INTRODUCTION

As part of the Fairtrade University & Colleges Award, the University of Reading carried out a survey of staff and students in April 2023 to gather more information about current issues and purchasing behaviour. The survey included 25 questions and took respondents around 10 minutes to complete.

There were no right or wrong answers, we were just keen to hear their thoughts. The information that they provided was anonymous and was not used for any other purpose than our Fairtrade award submission and planning on how we can improve our efforts around Fairtrade and ethical consumption in the future.

THEMES & ANALYSIS

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| **Engagement in Ethical Consumption** | - Highest level of worry about the environment.  
- Respondents not very worried about unemployment.  
- Few are volunteering with an organisation working on these issues but many would like to.  
- 53% of staff and students feel that the effort they are making will make a difference to address the issues listed in question 1. |
| **Buying Patterns**                 | - Majority of staff and students are already buying products with ethical credentials.  
- 33% felt that their buying decision that was specifically influenced by the ethical standards of a retailer or producer.  
- 50% felt that the ethical standards of the products that they buy, and the companies that sell them, is an issue that matters to them.  
- The product itself is the biggest motivator to purchase ethically followed by animal, ethical, environmental issues.  
- The biggest factor making someone less likely to buy ethically was price and brand followed by lack of information that the product is ethical and how.  
- Other valuable feedback preventing people included brand greenwashing, brand reputation and financial benefit to me.  
- 60% of staff and students felt that companies need to be more responsible and ethical than they are at the moment.  
- 50% try to buy products from companies that act in an ethical way, even if it means spending more. |
| **Trust in suppliers**              | - The respondents trusted products with accreditation marks e.g. Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade or those from charities and campaign organisations over retailers’ own statements and news reports in the media. 75% care that products are independently verified. |
| Fairtrade knowledge | - 86% of respondents recognised the Fairtrade logo and associated it with fair production, pay and workers.  
- In terms of products purchased, 35% always buy Fairtrade tea/coffee, 43% bananas and respondents rarely buy Fairtrade clothing.  
- Over 60% care whether Farmers are getting fair pay and that they can choose how they improve the communities in which they work. |

| UoR Activity & Education | - 75% of respondents feel that the University of Reading sees the use and promotion of Fairtrade as important or very important.  
- Staff and students see the most Fairtrade products in Co-op and University cafés and shops but not in vending machines. And, posters and displays in cafes are being noticed.  
- 47% of respondents did not see any advertising for Fairtrade Fortnight events so we need to do much more visible advertising about events and publicise our performance in this area in the coming year.  
- Many students have either never been taught about Fairtrade or ethical purchasing – perhaps we can provide more education to our students at this stage of their education. |

**ACTIONS & NEXT STEPS**

This word cloud below generated from the survey give us some good indications of how we can improve in the coming year.

1. **Survey** - For our next award submission, we will circulate this survey much earlier in the process so as to collect more responses.

2. **Publicity & Education** - To increase awareness of the University’s commitment and activities around Fairtrade, we will work with the Sustainability Team Green Festival, Internal Communications team, RUSU and the Careers team to provide additional information to students and staff about progress we are making, what we are doing and how they can get involved. International students may be a particularly useful group to engage with based on comments provided in the survey responses.

3. **Sustainability Overall** – A number of the comments stated that respondents would like to be involved in wider sustainability efforts overall at the University mentioning further reduction in plastics on campus including packaging, plastic drink bottles, prizes and reusable containers.

4. **Economic Climate** – One respondent very accurately pointed out that ‘There’s a cost of living crisis, no student is going to spend more so that produce is ethical’. This is a very valid point and we will be mindful of how the economic climate and cost pressures are affecting staff and students in future efforts.
1. How concerned are you, if at all, about the following issues affecting the world today? *Please select one for each area.*

- Animal welfare / rights
- Human rights
- Environmental pollution
- Climate change
- War and terrorism
- Disease and illness
- Child labour
- Depletion of fresh water resources
- Crime and violence
- Unemployment
- Lack of education in poor countries
- Inequality - gap between rich and poor
- Workers being badly treated
- Poverty
2. Which of the actions below do you take to make a difference to areas that concern you? (0 point)

- I already do this
- I don't currently do this, but would be willing to
- I don't currently do this, and would not be willing to
- Don't know

- Buying products with ethical credentials
- Signing an online petition
- Sharing pages or links on social media
- Join a campaign group or society
- Volunteer for an organisation working on the issues

3. How confident are you that the actions you personally take will make a real difference to addressing the issues that concern you? (1 star - not confident, 5 stars - very confident) (0 point)

2.64
Average Rating
4. Now we'd like to find out a bit more about what you think about the things you buy...

When, if at all, did you last make a buying decision that was specifically influenced by the ethical standards of a retailer or producer? Please select only one

- In the last week: 9
- Over 1 week up to 1 month ago: 8
- Over 1 month up to 3 months ago: 5
- Over 3 months up to 6 months ago: 2
- More than 1 year ago: 2
- Never: 1
- Don't know: 1

5. To what extent are the ethical standards of the products that you buy, and the companies that sell them, an issue that matters to you? Please select only one

- Matters a great deal: 7
- Matters a fair amount: 14
- Matters just a little: 6
- Does not matter at all: 1
- Don't know: 0
6. What motivates you to buy products that are produced in an ethical way? Please write your answer in the box below.

27 Responses

Latest Responses

"The idea that if everyone bought ethical products, unethical products and ...

"Hope to make a difference"

"Quality. Concern for the environment. Concern for animal welfare."

4 respondents (14%) answered product for this question.

7. Which of the following reasons, if any, makes you less likely to buy products that are produced in an ethical way? Please select all that apply

- Ethical products tend to have higher prices
- Information about the ethical criteria
- Information about the ethical practices
- Ethical options aren't well advertised
- The brands I prefer don't offer ethical products
- Ethical products tend to be lower quality
- I'm not concerned about whether the products are ethical
- Other
- None of the above

25
11
8
7
7
3
2
1
1
8. Please tell us what else makes you LESS likely to buy products that are produced in an ethical way. (0 point)

Latest Responses
“Companies that claim to be ethical, but you have no way of tracing it, for e...
"Not applicable"
“Price”

4 respondents (14%) answered brand for this question.

expiry date, brand reputation, Brand greenwashing, recycle polyester, recycle item, sourced products, high prices, ethically produced, Lack, products, stores that are available, retail brands, eg Marks, names that are unknown, benefit me financially.

9. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements? (0 point)

I try to buy products from companies that act in an ethical way, even if it means spending more
I don’t think its enough for companies to say that they are ethical, they need to prove it to me
It is important to me that companies are clear about where they source their raw materials, components...
Companies need to be more responsible and ethical than they are at the moment
I want to buy and use more products that don’t harm the people who produce them
10. How much do you trust the information that is available on the ethical credentials of products, please rank them. *Please select one for each option, where 1 is the most trusted, and 5 is the least trusted.*

More Details

- 1 Most Trusted
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 Least Trusted
- None of these

- Manufacturer statements / adverts about their products
- Accreditation marks e.g. Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade
- Retailer statements / adverts about things they sell
- Information from charities and campaign organisations
- News reports and the media

11. Have you ever seen this logo? *Please select only one.* (0 point)

More Details

- Yes 24
- No 4
- Not sure 0

12. What do you think Fairtrade means? *Please write your answer in the box below.* (0 point)

More Details

Latest Responses

- "Fairtrade is an agreement to create or source products from ethical backgro...
- "Fair deal for producers"
- "It's an accreditation that companies can attain to show that their workers a...

28 Responses

11 respondents (39%) answered fair for this question.
13. Please think about the categories of products listed below. When you have the choice, how often do you buy a product with the Fairtrade label over a product without the Fairtrade label? Please select only one.

More Details

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always
- Don't know

Tea/Coffee
Chocolate
Biscuits/Cake
Flowers
Clothing
Gold/jewellery
Bananas
Wine
14. How much do you care about the following issues? *Please select one option for each statement.* (0 point)

- Farmers in developing countries are getting a fair deal for the products they grow
- Knowing that the products you buy have been grown without child labour
- Farmers in developing countries choosing how they improve their communities with the money they earn
- Having an independent third-party check that brands are treating their suppliers fairly

15. Now we'd like to know what you've seen or heard about Fairtrade at the University of Reading. How important, if at all, do you think it is that your University takes action to use and promote Fairtrade? *Please select only one.* (0 point)
16. Thinking about your university, which of the following places do you recall seeing Fairtrade products available on campus? Please select all that apply (0 point)

More Details

- Students' Union: 4
- University shops: 9
- University Cafe / Restaurant: 14
- Co-op Supermarket: 18
- Vending machines on campus: 3
- Market on campus: 4
- Other: 0
- None of these: 5

17. Other than on the products themselves, where else have you seen the Fairtrade logo at your university? Please select all that apply (0 point)

More Details

- University website: 5
- Students' Union website: 4
- Posters: 10
- Displays in shops or cafes: 13
- Product tastings: 5
- Events and meetings: 4
18. Fairtrade Fortnight is an action-packed two weeks of events and activities taking place across the UK.

Do you remember seeing any of the following activities, campaigns or events taking place to promote Fairtrade Fortnight at your university? Please select one only.

- Yes, discounts on Fairtrade hot ... 4
- Yes, raffle to win a Fairtrade hat... 3
- Yes, student Fairtrade quiz at M... 2
- No, I didn't see any events during... 13
- Don't know 5
- Other 1

19. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your university's performance in relation to purchasing... 

Please select one only where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good.

- 1 Very poor
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 Very good
- Don't know

Products with positive ethical credentials

Fairtrade products
20. What else do you think your University could be doing to support Fairtrade? Please write your answer in the box below.

27 Responses

"Stocking only fairtrade products in university owned shops."

"Not sure."

5 respondents (18%) answered fair trade for this question.

21. Thinking about your time in education so far, at which point when you were studying were topics such as corporate social responsibility, climate change, social justice, consumerism, global and ethical trade (including Fairtrade) covered in teaching? Please select all that apply.

- Primary school: 2
- Secondary school: 13
- College: 1
- University: 8
- I have never been taught these things: 11
- Never been taught about these things: 2
- Don’t know: 1
22. We’re also interested in finding out what you know about Fairtrade in the local community where you study...

Thinking about your time at Reading so far, which of the following have you seen or heard about in the local community? Please select all that apply

- Fairtrade Fortnight events: 6
- Fairtrade town or city status: 1
- Fairtrade campaign group: 3
- Don’t know: 5
- None of these: 14

23. Finally, we’d like to know a bit more about you...

Which of the following statements best describes you? Please pick one

- I am a UK citizen studying in the...: 17
- I am an international student from...: 2
- I am an international student fro...: 2
- I would prefer not to say: 7

24. Please tell us about your studies. Please select all that apply: (0 point)

- Full-time study: 17
- Part-time study: 2
- I would prefer not to say: 4
- Apprenticeship (Intermediate / ...: 0
- BA / BSc / BEd / Foundation De...: 6
- MA / MRes / MSc / MED / MPhil...: 1
- PHD / DPhil / professional doct...: 3
- Other qualification: 4
25. Thank you for completing our survey, we really appreciate you taking the time!

Your responses are completely confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than for this research. If there is anything else you’d like to tell us, please do so in the box below.

More Details

Insights

27 Responses

Latest Responses

“Reword question 17 - I don't recall seeing the fairtrade logo anywhere, but I...

“Nothing further”

…”

2 respondents (7%) answered questions for this question.

- survey is an investment cost
- no student
- Fair trade
- None
- drink bottles
- fairtrade logo
- plastic reduction
- reusable container
- no option
- living crisis
- people
- produce