposing that RED is revealed as demand creation – a demand to feel altruistic, humane and philanthropic, as well as fashionable, with little effort.

The same applies to the marketing tactics of Fair Trade coffee and other products. It therefore legitimises and normalises colonial forms of capitalist surplus accumulation. Through the RED campaign, global capital is sustained by offering up Africa as a solution through the promise of its redemption; as well as to camouflage global inequality. (Hintzen, 2008: 82, 86).

In this context, the consumption of Fair Trade coffee “maintains a high level of personal consumption” (Wright, 2004a: 669). The problem with this approach to advocacy and persuasion is that the personal appeal of such a product would be eradicated should Fair Trade coffee enter the mainstream market. Seeing that activists rely on the existing premises that political consumerism is fashionable, it poses the risk of being unsustainable, considering that which is fashionable at a given time, can easily become out of fashion. This likely possibility could prevent norm internalisation from taking place. In effect, Fair Trade products commodify social consciousness where “the seemingly just consumer supplants the just citizen and social justice itself is commodified” (O’Manique, 2008: 1562).

3.5 Norm Emergence

The Fair Trade market is perceived by Lyon (2006: 452) as a “political construction emerging from a social struggle”. Alternative Trade Organisations (ATOs) and Fair Trade activists consider it their goal to “challenge the norms established in international markets by the neo-liberal paradigm” as well as to promote Fair Trade as an alternative to “the potential dependency inducing flows of aid and charity funds” (Bird and Hughes, 1997: 160). By transforming the notion of aid-giving through a “trade not aid” strategy, solidarity between consumers and producers could lead to the self-managed development of producer communities (Renard, 1999: 493; Reynolds, 2002: 411).

Initially, ATOs attempted to create a “parallel” system that would give disadvantaged producers access to the international market, rather than to reform conventional trading practices in its entirety (Levi and Linton, 2003: 415). Later on, it appears as if the aim of certain activists in the Fair Trade movement has shifted to a more radical dimension. In an interview conducted by Levi and Linton (2003: 419), the

Development Director of TransFair USA, it was stated that norm change was the organisation's primary goal, which would be achieved by making the Fair Trade model as "normal, unintentional, and universal as environmental responsibility is today". Fair Trade activists, therefore, serve a double purpose in that it offers a viable market product which uplifts disadvantaged consumers, as well as selling the norm that affluent consumers should incorporate global justice into their purchasing decisions (Levi and Linton, 2003: 419).

Fair Trade initiatives and organisations could be divided into three categories, namely the benign marketing agents, those that are a brand, and certification or verification organisations (Bird and Hughes, 1997: 161). The benign marketing organisations take the form of an Alternative Trading Organisation (ATO) and could have, for example, grown out of NGOs that works with producers in poor communities. This type of Fair Trade organisation assists producers from developing countries in gaining access to global markets.

Renard (1999: 497, 498), however, argues that the Fair Trade network cannot solely be based on the promoters (activists) ideological or ethical convictions, but that in order to be successful, the network should be based on "the convergence of various interests among the agents involved". These agents include the activists, producers, roasters, importers, distributors and consumers. All of these agents need to be convinced of the benefits involved in escaping market logic and that selling "ethics" is viable. These agents, therefore, need "to reach difficult compromises between ethical principles and the market" and "negotiate its niche in the market".

Raynolds (2002: 404, 405) uses actor-network theory to investigate how "individual and collective social actors ideologically and materially construct, maintain and transform commodity networks". She then continues to outline the "competing norms and mentalities deployed by key actors in negotiating constructions and network relations". In addition to a conventional political economy approach, three other factors should be analysed when investigating the free trade movement. These include the actors in the sphere of consumption, the symbolic and discursive aspects of commodity networks and the competing conventions that try to shape commodity networks. The different goals of norm entrepreneurs (such as the radical and

pragmatist activist), could damage the way in which commodity networks are moulded by new norms.

The most significant factor that prompted the rise of Fair Trade movements (and other social justice movements), is the erosion of states' trade regulatory capacity and new emerging local and global political spaces that transcend the nation-state (Raynolds (2000: 298). Raynolds (2002: 408, 411) believes that economic activity has developed a social dimension which contributes different rules, norms and conventions to commodity production and exchange. She highlights Murdoch's summary of five "conventions" that influences commodity consumption. These include the commercial convention of price, the domestic convention based on trust and tradition, the industrial convention based on efficiency and reliability, the public convention based on recognised brands and the civic convention based on the consideration of broader societal benefits (Murdoch *et al*, 2000: 114 cited in Raynolds, 2002: 408).

The civic convention in particular is emerging as a strong norm-creating factor where discourses of collective responsibility, global citizenship and the consideration of societal benefits come into play. The creation of new norms in consumption patterns receives institutional support from new industrial conventions that are focusing on formal standards, monitoring and certifications.

3.6 Norm Acceptance

The growth of the Fair Trade movement could be observed in three stages. The first stage entails the idea of "goodwill selling" where products are marketed and sold based on social solidarity. The second stage is a commercialisation phase where Fair Trade products are branded and sold through alternative outlets, as well as the mainstream market. Fair Trade produce is now moving into a third stage where major roasters, established coffee labels and distributors enter into partnerships with disadvantaged producers (Golding and Peattie, 2005: 156, 157).

3.6.1 Fair Trade and the Consumer

According to survey research conducted by Shaw and Clark (1999), Fair Trade is the most important ethical concern of consumers, since it encompassing a variety of social concerns such as labour rights and environmentalism. With the variety of specialty ethical product labels available, consumers often get confused, therefore it is important that activists differentiate between the different ethical offerings available on the market (McDonagh, 2002: 649; De Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2005: 382; Golding, 2009: 5; Levi and Linton, 2003: 426). Uninformed consumers could assume that organic products are ethical and that ethical (Free Trade) products are necessarily organic. Golding (2009: 3) recommends that activists need to consider carefully what to communicate to consumers, as well as how to communicate it to them. McDonagh (2002: 656) emphasises that it is important not to confuse consumers with too many issues, in other words, to take a “single-minded approach” when communicating and advertising ethical products to consumers. Gradually, the coffee industry is moving towards the establishment of “total quality” coffee, which encompasses CSR, Fair Trade, organic and environmentally friendly elements (Levi and Linton, 2003: 410).

It is difficult to measure consumer behaviour, mainly due to the “attitude-behaviour” gap (De Pelsmacker, *et al.*, 2005: 364). Consumers might be aware or concerned about, certain social and ethical issues and products but will not necessarily act on it. Factors such as price, quality and convenience are perhaps still the most significant factors determining purchase decisions (Golding, 2009: 7; Levi and Linton, 2003: 422). Several factors influence consumer behaviour. These include values, status consciousness, cosmopolitanism, conservatism, dogmatism, idealism, the sincere and social factor, as well as the personal gratification factor (De Pelsmacker, *et al.*, 2005: 366, 379). Consumers could also be enticed to purchase Fair Trade produce out of “fear” for their own well-being and of the harmful environmental consequences of production (Raynolds, 2002: 415).

Of these factors, values are one of the most significant factors that influence ethical consumption behaviour. “Values are abstract principles that reflect an individual’s self-concept” (Dickson, 2000 in De Pelsmacker, *et al.* 2005: 366) or what Golding (2009: 3, 7) refers to as the “modern project of the self” and shifting the consumer image from purchasing as a “chooser” to purchasing as a “citizen”. Consumer norms

need to be challenged in order to effect a conversion to consumer behaviour that supports sustainable development, responsibility and partnership (Golding, 2009: 10).

Fair Trade activists attempted to persuade consumers to support a new norm by appealing to their self-concept as enlightened citizen-consumers. The Fair Trade activists made use of the reactive persuasion method, by making this new identity appealing (refer to point 2.4.1 on p. 33 where this method is explained). In Figure 3 below, the image depicts a face which has global vision; a person that is a citizen of the world; a person that lives beyond himself. By purchasing Fair Trade products, the consumer can become this person. An advertisement for Cafédirect Fair Trade coffee (Figure 4) appeals to the consumer to form connections with “distant others”. By consuming Fair Trade coffee, consumers can enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that they have uplifted those who produce the coffee. Cafédirect gives the consumer the opportunity to become a saviour of others.



Figure 3: World Fair Trade Day logo
(Source: Fair Trade Lifestyle, 2009)



Figure 4: Advertisement for Cafédirect
(Source: Cafédirect, 2008)

3.6.2 Fair Trade and the Capitalist World Economy

Fair Trade is not only consumer-driven, but also retailer-driven. Large corporations are also supporting Fair Trade products, since it serves their interests to create a good reputation for themselves (Loureiro and Lotade, 2005: 130). The Fair Trade coffee movement has successfully managed to challenge MNCs through competition, and doing so, uses the capitalist system to promote their cause. Political consumerism has managed, to some extent, to sustain capitalism by reinforcing competition. Corporate social responsibility is now part of capitalist competition for corporate goodwill, favourable consumer images and market share. Reinforcing the corporation's image also motivates employees, since economic performance often depends on employees' belief in their company (Vogel, 2005: 59).

Supporting, purchasing and selling Fair Trade products could, therefore, potentially serve the interests of profit-hungry corporations as well as give corporations the opportunity to conceal their misdeeds against the global poor. According to interviews conducted by Levi and Linton (2003: 425), coffee companies and retailers are gradually becoming aware that offering Fair Trade coffee is crucial to remain competitive. Renard (1999: 489) draws attention to the fact that creating these new unique niche products is an advantage to distributors, since it avoids competition over the prices of identical goods.

It is, therefore, evident that norm acceptance has occurred to some extent. Some companies involved in the coffee industry have realised and accepted the benefits of buying into the new fair trade norm. However, this study proposes that the Fair Trade activists have not yet managed to reach a "critical mass" in order for the norm cascading to reach a point where it can stand a chance to reach norm internalisation. Big players in the coffee industry have only very recently started to buy into the norm, such as the Starbucks-Rwanda example mentioned earlier.

3.7 Norm Internalisation?

It is difficult to measure the exact size of the free trade market. Nevertheless, it amounts to a relatively small share of the global market. In 2000, the estimated value of the Fair Trade market was placed at US\$ 400 million (Raynolds, 2000: 305). The Fair Trade Federation (FTF) estimates that 2008 has seen the sales of Fair Trade products rise to US\$ 4.12 billion (Fair Trade Federation, 2009). Although the market share of Fair Trade products is relatively small, Fair Trade and organic agriculture movements poses significant challenges to the relations that characterise the global agro-food system (and consumption, trade and market systems) (Raynolds, 2000: 297, 298). These movements seek to challenge (or transform) the environmentally and socially destructive nature of the capitalist world economy by establishing more equitable society in the international trade system.

Ultimately, to effect change in the normative behaviour prescribed by the capitalist system, the Fair Trade movement, producers, consumers, NGOs and other actors in the industry need to collectively exert enough persuasion and pressure on international organisations, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), to adopt new norms. In order to internalise the Fair Trade norm, international organisations could, for example, implement a universal price-fixing system to ensure that disempowered producers will always be paid fair prices for their produce. However, such a system would radically transform the capitalist system which advocates free trade and competition. Needless to say, this is a mammoth task.

Another factor that requires a more coordinated collaboration between actors in the Fair Trade movement is the establishment of a single universal fair trade label. It is important to provide consumers with a single global label with clear information on fair trade produce. There are currently several fair trade labels in different countries, with different and sometimes competing standards systems, which tend to confuse consumers. Not all the organisations behind these labels agree that there is a need for a single label (Micheletti, 2003: 96; Bennett and Lagos, 2007: 202).

A further problem that stands in the way of norm internalisation is the absence of institutional support and resources to fund monitoring and certification. Bennett and

Lagos (2007: 204) mention the example of the Fair Labour Association (FLA) which is largely supported by corporate contributions which could give companies too much leverage over standards. Levi and Linton (2003: 414) believe that if possible, the internalisation and institutionalisation of Fair Trade would be a long-term scenario.

3.8 Challenges: Promoting Fair Trade and Effecting Norm Change

It is evident from the previous sections that the biggest challenge facing norm entrepreneurs is balancing the uniqueness of Fair Trade coffee with the ultimate aim of transforming capitalist trade behaviour. Here the difference between the pragmatic and radical activist becomes known. The pragmatist wants to create a unique niche within the global market in which a marginalised group could be empowered. The radicals, however, want to change the existing norms in global trade in its entirety. Both these two types of norm entrepreneurs frame their cause within the master-frame of the desirability of equality. There are two competing frames within this master-frame. The radicals frame their persuasive message in an “anti-capitalism” frame, whereas the pragmatists use a “responsible capitalism” frame. Although the anti-capitalism frame might attract youths and people sharing an anti-globalisation sentiment, such a frame runs the risk of alienating actors, such as MNCs, whose participation in norm change is essential.

Equality is already an accepted and valued norm, thus these activists depart from this existing norm in an effort to persuade their audiences of the need to change this norm, in order to incorporate norms of equality into the capitalist trade system. The way in which the activists use this frame to persuade their audiences is by highlighting that consumers can experience equality by forming a connection with the producers who produce the goods that they consume.

The use of this frame by both of these types of activists is problematic. The pragmatists would like to create a sense of equality between ethical consumers and a particular group of disempowered producers. The radicals, however, want to instil equality in its entirety in the capitalist system. The pragmatists believe that the only way to introduce some equality into the system and to make it appealing to consumers is by containing it in a niche. This will encourage consumers to engage with the idea

of equality, because it gives them the satisfaction of knowing that they have reached a point of self-actualisation that fellow consumers have not yet been able to attain.

Framing the norm of Fair Trade on the idea of equality is potentially problematic. It gives consumers a false idea of the meaning of equality and the nature of their relationship with producers. A relationship should not only be established between the product and the consumer, but also between the consumer and the producer. The newly found connection between Southern producers and Northern consumers are however merely a symbolic connection (Lyon, 2006: 458). Northern consumers are exposed to the stories and testimonials of the lives of the Southern producers, where the producers have no direct contact with those that consume their produce. It is, in effect, a one-way relationship, thus academics tend to exaggerate and glorify this new connection or relationship. Instead of being a true belief in equality, the newly found relationship between producers and consumers is reduced to being a “feel good” relationship on the part of the consumer.

The second challenge facing the Fair Trade movement is the emphasis placed on the “exceptional nature” of Fair Trade products. Such exceptional products could weaken radical Fair Trade activists’ efforts to transform the capitalism market system (Lyon, 2006). The activists’ ultimate goal is to transform the capitalist market system through norm internalisation, and not to simply create a niche market for Fair Trade consumption. In creating a niche market for such products, activists play into the hands of the corporate world by providing them with a unique and competitive angle to market their products. The only success that could be achieved by the creation of a niche market is the creation of awareness that companies should start considering implementing further corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices.

The crux of this dilemma is that by maintaining the uniqueness of Fair Trade products, wealthy ethical consumers provide activists with their support. On the other hand, by opening up this niche, the exclusivity that appeals to consumers will cease to exist. MNCs react to the demands of consumers, and in particular, the consumers with purchasing power. When a group of wealthy ethical consumers demand ethical products, the MNCs have the opportunity to react in such a way to appease those consumers. This reaction will, however, be dictated by their own terms, since there are

no large-scale or binding enforcement measures in place. In order to effect the global incorporation of the norm of equality through Fair Trade, the demand for such products should be universal. This would give consumers and activists more power to dictate the terms for the internalisation of this norm.

Therefore, the pragmatists have managed to introduce the norm of equality in trade, but this norm will be, or is being, diluted into capitalism by MNCs who still have the power to dictate the terms of implementation. The radicals will not have a chance to continue where the pragmatists stop, and will not have the opportunity to introduce the norm on a global scale themselves. Since the radicals will not be able to introduce the norm through a (critical) mass of consumers, they might have to resort to an “outside-market strategy”. This would entail litigation through the establishment of international legally enforceable accountability mechanisms, which is not necessarily achievable using political consumerism.

In order to achieve the acceptance and internalisation of the norm of equality in trade, norm entrepreneurs and activists need to address two matters. Firstly, the pragmatists and the radicals need to reconcile their efforts, and secondly, these activists need to find a way to achieve norm acceptance amongst a global consumer audience, instead of just an elitist group of ethical consumers. In this sense, consolidation is needed in the first norm life-cycle (norm internalisation amongst consumers) before the second cycle (norm internalisation amongst MNCs) could commence with a chance of succeeding. Ultimately, political consumerism, as a way to effect norm change, needs to grow or evolve from being a consumer-dependent movement to a consumer-led movement.

A third challenge, relates to the ethical concerns within the Fair Trade movement. These include the perceived “cultural imperialism” where “fair” and “sustainable” are defined by the activist movements, instead of the disadvantaged producers (Levi and Linton, 2003: 428). Levi and Linton, makes a tongue-in-cheek comment in saying that perhaps the only sustainability being addressed is that of the NGOs that are proliferating; each selling its own seals and brands. In addition, the Fair Trade movement could be on the road towards reinforcing stereotypical images of coffee producers as being poor, struggling and helpless, even to such an extent that it could

be said to invoke a frame that uses a colonial mindset. This would be absolutely contrary to the intended norm change that the activist set out to achieve.

Analysts of the Fair Trade movement have pointed out several additional challenges. Reynolds (2000: 299, 300) and Golding (2009: 2) warn Fair Trade activists and movements against several risks. Firstly, Fair Trade could lose its progressiveness should it be guided by self-interested wealthy consumers who simply see Fair Trade labels as a “passing consumer trend”. Secondly, there is the possibility that Fair Trade could be abused by profit seeking corporations that wants to bolster their image. Thirdly, Fair Trade movements and processes should be careful not to get diluted by conventional trade practices and should ensure that all partners involved in Fair Trade should be dedicated to maintaining their relationship and overall equality. This would entail ensuring that the links between the partners be as direct as possible and should be committed to long-term trading relations.

3.9 Suggestions: Effective Fair Trade Persuasion Strategies

When embarking on the exercise of persuasion, activists need to consider both the language that it will be using, as well as their target audience. One of the strategies used by Fair Trade advocates in mobilising consumers is channelling consumer anti-globalisation sentiment into taking action (Lyon, 2006: 455). This anti-globalisation sentiment exists amongst a variety of civil society groups. Fair Trade activists should not just target already socially conscious consumers and individuals, but should also target other societal groups which whom the Fair Trade message of equality could resonate. For example, some activists co-opt and encourage other respected organisations such as churches and labour unions to brew only Fair Trade coffee during meetings.

Churches in particular could be a potentially powerful target audience, considering the high esteem in which people generally hold religion. It was also one of the most significant motivations that fuelled the anti-slavery movement, the anti-apartheid movement, as well as the support for economic sanctions against Sudan, which were supported by Christian groups concerned with the religious persecution of Christians in Southern Sudan (Tamm, 2004: 697).

When developing strategies to persuade consumers to adopt the Fair Trade norm, activists need to consider what motivations consumers could have for adopting the norm. Lyon (2006: 456) believes that a possible motivation could be that consumers would be willing to purchase Fair Trade products to “combat their feelings of political fatalism” in light of the “inability of national governments to control the scale of contemporary social and economic change”. In order to fuel this motivation, activists could incorporate an anti-state and anti-government discourse into their persuasion. Activists should sell the “message of change” through communicating a social proposition.

Activists need to take into account other general purchasing motivations and considerations when trying to persuade consumers. Golding and Peattie (2005: 158) believe that the success of Cafédirect could be attributed to the fact that they have managed to compete on both price and quality, as well as offering the Fair Trade element, since factors such as price, quality and convenience are still the most significant factors determining purchase decisions (Golding, 2009: 7; Levi and Linton, 2003: 422). Fair Trade activists and marketers of Fair Trade goods need to eradicate the perception that “charity goods” are usually poor in quality (Bird and Hughes, 1997: 161; Renard, 1999: 493). It is therefore important that activists convince consumers of the product’s quality first and then market the additional “feel-good” benefit of purchasing a quality and ethical product (McDonagh, 2002: 656). Like Bird and Hughes (1997: 165) points out – Cafédirect faces the dilemma in trying to attract the ethical consumer, without alienating the semi-ethical consumer by overemphasising the product’s ethical credentials.

Another factor that would increase the activist’s chances at successful persuasion is consumer education. McDonagh (2002: 655) attributes the success of Cafédirect and other successful Fair Trade products to the promotion of “issue literacy” among consumers by Fair Trade organisations. Issue literacy, or consumer education, is critical in orientating consumers in the Fair Trade and ethical market. In the case of Fair Trade coffee, Levi and Linton (2003: 421) observe that although Fair Trade coffee is now more widely available in coffee shops and retail outlets, consumers purchase this coffee mostly for its quality, without truly understanding the social

issues surrounding it. This is due to a lack of education, without which the legitimacy of the acceptance of a new norm could be jeopardised.

The process of persuasion and communication with target audiences should be a sustainable and responsive process. It is important that activists first determine the knowledge level of consumers and then adjust communication strategy accordingly. Activists should communicate in such a way that it does not appear hostile to consumers in that it might be perceived that activists are trying to undermine the consumers' right to free choice (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004: 701). In addition, Reynolds (2000: 306) recommends that consumer education take place within the realm of global citizen politics. A negative response from consumers could severely jeopardise activists' efforts to proceed forward within the norm life-cycle. Therefore, thorough planning and pre-emption of consumer responses is very important and could determine the success or failure of a campaign (Golding, 2009: 1).

Another suggested strategy is to target consumers that are already label conscious, for example those who read labels for other purposes, like for health reasons. These consumers are more likely to take note of other certification labels (McDonagh, 2002: 657). Levi and Linton (2003: 423) suggest that in order to effectively promote Fair Trade products, activists should direct their education campaigns to consumers, as well as large institutional buyers such as airlines, governments, company cafeterias and large specialty roasters. More could be done to introduce large institutions to Fair Trade. Targeting institutional buyers could result in a situation where individual consumers need not make a decision whether or not to purchase Fair Trade products.

Another ingredient that could be added to a recipe for successful persuasion is to give consumers a choice in how they could contribute to the cause. This would mean the availability of a variety of Fair Trade products, different ways to purchase products and different places or distribution points where consumers can purchase Fair Trade products.

Marketers of Fair Trade products should highlight the newly empowered producers of the product, instead of taking the approach of presenting the small producers as victims in need of charity (Golding, 2009: 6). Wright (2004a: 666) conducted an

analysis of Fair Trade coffee advertisements and concluded that advertising only partially reveals the social relations behind the production, exchange and consumption of coffee. These advertisements not only advertise coffee, but also “render producer’s lives as consumption items”. Therefore, even if activists manage to sell the proposition of a new norm, it would not necessarily instil true understanding in order for norm internalisation to take place.

Fair Trade activists has managed to attract some consumers by using the method of marketing Fair Trade in an “exotic” manner, drawing on consumers’ fascination with distance lands and foreign culture (Raynolds, 2002: 410). Fair Trade activists combine products with information about people and places that are involved in the production of the Fair Trade product. Raynolds refers to this as creating a “Third World ambiance”. Golding and Peattie (2005) propose that an approach that combines commercial and social marketing has the greatest potential to promote the consumption of Fair Trade produce. It is important to place emphasis on both the quality and the social purpose of the product. In effect, Fair Trade activists need to use the capitalist system and conventional consumer behaviour to introduce new norms in consumption.

The next biggest challenge for the Fair Trade movement is to reach a broader public, other than just those who are susceptible to the idea of ethical consumerism (Levi and Linton, 2003: 428). In order to so, Golding and Peattie (2005: 163) suggest that marketers of Fair Trade need to move Fair Trade values beyond niche markets into the mass market, in order to change the very nature of the mass market. Golding and Peattie accurately summarise their argument with the following:

Achieving the economic expansion of Fair Trade whilst preserving its potential to achieve progressive social change in the global economy will not happen by choosing between social and commercial orientations in Fair Trade marketing. Rather, this mission will require achieving a blend of the two in which the promotion of the coffee brand is balanced by the promotion of Fair Trade as a social proposition (2005: 164).

3.10 Conclusion

The case study of the Fair Trade movement conducted in this chapter has provided an indication of where in the norm life-cycle the movement is currently situated. In the first norm life-cycle, activists have managed to persuade consumers to accept the idea of Fair Trade, which has seen a steady growth in sales. Therefore, ethical purchasing behaviour have been internalised to some extent. However, it is important to see this statement in light of the fact that it is not possible to precisely measure consumer behaviour. Although the Fair Trade movement has managed to proceed to the second life-cycle of norms, it might not have the momentum and strength to complete the second life-cycle. This is partly because the group of consumers that have internalised the Fair Trade norm remains relatively small. In addition, it is questionable how sustainable this new normative behaviour amongst consumers is, considering that Fair Trade purchasing could just be a passing popular trend.

Within the second norm life-cycle, activists and consumer-activists have managed to persuade a limited amount of corporate players to accept the Fair Trade norm. However, this acceptance remains voluntary and could evaporate, should the consumer trend pass. Some companies involved in the coffee industry have realised and accepted the benefits of buying into the new Fair Trade norm, but is only doing so in response to consumers. Considering that that group of consumers remain relatively small, true internalisation amongst MNCs is unlikely to take place. Norm implementation and internalisation is also hampered by the lack of coordination between activists, labelling organisations and certification schemes, as well as competing goals and ideologies.

Therefore, activists need to revisit their persuasion strategies in order to increase and strengthen the “critical mass” in the first norm life-cycle, in order to make further progress in the second norm life-cycle.

Chapter 4

The Boycott:

The Conflict Diamonds Campaign

4.1 Introduction

This chapter takes an in-depth look at political consumerism's "boycott" strategy as a method of persuasion by norm entrepreneurs (refer to p.14 for further explanation). In order to position this strategy within the life-cycle of norms and to determine best practices and challenges, the chapter will use the case study of the conflict diamonds campaign. As with the Fair Trade case study, the conflict diamonds case also tries to introduce new norms relating to capitalism and trade. The conflict diamonds campaign aimed to introduce an element of responsibility (and transparency) into capitalism and trade relating to conflict resources.

This chapter will commence with a brief introduction to the conflict diamond phenomenon. Thereafter, it will outline the different stages through which the campaign developed, namely norm emergence and norm acceptance, as well as consider the progress made with norm internalisation. This chapter will make specific reference to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), which lies at the core of all attempts to internalise the norm proposed by the conflict diamonds campaign. This chapter will conclude by outlining the successes of the conflict diamonds campaign, as well as identify challenges that are hampering the internalisation of the anti-conflict diamonds norm.

4.2 Conflict Diamonds

Conflict diamonds are defined as “rough (uncut and unpolished) diamonds which are used by rebel movements to finance their military activities, including attempts to undermine or overthrow legitimate governments” (Tamm, 2004: 690). Rebel groups have used such diamonds to fund conflicts in Angola, Liberia, Cote d’Ivoire, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); the two most notorious conflicts being those in Angola and Sierra Leone.

During Angola’s 27-year long civil war, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) had a monopoly over Angola’s diamond exports, through territorial control of the country’s diamond mines. The rebel movement used forced and child labour to exploit the mines and then used the revenue from diamond exports to fund their military campaigns (Grant and Taylor, 2004: 389). During Sierra Leone’s decade-long civil war of the 1990s, Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group, in cooperation with Liberia’s military ruler Charles Taylor, managed an illegal diamond network, which provided them with the capital to rule with impunity. War crimes in these countries were widespread and included terror tactics such as the widespread amputation of civilians. Taylor used his office to facilitate illegal diamond activities in Liberia and Sierra Leone. By the late 1990s, Liberia had become a hub of diamond-related criminal activity, which ensured a continuous supply of arms to sustain the civil wars in those countries.

In 2007, the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) estimated that in West and Central Africa, more than 240,000 children are working in small-scale gold and mineral mines and quarries; several of them in hazardous underground mines (CRIN, 2007). In the late 1990’s conflict diamonds constituted approximately 15% of the world’s diamond production (Fatal Transactions, 2008a).

The NGO and consumer-led campaign against conflict diamonds was spurred by the widespread violations of the 1998 United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1173, which imposed sanctions against the UNITA rebel movement to prohibit the sale of unofficial diamonds from Angola. Diamonds were being exported despite the sanctions, through neighbouring countries.

4.3 Norm Emergence

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and activists recognised the failure of states and international governmental organisations to address the human rights abuses caused by conflict diamonds and decided to target other role players, such as multinational corporations (MNCs) in the diamonds industry, as well as consumers. As with other political consumer campaigns, this shift illustrates the change in global governance and the recognition of new powerful actors in the international arena. Conflict diamonds activists therefore initiated a process of constitutive and prescriptive norm change; constitutive because it gives new identities and responsibilities to certain actors and prescriptive because it proposes new appropriate behaviour in international trade.

London-based NGO, Global Witness, launched the conflict diamonds campaign in 1998. The aim of the campaign was to end the sale of “diamonds that originate from areas under the control of forces that are in opposition to elected and internationally recognised governments, or are in any way connected to those groups” (Global Witness, 2001: 1). Global Witness launched the campaign following research conducted into diamond mining and human rights abuses in Angola in 1996. It is important to note that this research followed efforts to put the corruption in Cambodia’s logging industry on the international agenda. The conflict diamonds campaign could therefore have benefitted from previous inquiries into conflict commodities.

Global Witness initiated its issue awareness phase in 1998 with the publication of a report titled “A Rough Trade: The Role of Companies and Governments in Angola’s Civil War”. This report was followed by a second report, “Conflict Diamonds: Possibilities for the Identification, Certification and Control of Diamonds”, released in 2000. This second report could be perceived as the advent of Global Witness’ advocacy phase, which not only created awareness, but also introduced solutions, or new norms, concerning the conflict diamond phenomenon. The report detailed possible methods to identify, certify and control the diamond trade. The year 2000 also saw the publication of a report by the human rights NGO Partnership Africa Canada (PAC), titled “The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security”.

Shortly after the release of this report, the United Nations (UN) Security Council embargoed diamonds from Sierra Leone.

Le Billon (2006: 779) reminds us that the conflict diamonds campaign was not just about protecting the victims of war, but also to “shame a capitalist system reaping the spoils of war with impunity”. Additionally, this campaign not only aimed to create a more responsible capitalist system, but also to eradicate perverse capitalist systems that have developed due to the failure of states in Africa. The breakdown of order in diamond-mining states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Angola has led to warfare sustaining the emergence of an economic subsystem. In addition, the conflict diamonds campaign addressed several other social injustices, such as corruption, terrorism, child soldiers, forced labour and human rights abuses.

By targeting one specific commodity, the campaign managed to address more than one social wrong, such as conflict, the undermining of legitimate governments, child labour and human rights violations. Due to the range of social issues negatively affected by conflict diamonds, the activists’ message could reach a wider audience and could therefore mobilise more supporters and consumers for their cause.

4.3.1 Lobbying the Consumer

After Global Witness managed to put the issue of conflict diamonds on the agenda, it directed its advocacy campaign towards consumers. In 1999, it created the “Fatal Transactions” campaign in collaboration with other development partners. The institutional partners include the Netherlands Organisation for International Development (NOVIB), the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NIZA) and the German Medico International. Fatal Transactions took the form of an educational campaign highlighting the fact that consumers could, directly or indirectly, be consuming produce that sprout from natural resources that fuel conflicts in countries such as Angola, Sierra Leone and Liberia. It also targeted the diamond industry by educating consumers about the lack of effort on the part of diamond companies to ensure that their industry was not funding conflicts in Africa.

The Fatal Transactions campaign was supported by the creation of campaigns by other sectors of society. On 14 February (Valentine's Day) 2001, a group of United States human rights organisations launched "The Campaign to Eliminate Conflict Diamonds". The coalition held a press conference, during which, amongst others, victims of the wars in West Africa addressed the crowd. By launching the campaign on Valentine's Day, the activists managed to make a striking and ironic statement – equating love and diamonds to violence and death.

Other organisations, campaigns and initiatives that supported the cause included the "Stop Blood Diamonds" campaign², the Canadian Institute of Sustainable Living's (One Sky) "Blood Diamonds are For Never"³ and the "Conflict-Free Diamond Council"⁴. The One Sky campaign provided consumers with an "activist's package" which they could use to lobby diamond companies and retailers. This package contained information materials, postcards and sample petition letters. The Stop Blood Diamonds Campaign conducted a survey which revealed that in the year 2000, 7% of consumers in the United States were aware of the conflict diamonds problem. By 2003, this amount had grown to 26% of consumers. Established and respected organisations such as World Vision and Amnesty International supported these consumer awareness campaigns.

Analysts highlight that the use of a carefully crafted frame, supported by dramatic slogans, helped to gain the attention of consumers (Tamm, 2004; Grant and Taylor, 2004; Le Billion, 2006). Such slogans included "diamonds are a guerrilla's best friend", which is a word play on the industry-promoted idea that "diamonds are a girl's best friend". Other slogans that were used, were "the diamond trade is a lethal dinosaur with profit being placed before the lives of thousands of people", "amputation is forever" (a word play on the industry slogan "diamonds are forever"), "if you buy a ring, will you fund a warlord?" and "did someone die for that diamond?". Figures 5 and 6 below depict some of these slogans and are illustrations of the proactive persuasion method used by activists to shock consumers into not purchasing conflict diamonds.

² Available online at: <http://www.stopblooddiamonds.org>

³ Available online at: http://www.onesky.ca/diamonds/diamonds_campaign/

⁴ Available online at: <http://www.conflictfreediamonds.org>

NGOs also used images of children who were mutilated by rebel groups and in some instances, Sierra Leonean amputees were present at protests outside major diamond dealers' shops and offices (Gardiner, 2000). As Le Billon (2006: 778) states, the activists managed to convey their message by "superimposing the amputated limbs of war victims on diamond-ringed fingers of brides, or pricing diamonds in deaths rather than dollars" and convinced consumers that "consuming is killing". In effect, what activists have managed to do was to replace stones with people, dollars with suffering, desire with compassion and shopping malls with killing fields (Le Billon, 2006: 784, 788). Le Billon proposes that the conflict diamonds campaign managed to successfully mobilise consumers due to the activists' ability to have "reconnected the 'violent' spaces of exploitation with the 'peaceful' spaces of consumption".

The conflict diamonds campaign was boosted by the release of the Hollywood film "Blood Diamond" in 2006. The film depicts the activities of illegal diamond smugglers during Sierra Leone's civil war in the 1990s. Even before the release of the film, the largest company in the diamond industry, De Beers, was worried about the potential effect of the film on the diamond industry. During that time, De Beers and its partners donated funds to Partnership Africa Canada's (PAC) Diamond Development Initiative (Jackson, 2007). Following the success of the film, the director and the cast of the film launched a website, "Blood Diamond Action"⁵ to educate consumers further about the effects of conflict diamonds.

Several international celebrities joined the campaign against conflict diamonds. Actor Jamie Foxx announced that he will no longer wear any diamond jewellery, in particular his large diamond earrings that serves as one of his trademarks. American rap artist, Kanye West, produced a Grammy-winning song, "Diamonds from Sierra Leone"; actor Martin Sheen filmed a public service announcement on behalf of the Campaign to Eliminate Conflict Diamonds, and actress Charlize Theron acted as a spokesperson for the cause.

Yet, the Fatal Transactions campaign did not set out to instigate a boycott against diamonds, but rather to create enough awareness amongst consumers to threaten the diamond industry with the likelihood of a backlash (Le Billon, 2006: 785).

⁵ Available online at: <http://www.blooddiamondaction.org>



Figure 5: "Diamonds: a girl's best friend?"
(Source: Fatal Transactions, 2008b)



Figure 6: "What price for these diamonds?"
(Source: International Action Network on Small Arms, 2006)

4.3.2 Lobbying the MNC

The conflict diamonds activists, and their newly recruited consumer-activists, directed their persuasion efforts at the Diamond High Council (HRD) and the largest player in the diamond industry, De Beers. Initial research conducted by Global Witness documented De Beers' diamond trading relationship with Angola's UNITA rebel group. Transparency International estimated that at that time, De Beers held approximately 80% of the world diamond market and that De Beers had openly purchased smuggled diamonds from rebel groups (Shaxson, 2001: 217).

As with other political consumer campaigns, the conflict diamonds campaign also calls for transparency and the accountability on the part of MNCs. The new awareness and concern over conflict diamonds has taken away the opportunity that MNCs had to simply hide their dubious and ethically questionable transactions with warlords behind international and local apathy (Shaxson, 2001: 216). In their campaigning, activists also reminded MNCs of the consequences of the fur boycott of the 1980's and that the conflict diamonds campaign could easily take the same route.

Shaxson (2001: 218) observed that the initial response from the diamond industry was to hold the activists in contempt. Industry players stated that their campaign could threaten the economies of poor but peaceful diamond producing and processing countries, such as Botswana, Namibia and India. By doing so, industry players presented consumers with a counter-frame to the way the activists have framed the conflict diamonds issue. The activists' frame of bodily harm, however, proved to be more effective, since it clearly established a causal link between diamonds and bodily harm.

The activists' efforts to raise awareness and concern brought results, once the term "conflict diamonds" was reintroduced as "blood diamonds". Shaxson (2001: 218) believes that the widespread use of the term, blood diamonds, resonated with consumers, which led to the "tipping point" which compelled major industry players (and governments) to accept the conflict-free norm. Companies started to fear the damage that activists could cause to the image of the diamond, and the quality and purity that it represents.

De Beers realised the potentially negative effects the campaign could have on their business and as a result, announced in late 1999 that they will no longer purchase diamonds from Angola, unless it was from an officially registered mine. In 2000, the company went a step further and declared that it will no longer sell any gemstones that originated from rebel-controlled conflict zones in Africa. In the same year, De Beers established and mandated the Diamond Task Force (DTF) to provide technical services to countries that are rebuilding their post-conflict diamond industry. The DTF facilitates partnerships between governments, international organisations and local communities. De Beers also created a Best Practice Principles code of conduct, which prescribes the business, social and environmental responsibilities of the De Beers Family of Companies and its partners (De Beers Group, 2008).

After De Beers implemented these new adjustments, policies and initiatives, it came to light that the conflict diamonds campaign could in fact be beneficial to the diamond industry, providing that the industry strategically engaged and appeased the conflict diamond activists. As in the case of Fair Trade, the conflict diamonds campaign provided MNCs with the opportunity to capitalise on the controversy. For example, the Canadian diamond industry, which immediately after the launch of the conflict diamonds campaign, incorporated the peacefulness, and integrity of its diamonds into its marketing strategies (Le Billon, 2006: 792). In effect, “Canada could capitalise on conflict” (Duncun, 2000 in Le Billon, 2006: 792).

Yet why would De Beers agree to cooperate with the activists, when those same activists tried to tarnish De Beers’ established and reputable image? The conflict diamonds campaign played right into the hands of De Beers, since it could further restrict supply and enhance its power in the international market by complying with the demands of the activists (Spar, 2006: 205). Spar (2006: 206) believes that ultimately, De Beers managed to “turn a potential attack on their business into a substantial windfall”. The diamond industry simply added a fifth “C”, namely Conflict, to the 4 “C” principles of the diamond industry, namely Carat, Colour, Clarity and Cut (Grant and Taylor, 2004 and Tamm, 2004).

4.4 Norm Acceptance: The Kimberley Process

After the conflict diamonds campaign managed to gain the attention of consumers, industry players, governments and international governmental organisations, the norm conformists decided to embark on a norm socialisation process and to find ways to implement the new norm (refer to point 2.2.2 on p.28 where this process is explained). May 2000 saw the launch of the Kimberley Process, named after its first gathering in Kimberley, South Africa. The initiative aimed to establish a tracking system of export certification and import verification for the diamond industry. Approximately 35 participants involved in the production, processing, importing and exporting of diamonds participated in the process. The World Diamond Council (WDC), who pledged to implement a system that ensures a conflict-free guarantee on diamonds moving through the industry, supported the process. The “certificate of origin” system may be “given legal force which makes it a criminal offence to falsify a diamond’s origin” (Shaxson, 2001: 219).

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly passed Resolution 55/56 in December 2000, and announced that it supported the Kimberley Process. The Resolution recognised that conflict diamonds are a critical factor in prolonging conflicts in Africa and it called upon governments, NGOs, diamond traders and financial institutions to implement policies that would halt the trade in conflict diamonds (United Nations, 2001).

Following a Kimberley Process Ministerial Meeting in Gaborone in November 2001, participants in the Kimberley Process decided that they would mandate the UN Security Council to pass a UN General Assembly-endorsed resolution which would establish a set of legally binding trade mechanisms to ensure that rough diamonds will be exported in sealed containers accompanied by a certificate of origin. In March 2002, the UN approved the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) with the passing of UN Resolution 56/263. During 2002, the Kimberley Process worked towards finalising the details of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) and launched the final outcome under the “Interlaken Declaration”, at Interlaken, Switzerland in November 2002.

The KPCS is essentially a voluntary trade restriction mechanism. All major role-players in the diamond industry were to adopt a parallel and complementary system of self-regulation. It stipulates a code of conduct; the provision of warranties on each invoice for the sale of diamonds; requirements for maintaining detailed records of the sale of diamonds; as well as the use of independent auditors to attest to honouring the Code. By 2006, the KPCS had more than 70 member countries.

The Kimberley Process was supported by parallel developments in the United States (US). During 2001, the “Campaign to Eliminate Conflict Diamonds” lobbied for the passing of various US Congressional Bills to ban the import of conflict diamonds into the US. Through negotiations and compromise, the group of NGOs, their congressional supporters and the diamond industry managed to reach a compromise. In April 2003 US President George Bush signed the Clean Diamond Trade Act. The signing of the Clean Diamond Trade Act was a major boost for the Kimberley Process, since the US is the biggest importer of diamonds (Grant and Taylor, 2004: 393, 394).

4.5 Norm Internalisation?

Following the acceptance of “conflict-free” resources and trade, the diamond industry has implemented some changes through the KPCS, but Global Witness and its partners believe that these reforms “fall far short of true self-regulation” (Shaxson, 2001: 217). One of the shortfalls indicated by Shaxson is that although companies now record information on trade dealings in the industry, it protects its fellow industry players by not revealing specific details about who makes which transactions. In other words, although there has been the establishment of a degree of internal accountability, there is still more to be done to ensure external accountability beyond the industry players themselves.

Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) (2009) has raised concern that the KPCS is “potentially failing in its objectives”. PAC, alongside other civil society groups that support the campaign, stated that despite having all the tools in place, the scheme is failing to address effectively, issues of non-compliance, smuggling, money laundering and human rights abuses in alluvial diamond fields. Global Witness (2009) echoed PAC’s concerns by saying that “the clock is running out on the Kimberley Process’s

credibility”. The major problem with the KPCS is that members’ commitment to the KPCS is entirely voluntary and that there is no clear enforcement mechanism and no independent monitoring mechanism (Gold, 2006: 51).

Capacity and political will to implement the KPCS also poses problems, considering Africa’s vast unmanned borders and the fact that several countries do not raise enough tax from diamond exports to make implementing the scheme worthwhile (Jones, 2003). According to Global Witness (2006), compliance to the scheme reveals differences in capacity and commitment. Global Witness argues that resources need to be strategically allocated in order to be able to monitor and verify compliance at all points during the certification process. The situation is exasperated by the fact that conflict diamond exporters are more concerned with generating immediate revenue, rather than participating in a sustainable, regulated diamond market (Gold, 2006: 51). Bennett (2002: 396) highlights that some leaders of MNCs believe that discontinuing operations in countries where there is conflict, will simply allow less scrupulous corporations to step in and partner with corrupt governments or rebel groups.

It remains to be seen whether the cascading of this norm will reach the stage of norm internalisation. Grant and Taylor (2004: 395) are sceptical as to whether the policies on paper will bring tangible results, considering that the Kimberley Process’s resolutions comprise a set of non-binding minimum common standards and takes the form of an “international understanding”. Wright (2004*b*) believes that because norm entrepreneurs are being gradually excluded from the implementation process, norm internalisation is being jeopardised. Civil society, led by the norm entrepreneurs and activists, played a pivotal role in introducing the norm and taking the norm to the stage of norm acceptance and to some extent, the norm cascade phase. However, these “civil society groups found themselves potentially redundant when the KPCS agreement was adopted” (Wright, 2004*b*: 701). This is because governments and the diamond industry took on the leading role in implementing the KPCS. NGOs and activists now realise that they have to focus their attention on maintaining pressure on the industry to abide by its commitments; while keeping the trump card of a consumer boycott, should performance not be satisfactory.

An aspect of the campaign that should concern norm analysts is the use of the terrorism frame, which came at the time of the 9 / 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. By using this frame, instead of a human rights frame, activists could decrease the chances of embedded norm internalisation. Although the existing political environment promoted the acceptance of the norm, the actors' motivation to accept and internalise a norm, is just as important as whether or not they accept the norm. As Le Billon (2006: 787) observes, the conflict aspect of the campaign is largely perceived by the West as an "African problem", whereas the concern over terrorism is a matter "close to home". Thus, the broader aim of activists to internalise responsibility for global justice amongst consumers could get lost in the process. If consumers act out of concern for their own interests, instead of concern for others, the sustainability of the norm might be jeopardised should the interests of the consumers change.

Another shortfall in the campaign highlighted by Le Billon (2006: 791) is that the KPCS only paid attention to the violence of rebel groups directed at undermining legitimate governments, and not the violence that caused the forced displacement and mutilation of people. Perhaps this is where the consumer part of the campaign has a bigger role to play - to present a balanced case for all the injustices caused by conflict diamonds.

4.6 Challenges

This chapter places the challenges facing the conflict diamonds campaign into two categories, namely, the challenges facing the activist's consumer campaign and the challenges facing the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. Despite the success of the conflict diamonds campaign, it has received some criticism. Siegel (2009: 133) believes that conflict diamonds activists have effectively damaged the reputation of the diamond industry. She states that although the majority of diamonds emanate from peaceful countries, the campaigners created the impression that all diamonds are primarily produced by conflict-ridden countries in Africa. The image of diamonds as a peaceful symbol of love was effectively destroyed when diamonds became associated with war and death. Jackson (2007) supports this observation by saying that the

campaign inadvertently pushed consumers away from certified African diamonds, which in turn results in a loss of revenue for African countries.

The activists also realised that boycotting diamonds could indirectly hurt developing countries that are dependent on the diamond trade (Tamm, 2004: 693, 694). This realisation could be an indication that the diamond activists realised that political consumerism on its own would not have achieved the desired results, or that political consumerism should only be a last resort, should all other “diplomatic” channels be exhausted. Tamm quotes Alex Yearsley, a campaigner for Global Witness saying that:

We didn't really go to the mass media. We could have been a lot worse than we were, but because we'd seen moves from the industry, we didn't see the need for that. If governments and the industry hadn't reacted, then the profile of the campaign would have been raised dramatically (2004: 694).

The Namibian National Society for Human Rights (2001) has also expressed their discontent with the concept of blood diamonds, stating that it is “an insidious, diversionary and racist strategy conceived by non-Africans”. The society continues by saying that the campaign plays into the hands of Western-based international diamond dealers who are competing for control over the world diamond industry and market. A further frustration voiced by this society is that the conflict diamonds campaign has distorted the real causes behind conflicts in Africa, which is the denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as arms trafficking.

Conflict diamonds campaigners might be under the illusion that they have managed to end conflicts in Africa by ending the trade in conflict diamonds through the KPCS. However, as the Namibian National Society for Human Rights rightly points out, diamonds are not the only cause of conflict. In order to measure the successes and remaining challenges facing the conflict diamonds campaign, one has to revisit the initial goals of the various activist groups who were driving the campaign. As mentioned previously, the conflict diamonds campaign addressed several issues (such as conflict, the undermining of legitimate governments, child labour and human rights violations) of which not all have yet been solved.

Numerous challenges confront the KPCS. Global Witness (2006: 4, 8) reports on these challenges and makes some recommendations. Firstly, the organisation proposed that criteria for entry into the KPCS must be stricter and applied consistently. Secondly, the KPCS must develop a system to address and expel underperformers who damage the regime's integrity. Thirdly, participating countries should do more to design and implement changes in governance and administration to ensure that the KPCS works effectively. Technical assistance should be available to countries who struggle to implement the necessary changes. The scheme also needs to do more to improve industry compliance, as opposed to only focussing on governments.

4.7 Successes

The norm change introduced by activists driving the conflict diamonds campaign, could be seen as one of the political consumer campaigns that has come the closest to reaching the norm internalisation phase of the norm life-cycle. By making this statement, one has to question what contributed to the success of the conflict diamonds campaign. In comparison with other human rights campaigns, the conflict diamond campaign "rapidly achieved a rare broad consensus" (Grant and Taylor, 2004; Wright, 2004*b*: 699). Analysts attribute the success of the campaign to the combined efforts of official and unofficial diplomatic channels as well as a diverse network of public and private actors that united to address, on equal footing, the problem of conflict diamonds (Shaxson, 2001; Grant and Taylor, 2004; Spar, 2006). Therefore, it is important to note that the campaign was not solely, or mainly, driven by political consumers. The lobbying of consumers through the Fatal Transaction campaign was only one part of the overall conflict diamonds campaign. Global Witness also conducted campaigns at state and industry-level.

A characteristic of this campaign that stands out above other commodity-targeted movements is that diamonds are a very unique, high priced and almost exclusive commodity (as opposed to a commodity like coffee). This limits the size of the consumer movement that could pressure MNCs to accept the idea of conflict-free diamonds. However, despite the relatively small group of consumers that boycotted the idea of conflict diamonds, they still managed to compel the main diamond companies to participate in forums and negotiations which resulted in the Kimberley

Process Certification Scheme (KPCS). One could argue that wealthy consumers are the ones who are most likely educated and can appreciate and understand the complexity of the conflict diamond phenomenon. It could also be speculated that boycotting a luxury item might be more successful, considering that indulging in luxury at the expense of others, could evoke a stronger feeling of guilt.

In addition, diamonds also have the “sexy-factor” which is lacking in other commodities. Le Billon quotes Alex Yearsley (2000), a campaigner for Global Witness, saying that:

Global Witness has worked on the issue of timber funding conflict in Cambodia and has not obtained a fraction of the public awareness that has been achieved on the diamond issue...Basically, diamonds are sexy and logs are not (2006: 788).

Tamm (2004: 690) and Le Billon (2006) believe that we can partly attribute the success of the conflict diamonds campaign to the political climate that existed during the time the campaign was launched. A climate concerned with national security came to existence following the 9 / 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. There were allegations in the media that the Al-Qaeda terrorist network had been partly funding their operations with trade in conflict diamonds. Al-Qaeda placed their capital in diamonds when their assets were frozen. Al-Qaeda laundered an estimated US\$ 20 million through purchasing diamonds (Jones, 2003). This played right into the hands of the activists, giving them the leverage to convert (especially American) consumers by emphasising that they are indirectly purchasing the terror attacks against them; shaming consumers by naming them “terrorist consumers” (Le Billon, 2006: 779).

The success of the conflict diamond campaign could be an indication that the approach of the pragmatist activist is potentially more effective than that of the radical activist. Although this study attributed the boycott strategy to radical activists, in the case of the conflict diamonds campaign, the boycott strategy was effectively used as a threat, without necessarily being fully implemented. The method of engagement as opposed to confrontation (or rather a delicate balance between the two) has reaped results.

However, Tamm (2004: 695) predicts that the conflict diamonds campaign could take a more radical turn, in light of activists raising their dissatisfaction with the implementation and monitoring of the KPCS.

The conflict diamond campaign not only succeeded in achieving norm acceptance, but also managed to get consumers to revisit their consumer behaviour by highlighting that consumers are behaving “inappropriately” by feeding their “dangerous appetites” for goods that fuel conflicts (Tamm, 2004: 704). This could lead to further awareness and support for the certification of origin of other industry goods, such as the timber industry, which is already in the process of being developed. The certification of the origin of timber would enable consumers to purchase timber obtained only from sustainable resources. This is proof that the diamond certification process has initiated, or even almost internalised a new norm supporting not only ethical trade in diamonds, but other conflict commodities as well. The KPCS is a “potential trail-blazer for dealing with other examples of the illicit exploitation of natural resources” (Wright, 2004*b*: 702).

Despite the shortfalls in the diamond industry’s response, the campaign proves that the private sector has the ability and motivation to respond to pressure from NGOs, activists and consumers (Shaxson, 2001: 220). Although it is difficult to quantify the Kimberley Process’ impact on the diamond trade, statistics do point to some successes. In the late 1990’s conflicts diamonds constituted 15% of the world’s diamond production, a figure that has now been reduced to less than 1% as a result of the Kimberley Process (Fatal Transactions, 2008*a*). Today, diamonds are one of the most intensively monitored and audited natural resources in the world.

4.8 Conclusion

The case study of the conflict diamonds campaign has provided an indication of where in the norm life-cycle the campaign is currently situated. In the first norm life-cycle, activists have managed to persuade consumers to reject diamonds that originate from conflict areas. Activists have managed to get consumers to conform to such a degree that diamond industry players such as De Beers took far-reaching pre-emptive measures to prevent a dire consumer backlash against the industry.

The campaign has entered the second norm life-cycle. The case study made a significant observation, namely, that the second norm life-cycle was not solely or primarily driven by consumer-activists. Other role players such as governments, the United Nations and the diamond industry itself came on board at an early stage during the second life-cycle. Activists consolidated the completion of the first norm life-cycle to such an extent, that MNCs hardly needed any further lobbying from the consumer. The mere threat of a consumer boycott was enough to get MNCs in the industry to take action early on during the second life-cycle.

Although these developments highlight the power of consumer boycotts, it also created a situation where the norm conformists (MNCs) took the norm cascading phase out of the hands of the consumer-activists. This led to a situation where consumers were sidelined during the norm implementation process. Perhaps political consumerism has not yet reached a stage where it can act as an independent force for norm change, and is still dependent on other actors. It is however, a potentially powerful force on the horizon that could evoke reaction from MNCs without having to come to full force.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study posed two questions. Firstly, it asks which stage in the norm life-cycle political consumerism has managed to reach. Related to this, it asks whether it is in fact possible for activists and political consumers to complete the norm life-cycle and thereby effect norm change to enhance capacity for social justice in capitalism.

This study also posed a second question involving the strategies that have been used and could still be used by activists to pursue change in the normative behaviour of agents, such as consumers and multinational corporations (MNCs). Furthermore, the study sought to identify successes and failures of particular strategies employed by norm entrepreneurs. These successes and failures will be outlined using Friestad and Wright's (1994) Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM). The PKM is used simply to present the findings of this study and the resulting practical suggestions in a structured manner and not to introduce any new elements to the study.

The summary of the findings of this study will be outlined in two sections, each relating to the two research questions. This chapter will also identify prospects for further research and conclude with a reflection on the phenomenon of political consumerism.

5.1.1 Political Consumerism and the Norm Life-Cycle

This study proved that it is viable to perceive political consumerism as a potential vehicle to effect international norm change. When Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) framework of the life-cycle of norms was applied to the two case studies of consumer-activism, the actors and processes of political consumerism corresponded with the processes proposed by the norm life-cycle. As illustrated in Figures 7 and 8, this study proved that political consumers and their related actors have already managed to enter

the cycle, but have not yet been able to complete the cycle in full. Each of the figures below depicts the processes that the two case studies have undergone within the two norm life-cycles. These two cycles follow on each other to form part of a whole, which guides political consumerism in its efforts to come full circle in the process of norm change.

Norm change within the capitalist world economy and the transnational civil society, is considerably more challenging than norm change in the state-system. Political consumerism needs to grow through two life-cycles. This prolongs the process of persuasion and jeopardises sustainability. Feeble parenting of consumers by the activists during the first, or infant, life-cycle could diminish the strength of the movement during its adult years in the second life-cycle. As indicated in this study, the challenges that political consumerism as a movement face, are numerous. It is not yet certain whether these challenges could be overcome. The political consumer movement is, however, still in a phase of infancy. As more consumers realise, embrace and act upon their power as consumers, the political consumer movement might stand a chance at completing any norm life-cycle that it chooses to enter.

1: Activist-Consumer Cycle		2: Consumer-MNC Cycle	
<p>Collapse of International Coffee Agreement</p> <p>ATO's; Labelling Organisations</p> <p>"Equality" Frame</p>	EMERGENCE	AWARENESS	<p>Consumer demand for Fair Trade products</p> <p>"Equality" Frame</p>
<p>Persuasion</p> <p>↓ ↑</p> <p>Consumers <i>(some confusion – too many labels)</i></p>			<p>Persuasion</p> <p>↓ ↑</p> <p>MNCs</p>
<p>Reactive <i>(purchasing the idea of a more equal world becomes fashionable)</i></p>	ACCEPTANCE	ADVOCACY	<p>Boycott</p>
<p>Weak Critical Mass TIPPING POINT</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Cascade / Socialisation</p>			<p>Critical Mass <i>(limited amount of industry players / MNCs)</i></p> <p>TIPPING POINT</p>
<p>Fair Trade purchasing</p>	INTERNALISATION	ACTIVISM	

Figure 7: Fair Trade (coffee) in the Two Norm Life-Cycles

1: Activist-Consumer Cycle		2: Consumer-MNC Cycle	
<p>Failure of UN sanctions against diamond-producing states</p> <p>Global Witness; Fatal Transactions</p> <p>“Responsibility” Frame</p>	EMERGENCE	AWARENESS	<p>Consumer protest</p> <p>“Responsibility” Frame</p>
<p>Persuasion</p> <p>↓ ↑</p> <p>Consumers</p>			<p>Persuasion</p> <p>↓ ↑</p> <p>Diamond Industry</p>
<p>Proactive <i>(equating consumption to murder)</i></p>	ACCEPTANCE	ADVOCACY	<p>Boycott <i>(or threat of boycott)</i></p>
<p>Critical Mass TIPPING POINT</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Cascade / Socialisation</p>			<p>Critical Mass <i>(including De Beers)</i> TIPPING POINT</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Kimberley Process</p>
<p>Arrest conflict diamond purchasing</p>	INTERNALISATION	ACTIVISM	<p><i>Implementation negotiations</i></p> <p>↓</p>

Figure 8: The Conflict Diamonds Campaign in the Two Norm Life-Cycles

The findings of this study, and the successful application of consumer campaigns to the life-cycle of norms, are significant to scholars who study power, interests and change in the international arena. The realisation that the combined efforts of activists and consumers hold the potential to change the behaviour of powerful international agents calls for further study. These new actors and movements should be taken into account when global governance, international law, corporate practices and global norms and values are studied. These actors create and hold new interests and values that could alter the way in which we perceive rational action. Consumer-activists are however still in the process of realising the power that they hold, and are still learning how to use that power.

The types of norms that activists and their consumer counterparts are able to introduce remain limited. This becomes evident when referring back to the three categories in which Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 891) place norms. The three types of norms that they propose are regulative norms, which maintain order; constitutive norms which create new actors and interests; and prescriptive (or evaluative) norms which prescribe what is appropriate. Political consumerism has only been able to introduce constitutive and prescriptive norms. The consumer movement (activists and consumers) has been able to establish themselves as newly recognised actors in the international arena who have certain interests that should, inevitably, be considered during policy making. Additionally, consumers have also been able to prescribe, albeit to a limited extent, what appropriate behaviour for multinational corporations (MNCs) should be. However, the consumer movement has not been able to put regulative norms on the agenda. Political consumers first need to consolidate their power as recognised political players in the international arena, before they will be able to have any influence on norms that prescribe the maintenance of order.

5.1.2 Activists, Consumers and Persuasion Tactics

In order for this study to outline systematically the challenges faced by political consumerism within the norm life-cycle, political consumerism will now be situated in Friestad and Wright's (1994) Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM), as illustrated in Figure 9. This will allow this study to identify problem areas in the consumer-driven norm life-cycle.

Persuasion lies at the centre of the norm life-cycle. Effective persuasion is the key determinant of whether or not progress will be made in putting a norm on the agenda, achieving norm acceptance, convincing norm promoters to socialise others to accept a norm and finally, to successfully negotiate the implementation and internalisation of a norm. Friestad and Wright's (1994) Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) will be used to outline the shortcomings in activists' persuasion strategies.

The PKM proposes that there are several variables relating to the Agent (the actor conducting the persuasion) and the Target (those people for whom a persuasion attempt is intended). These variables include topic knowledge, persuasion knowledge and knowledge of the Agent (in the case of the Target) and knowledge of the Target (in the case of the Agent). By applying the PKM to the case studies analysed in this study, it becomes evident that most of the challenges facing political consumerism within the norm life-cycle relate to these variables.

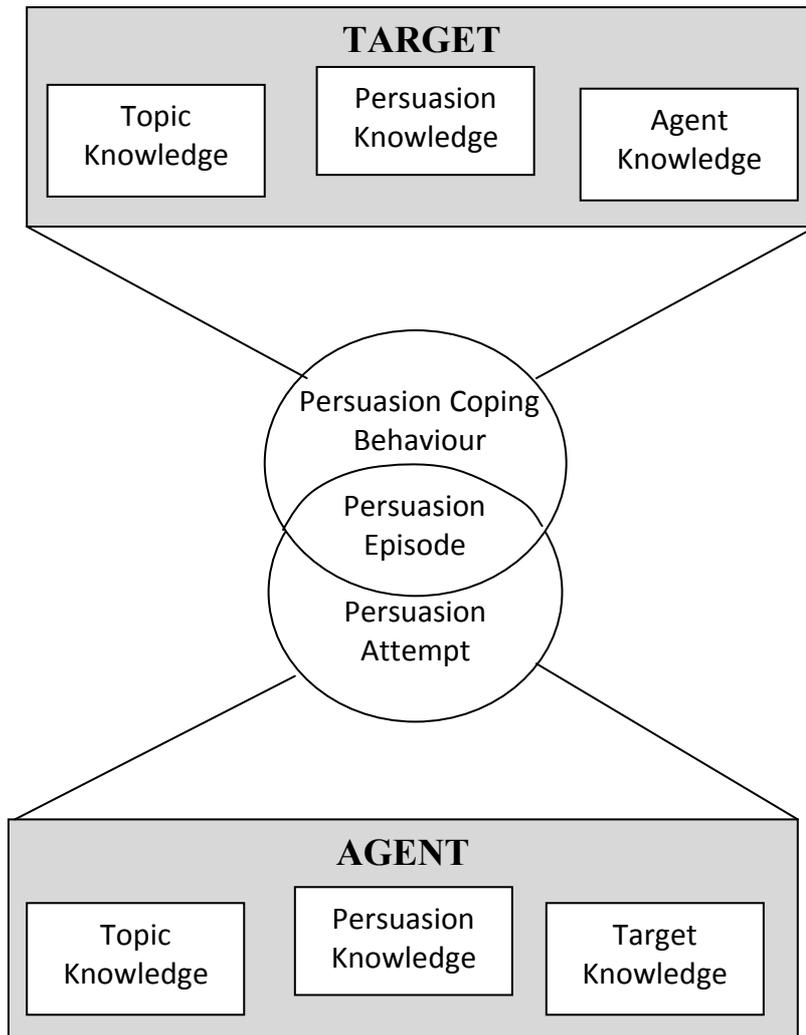


Figure 9: Representation of the Persuasion Knowledge Model

(Source: Friestad and Wright, 1994: 2)

Within the first norm life-cycle, the activist assumes the role of the agent, and the consumer the role of the target. Activists need sufficient knowledge to affect norm change or purchasing behaviour amongst consumers. Firstly, the activist needs sufficient knowledge about the topic, or issue that it wants to put on the agenda. The issue should have a chance at drawing the attention of the targets. Related to that, the activist needs to be clear about the goal that he or she wants to achieve. Secondly, the activist needs persuasion knowledge, which will entail knowing how to effectively frame the issue that it wants to communicate, as well as which strategies (such as the reactive and proactive approach) to use. Thirdly, the activist needs to have knowledge about its target. Activists need to know and understand consumers existing beliefs, behaviour and needs.

Within the second norm life-cycle, the political consumer, or consumer-activist, assumes the role of the agent, and the multinational corporation (MNC) assumes the role of the target. As with activists in the first norm life-cycle, consumers in the second norm life-cycle need sufficient knowledge in order to persuade MNCs to accept a new norm. Firstly, consumers need knowledge about the topic or issue. Consumers will only have this knowledge if the activists have conducted effective consumer education in the first life-cycle. Secondly, consumers need persuasion knowledge which entail knowing how to effectively use strategies to convince MNCs to accept a new norm. These strategies include the use of the boycott and buycott strategies. Thirdly, consumers need knowledge about the nature of the MNCs that they target. This will allow consumers to monitor effectively the implementation of the norm by the MNCs.

The case studies revealed several successes, challenges and considerations relating to political consumerism's progress through the life-cycle of norms. During the first norm life-cycle, activists proved to have sufficient topic knowledge. The issues that they placed on the norm agenda, namely Fair Trade and conflict diamonds, were susceptible to consumers. However, in some cases, the different activists involved in the promotion of the same norm, had different or competing goals. The different goals of the pragmatist and radical activists in the case of the Fair Trade norm illustrate this. The pragmatists set out to uplift marginalised farmers through providing them with

access to the international market, where radicals aimed to transform the nature of trade in the global economy.

Activists have illustrated that they possess persuasion knowledge, but knowledge expansion is required to make persuasion more effective. For instance, activists need to pay more attention to how they frame issues. Activists need to reconcile competing frames, and in the case of master frames, ensure that the norms in that frame do not contradict each other. Related to framing, activists could draw stronger causal links between existing and emergent norms. Causality was well illustrated in the case of the conflict diamonds campaign (where conflict was linked to amputated limbs). In the case of Fair Trade, the causal link was weaker, since the link between the nature of trade and poverty was less clear to the consumer.

In order to reach a larger audience, activists need to revisit their target knowledge. Firstly, they need to take into consideration the existing behaviour, preferences and behaviour of consumers. The Fair Trade case study illustrates this, where consumers often placed price and quality before the social cause of the product. Activists need to eradicate the perception that “charity goods” are low in quality, in order to accommodate consumers’ existing preferences, as well as to instil new preferences and behaviour. Coupled to that, activists need to improve their target’s knowledge about the proposed norm, through more aggressive consumer education initiatives. The internalisation of responsible consumption behaviour depends on consumers’ true understanding of the issues concerned, and not just the belief that purchasing a social cause is fashionable. Secondly, activists need to broaden what they perceive as their target audience. Activists should not just target individual consumers; other targets such as institutions, labour unions and churches also need to be included in their target audience.

During the second norm life-cycle, political consumers have proved to have limited topic knowledge, due to the numerous product labels, certification schemes and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that try to offer guarantees to consumers. Additionally, activists bombard consumers with different issues and causes. To some extent consumers do realise that their purchasing decisions affect others, but the case studies indicated that the consumers are not always clear on what those effects entail.

For example, the Fair Trade case study indicated different understandings of the effects of purchasing Fair Trade products. Some consumers are under the impression that purchasing Fair Trade products is a charitable action that will save the poor. Others understand that their purchases actually empower people to save themselves. In the case of the conflict diamonds campaign, there was also the understanding that by helping others (by not purchasing blood diamonds), consumers can help themselves (by preventing terrorist attacks against their countries). At the extreme end, some could even perceive their Fair Trade purchases as a personal expression of an anti-globalisation sentiment.

Consumers have proved to have sufficient persuasion knowledge through their use of the boycott and buycott strategies. This persuasion knowledge and tactics were transferred to consumers by activists, and proved successful, especially in the case of the conflict diamonds campaign.

Lastly, consumers do not have sufficient target knowledge. This is because consumers depend on activists, the media, researchers and watchdogs to continuously provide them with information and knowledge on the progress made with the implementation of the norm. Without accurate and critical information, some companies might manipulate consumers into believing that norm implementation was successful. For example, a coffee franchise might claim that they support Fair Trade, when only small fractions of their products are Fair Trade products. This lack of target knowledge could also be observed in the case of the conflict diamonds campaign. Consumers (and activists) were under the impression that they were successful in their aim with the advent of the Kimberley Process. However, as the case study indicated, the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) is still undergoing negotiations and compliance is voluntary. Activists therefore need to provide consumers with continuous target knowledge so that it will be able to take action to achieve the full internalisation of the norm.

5.2 Challenges and Recommendations

The analyses of the case studies brought to light several challenges for political consumerism. This study cannot provide concrete solutions to all of these challenges, but is able to recommend critical areas to which activists and norm entrepreneurs need to pay further attention. The following sections outline these challenges and recommended improvements.

5.2.1 Activist-Consumer Norm Life-Cycle

The first challenge involves the activists. Since activists are the norm entrepreneurs that give birth to the norm life-cycle, it is critical that they are prepared for, and focused on, what it is that they want to achieve. Firstly, when there are several activist groups and organisations working to promote a certain cause, the different types of activists (such as pragmatists and radicals), need to reconcile their efforts. They need to possess clear ideas on the degree of change that they seek and what success would entail.

Secondly, related to cooperation between activists, activists should try to co-opt an already established, respected institution or non-governmental organisation (NGO) from which to launch their campaign. This will help activists to keep rogue activists (such as radical internet activists who engage in e-terrorism) at bay and reinforce their own legitimacy as leaders of a particular campaign.

Thirdly, activists need to address ethical concerns within their activist network, as pointed out by Levi and Linton (2003: 428). Activists need to do more research before commencing their campaigns, in order to ensure that the change that they promote will be beneficial to those that they seek to uplift. This could be done by conducting in-depth consultations with the disempowered people that they are trying to help. For example, in the case of conflict diamonds, consultations should be held with the refugees who fled from rebels who forced them to work in diamond mines; and in the case of Fair Trade, the disempowered producers. This would ensure that ideas about sustainability and fairness are not solely defined and determined by activist movements and NGOs.

Once these issues have been resolved, activists then need to make certain improvements in the way that they recruit, or effect purchasing behaviour change amongst consumers. Le Billon (2006: 780) warns that there is a risk that campaigns could limit themselves by catering for a privileged few ethical consumers, through the development of “speciality products”. Therefore, there is a limited scope for achieving more radical transformation of production systems. More reflection is needed to determine what a “critical mass” for each campaign goal would entail, as well as what needs to be done to reach that “critical mass”.

Activists need to find ways of ensuring that consumers do not view the purchasing of “ethical products” as a passing fashion trend. Aggressive consumer education campaigns could assist in avoiding a situation in which social justice becomes commodified, and instead, ensure that the commitment to responsible purchasing behaviour becomes consolidated and internalised. Stated differently, political consumer campaigns are still very much consumer-dependent, where consumers need constant guidance from activists and consumers who act purely out of their interest in fashion. Instead, campaigns should strive to be consumer-driven. This will entail the involvement of well-informed consumers who have taken to heart the interests of those who are suffering as a result of a particular commodity. Such consumers are consumer-activists who can drive campaigns by making ethical purchasing behaviour a part of their everyday life.

Consumer education campaigns could be more effective, should activists and labelling organisations combine their efforts to reduce the numerous ethical labels that products carry. By reducing the different labels and incorporating several social causes in one label, consumers would be less confused about the meaning of their purchases. Furthermore, in addition to clearer labels, activists also need to take existing purchasing needs of consumers into account, by promoting and adjusting the price and quality of ethical products.

Another ingredient for success is co-opting celebrities in the campaign. The Fair Trade campaign did not have any celebrities acting as faces for the campaign. The conflict diamonds campaign did, however, make use of celebrities, amongst others, the lead actress of the Hollywood movie “Blood Diamond”, to support their campaign.

A last observation that was made about the successful persuasion of consumers is the environment in which a campaign is launched. Consumers are more likely to be persuaded if the issue involved are already affecting their own lives, instead of an issue that could become a problem in the future. A case in point is the conflict diamonds campaign. Western consumers (Americans in particular) have already been affected by terrorist attacks, which is said to be funded by conflict diamonds. In the case of Fair Trade, the consequences of global inequality might not have yet affected consumers. Although prevention is better than cure, consumers have not yet been able to understand the potential impacts of their purchasing decisions. Activists need to incorporate an understanding of future consequences in their consumer education campaigns.

5.2.2 Consumer-MNC Norm Life-Cycle

The analyses of the case studies indicated that the most significant challenges lie in the second norm life-cycle, where multinational corporations (MNCs) become the target of persuasion.

The first obstacle entails the phenomenon where MNCs use politicised consumption as an entrepreneurial strategy to lure consumers, which helps to contest their own capitalist image. Because of the limited monitoring capacity of activists and consumers, MNCs have the power to manipulate that degree of change that they are willing to undergo. Related to that, activists need to take into account the motivations of the MNCs they target. Should there be the threat to marginalise MNCs, or damaged caused to its brand, MNCs might (reluctantly) feel compelled to comply with the demands placed on them. This results in token gestures which weakens the legitimacy of MNCs dedication to a cause. On the other hand, should an MNC be effectively and positively persuaded to make certain changes, there would be a higher level of dedication to the cause on the part of the MNC. Here the pragmatist and radical methods come to play, which needs further attention and research by both activists and academics.

This study would like to recommend that activists and consumers link their present campaigns to successful campaigns from the past; similar to what the conflict diamonds campaign did. Activists highlighted to MNCs that the diamond industry

would be placed under the same pressure as the anti-fur campaign. Highlighting previous successes in consumer campaigning could assist in getting MNCs to take activists seriously. Activists could also boost their strength by gaining the support of academic or expert opinion. This could create a professional threat to MNCs, in addition to threats from the civil society-based consumer movement.

Secondly, just as activists try to manipulate MNCs, MNCs could also try to manipulate the activists. This is what Friestad and Wright (1994) refer to as “persuasion coping behaviour” or “counter persuasion” (refer to Figure 9) through the creation of a counter-frame. MNCs that are often targets of activists tend to develop coping mechanisms and knowledge on how to pacify activists. Here the example of Fair Trade labelling organisations applies. The absence of funding for monitoring and certification activities could, in some cases, make labelling organisations reliant on corporate contributions, which gives MNCs the power to manipulate and lessen licensing requirements. Activists, therefore, need to work towards having greater independence to pursue their goals and need to find alternative sources of funding and support.

The final, and perhaps most important recommendation that this study would like to make, is that activists should guard against prematurely believing that they have achieved success. Norm acceptance is not the end of the battle. More pressure, persuasion, negotiation and monitoring is needed to ensure the successful implementation and internalisation of a norm. This is illustrated by the conflict diamonds campaign. Activists and consumers have progressed too far in the norm life-cycle to let its growth be stunted during the last stage of the norm life-cycle. Some activists and consumers believe that the Kimberley Process announced the victory of their campaign against conflict diamonds, but there are still several problems with the consolidation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS). If activists believe that they have exhausted their capacity by the time they reach the third phase of the norm life-cycle, then they should perhaps share their spotlight with other international agents, such as governments and international governmental organisations.

5.3 Prospects for Further Research

This study was limited to two case studies, yet it has identified several facets of political consumerism and norms that warrant further investigation and research. In order to identify trends, the strengths of different tactics used by pragmatist and radical activists, as well as the effectiveness of the boycott and buycott method, researchers could take on a more encompassing research project comprising cross-sectional case studies of several consumer-activists' campaigns. Such a study could identify which combinations of these variables are more likely to ensure successful norm change, and perhaps create a substantive formula for successful persuasion and norm change

Research could also be conducted on the geopolitical aspects of political consumerism. One could ask why consumers from some countries are prone to political consumption, when others are not. This study indicated that most political consumer-driven campaigns emanate from the West. Further research could determine why such consumer behaviour has not yet emerged in the developed East. More importantly, the dimensions of the developing world should be incorporated into studies on political consumerism. The literature on political consumerism mostly focuses on developments in the developed North, and gives limited or no attention to the developing South. As Moore (2004: 77) asks: "what does Fair Trade 'feel like' from a Southern perspective?" Is the developing South buying into the idea of political consumerism? For example, in 2009, South Africa founded Fair Trade South Africa (FTSA). In April 2009, FTSA signed a marketing agreement with the Fair Trade Labelling Organisation (FLO) to market the FLO label in South Africa as both a producer and consumer of Fair Trade products (Fair Trade South Africa, 2009). Unlike in the case of Northern political consumers who want to help the "distant others", organisations like FTSA has a more inward-looking approach aiming to develop their own communities through producing and consuming Fair Trade, or ethical, products.

Further attention could also be given to the gender aspects of political consumerism. This study has made reference to women as a powerful audience for activists who want to change consumer behaviour to favour social causes. Some research has already been conducted on the gender dimension of political consumers, such as the works of Sussman (1994), Friedman (1995) and Hilton (2002), although these works are not strictly from a feminist perspective.

Another area that deserves further study, include the socio-political and economic environments in which new norms are likely to emerge, and be accepted. In the case of the conflict diamonds campaign, the post 9/11 environment made a significant contribution to the promotion and acceptance of the norm; taking into account the link between conflict diamonds and terrorism. Other environments, or the aftermath of global events or disasters, such as draught, wars, or global warming could spur and support the emergence of new norms.

5.4 Reflection

One should resist the temptation to believe that the rise of political consumerism is the advent of a global moral revolution that will not only change global governance, but also change the very essence of human nature and justice. Constructivism propagates that conceptions of power in international relations is shifting the emphasis from material interests to non-material interests, such as identity, values, justice and moral dignity. The nature of those interests might be changing, but actors will continue to behave and make decisions, based on their own interests; which remains a central part of rational choice and human nature. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 888, 907) remind us that norms and rationality are intimately connected, where rational progress is a central principle of global culture. As Derville (2005: 532) states, activists use messages that “will resonate with the rationale people use to make decisions”.

When drawing conclusions about whether or not political consumerism could dramatically change global society, one should take into account the motivation and interests of the different actors. Norm entrepreneurs (or activists) do not necessarily act out of altruism or empathy. Most norm entrepreneurs and norm conformists do not act against their own interests; instead, they act in accordance to a “redefined understanding of their interests” (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 898). Political consumerism therefore does not dictate behaviour change amongst international actors. It simply redefines interests which facilitates behavioural change.

So who really benefits? Is it the activists, the consumers, the MNCs, or the global disempowered poor? Political consumerism is the expression of the new interests of agents (activists, consumers and MNCs) who could all benefit from it by conforming

to the value placed on those interests. Political consumerism satisfies the activists' need for power to dictate and determine change and in return give them an avenue to surpass their own feelings of powerlessness in the face of the diminishing power of the state. Consumers can fulfil their need for the attainment of self-actualisation and purpose; and MNCs can boost their image and at the same time pocket the profit made from satisfying the new demands of the consumers. Therefore, political consumerism might transform the nature of capitalism, but not capitalism itself. In an ongoing struggle against inequality, it remains to be seen to what extent political consumerism will serve the interests of the global disempowered poor.

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