Fair Trade Knowledge Decreases as Campus Involvement and Campaigning Decreases

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INTRODUCTION:

Farmers and distributors around the world are switching to Fair Trade. Fair Trade is an organization that provides a step in the right direction, a way for farmers and distributors to improve their livelihood and environment, while also being able to remain in the market for products. These products range from bananas and chocolate to rice and coffee.

Fair Trade sets certain criteria for the producers and traders which include:

-Environmental Objectives

-Economical Goals

-Social Needs

The Fair Trade applicant must follow detailed guidelines, while also being subject to inspection annually. As a reward, the producers receive a minimum price for their good. In the case for Santa Clara, this is mainly for coffee, but also includes chocolate.

It is not perfect or ideal, nor do we think that it is. What fair trade exemplifies is the idea that social change is possible. We should recognize that it is awareness that begins the process of change. We can not expect people to act on something they have never heard about. Therefore, awareness is the first step in understanding the issues of how our food is grown.

-Is it organic?

-Is it grown sustainably?

-How are the workers treated?

-Do the children of workers receive an education?

-What are the environmental impacts?

HISTORY of Fair Trade at Santa Clara:

Pre-2004: Fair Trade present at Jumpstart

2004: Santa Clara Fair Trade Coalition Established

2004/2005: SCU distributor from Oakland/Berkeley Area. Admin say students lack demand for FT in Mission Café. One pot of FT coffee was offered in Mission Café.

2005: FT Coalition campaigns and spreads campus awareness (petitions, class lectures/sit-ins, interactive art display in Benson, films, hosted FT rice speaker from Thailand in conjunction with *Engage*)

Winter 2006/2007: Santa Clara introduces FT coffee from Barefoot Coffee Roasters, but only in Mission Café (Switched due to Cost and Quality because Oakland based company. Barefoot was better.) Jumpstart continues to have FT. Market Square, Bon Appetit catering and the Law School still do not have FT.

Spring 2007: FT awareness lessens. Fair Trade Coalition dissipated, campaigning slows, but is still present. Santa Clara University looks into implementing Fair Trade into commercial uses.

2007/2008: Individuals still continue for FT efforts around Campus sustainability days, Earth days, class lectures, write articles, but Coalition had dissipated.

2008: PeraVida, a company that could provide Fair Trade for SCU catering doesn't respond despite requests. Interest by Bon Appetit.

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METHODS:

Purpose: To find if the decrease in Fair Trade campaigning had an impact on the knowledge of Fair Trade throughout undergraduate students who eat at Benson.

Hypothesis: It was hypothesized that there will be a correlation between the dissolution of Santa Clara Fair Trade Coalition and knowledge of Fair Trade. We will see an increase in knowledge from freshmen to seniors because the upperclassmen were more exposed/aware of the Fair Trade movement.

Dependent Variable: Knowledge of Fair Trade among Santa Clara students.

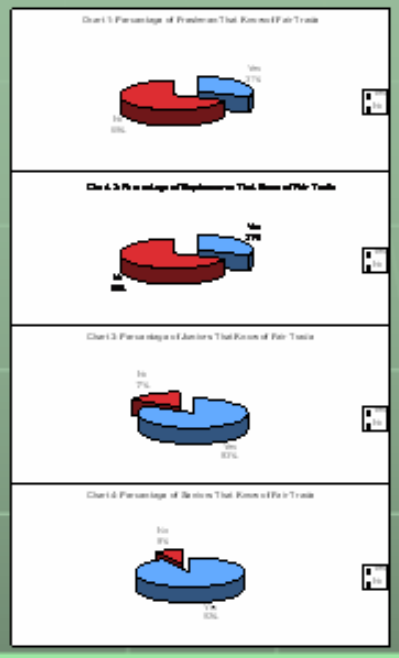
Independent Variable: The class of undergraduate Santa Clara students.

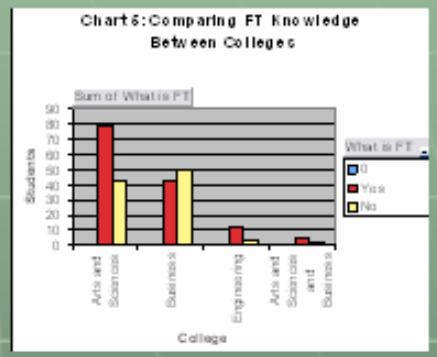
Participants: Approximately every person student who regularly eat at Benson. Out of a total of 200 tested participants, 191 were analyzed.

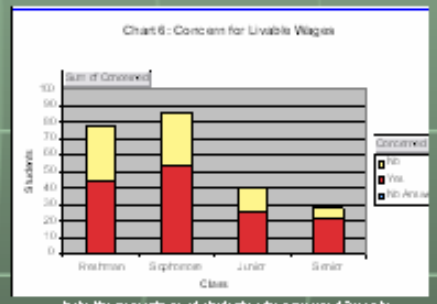
Procedure: During the course of both Winter and Spring quarters, surveys were distributed during varying high flow and low flow periods in the day. The survey consisted of twelve questions which includes the following topics:

- Grade
- College
- Gender
- Political Affiliation
- Organizations (Extracurriculars)
- Volunteering
- Frequency of Eating at Benson
- Knowledge of Fair Trade (Y/N)
- FT Availability on campus
- FT options/items on Campus
- Willingness to Pay for FT products
- Desire to Bring Farmers to Campus
- Concern for Farmers Livable Wage

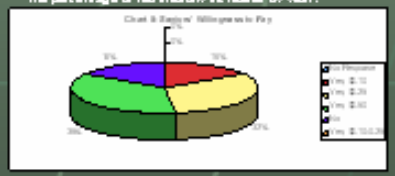
RESULTS:







Note the percentage of students who answered "Yes" to being concerned with the farmers' livable wages (in red). The percentage of red shading increases by year.



General Trends:

-Knowledge of FT increased with each year

-A greater percentage of Arts and Sciences students knew more about FT

-Concern for farmers obtaining a livable wage increased with classes (and awareness level)

-Of the freshmen that did respond, many were still willing to pay extra for FT products

DISCUSSION

The seniors of 2008 were exposed to Fair Trade campaigning in their first 3 years at Santa Clara from 2004-2006. This intense and spirited campaigning led to more awareness of the issues of Fair Trade and the willingness to change (see History). Our results imply that we should direct our efforts in educating those lacking knowledge of Fair Trade, such as lowerclassmen, particularly freshmen and business students. More awareness on campus is the first step to creating a culture of change.

We support our findings in that Fair Trade knowledge is lacking within our campus, but knowledge is not limited to just Fair Trade campaigning. The source of each student's exposure to FT awareness may be different. Over time, seniors could have acquired news of the movement from outside resources like local or national newspapers, classes on social justice, or the economics on social markets.

This means that reviving the Fair Trade Coalition is just one way that we can create more social awareness and change on campus. Bringing more Fair Trade products on campus would not only revive the coalition, but inspire eco-conscious students.

We also see that students are concerned with the social inequalities of farmers. As shown by Chart 6, students still seek to correct the social inequalities and obviously have a certain willingness to pay.

Yet this also poses a serious problem with our findings. Although there is a significant decrease in awareness in freshmen, we are skeptical of their high willingness to pay to solve the livable wage problem. Essentially, freshmen are willing to pay for a cause they don't understand. It is very important to understand that paying more for Fair Trade is not the ultimate solution. Fair Trade has its own economic flaws. Many more benefits of Fair Trade deal with the act of caring about where your food comes from, who is picking the beans, and how are these farm workers are treated; it is thinking about the problem and understanding its attributes and flaws.

Knowing about Fair Trade is a step in the right direction. The only way to change is through beginning awareness. Fair Trade is far from perfect, but it does provide a business model that idealistically improves social inequalities. It is an example of a way of thinking, and further makes people more conscious of a movement that is influential and has even more potential.

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http://www.fairtrade.net/organic_standards.html