

## Article

# It's All about Distinction: The Lifestyle Embeddedness of Fair Trade Consumption

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**Abstract:** Social scientists have argued that ethical consumption is embedded into broader lifestyles running across various domains of social life. For instance, fair trade consumption might be part of a distinctive lifestyle, including behaviors such as going to fancy restaurants or the opera. We, therefore, investigate the relationships of the main dimensions of broader lifestyles to various aspects of fair trade consumption—from purchase frequency, to visiting specialized stores, to the identification with fair trade. The analysis relies on data collected in the Summer of 2011 in Zurich, Switzerland. Since per capita consumption of fair trade products in this country was on a comparatively high level, the results are also important for other societies experiencing only currently the mainstreaming of fair trade. The first dimension, distinctiveness of lifestyles, denoting orientations and behaviors with high social prestige in society, emerges as a substantial and important determinant of all included aspects of fair trade consumption. The second dimension, modernity, is only correlated with a subset of these aspects. These effects are robust, even when taking ethical and political orientations and resource endowment into account. Hence, differences between lifestyle groups do not simply reflect the social position of high-status consumers or their ethical and political views. They reflect orientations, mental representations and routines specific to these social groups. Broader lifestyles are, therefore, a relevant addition to explanations of fair trade consumption.

**Keywords:** lifestyle analysis; broader lifestyles; distinction; modernity; social status; buying behavior; distribution channels; motivations; identity; routine



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## 1. Introduction

Fair Trade strives for greater justice in international trade and the reduction of poverty in the Global South. Fair trade stands for a holistic view on sustainable development, integrating ecological (i.e., production methods), economic (i.e., fair trade premium), and social (i.e., gender equality) goals [1]. It has grown tremendously over the last decades [2]. In many countries of the Global North, consumers can nowadays buy fair trade goods in various outlets, including supermarkets, discounters, the “good old” worldshops or even the newsstand around the corner. However, there are still enormous differences in the per capita consumption of fair trade products. In 2015, Switzerland was the worldwide leading country with 58 Euros per capita, more than double and triple the amount of countries like Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands, with the ranks 6, 8 and 10 [3].

By paying a fair trade premium, consumers take distant others into account in their buying decision [4,5]. They contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of farmers and workers in the Global South [6]. Moreover, with their wallet, consumers reward producers and brands which follow fair trade principles. For these reasons, sociologists and political scientists have characterized the purchase of fair trade products as a form of ethical consumption [7,8]. Consumers, backed up by NGOs and social movements [9], express their ethical values in their everyday shopping routines [10]. They can pursue

their political goals directly by making consumption choices, influencing the behavior of powerful actors, such as transnational companies.

Given the characterization of fair trade as a type of ethical consumption, it might not come as a surprise that social scientific research has shown a strong interest in the roles of ethical and political motivations for fair trade consumption, such as the fair trade consciousness [11,12], moral norms and identities [13,14], political attitudes [15], or prosocial values [4,5,16,17]. Although research produced rather consistent findings on the importance of these determinants, various authors have argued that a perspective on ethical and political motivations alone is insufficient for the explanation of ethical consumption [18–20]. They opt for the inclusion of lifestyles—patterns of behavior that exhibit a certain formal similarity across various situations and express underlying orientations, e.g., aesthetical, religious or ethical principles [21,22].

First, according to the sociology of consumption, ethical consumption is always enmeshed in a larger web of practices, behaviors, and values [10,18]. These values, behaviors and practices are not confined to the domains of ethics and politics, but also encompass aesthetic, hedonistic, ethnic, cosmopolitan, or action-oriented orientations and corresponding behaviors, among others [23–26]. Hence, ethical consumption practices are often embedded into broader lifestyles running across various domains of social life. Wearing fair trade sweaters might be the latest trend for fashionistas but buying organic wine might collide with being a wine aficionado, for example. Importantly, several authors have hinted at the possibility that sustainable and ethical consumption are part of the distinctive lifestyles of persons with high social status [7,27–29]. Fair trade consumption should therefore not be studied as an isolated act but as part of a person's broader lifestyle.

Second, our understanding includes that a person's lifestyle is not the expression of highly individualized, fluid, or idiosyncratic lifestyle projects [30], but an instance of collectively shared behavioral patterns and corresponding orientations in a population. Lifestyle analysis thus allows us to describe the structure of society in a specific way, namely as groups of people with shared lifestyles, behaving in a similar and stable manner across situations [24,31]. This makes them valuable candidates for the segmentation of a population or a market. Lifestyles are considered an especially efficient tool for the planning of target-specific interventions to foster sustainable behavior [19,20,32]. Profound changes to everyday shopping routines of western consumers are widely seen as necessary to achieve the goals of sustainable development [33]. Understanding how fair trade consumption is embedded into broader lifestyles may help to achieve consumer decisions compatible with sustainable development.

According to these arguments, then, broader lifestyles could be important determinants of fair trade consumption besides ethical and political motivations. However, whether broader lifestyles can improve the explanation of fair trade consumption is difficult to assess given the current state of research. Studies explicitly dealing with lifestyles are very rare and employ narrow, domain-specific typologies of lifestyles. These are based on fair trade consumption itself [34,35], ethical consumption [36], or sustainable behavior [37]. They do not address the question whether dimensions of *broader* lifestyles structure fair trade consumption. Furthermore, their explanations are not very informative in so far as it is hardly surprising that individuals with an ethical consumption lifestyle also choose fair trade products. Contrary to such specific accounts, we focus on the embeddedness of fair trade consumption into broader lifestyles. Broader lifestyles are not confined to one domain, e.g., ethical consumption, but span across different areas of a person's behavior, e.g. from culture, various forms of consumption like food and beverage, up to sports and leisure. They represent more or less consistent patterns of behaviors across several social domains in the general population [22,38,39]. Moreover, by analyzing broader lifestyles, we can take up the pertinent question raised in sociological research on the role of distinctive lifestyles for ethical consumption [7,27,28]. We are able to empirically study this claim directly since our representative data includes an explicit measurement of the distinctiveness

dimension of lifestyles and also a differentiated set of measures of fair trade consumption, thus enabling us to conduct our study with a data set of very high quality.

For these reasons, in the present article, we focus on the question whether adhering to such broader lifestyles contributes to the explanation of fair trade consumption. Based on an established research instrument from sociology to measure the dimensions of broader lifestyles [24,40], including the dimension of distinctiveness addressed in previous research e.g., [28], and representative quantitative data on fair trade consumption collected in Zurich, Switzerland in the year 2011, we address three interrelated research questions: First, how strongly do broader lifestyles correlate with various aspects of fair trade consumption, such as purchasing fair trade products, visiting specialized stores, decision criteria for buying fair trade, identification with fair trade, and routinization of fair trade consumption? Second, what dimensions of such lifestyles, including the distinctiveness dimension of lifestyles, are especially important for fair trade consumption? Finally, do broad lifestyles provide a unique contribution to the explanation of fair trade consumption, taking ethical and political motivations into account?

The article is organized as follows: We begin with the current state of research, the theoretical discussion of lifestyles as an explanatory concept, and derive expectations on broad lifestyles and fair trade consumption. Second, we present the data and measurement, followed by the results. Then, we discuss the findings. Finally, we draw conclusions and make recommendations for target-specific interventions based on the broader lifestyle concept.

## 2. Theory

### 2.1. What Do We Know about Lifestyles and Fair Trade Consumption?

We define lifestyles as patterns of behavior, which share certain formal similarities and exhibit a high degree of biographical stability. The coherence and stability of lifestyles are rooted in underlying cultural orientations, which also make them identifiable by others [21,25,39]. Lifestyles are not about single actions, but always about patterns of multiple behaviors across situations and time. Given this understanding, research on lifestyles in fair trade consumption is scarce.

A first line of inquiry related to lifestyles seeks to identify groups of consumers based on expectations and preferences about fair trade products. Studies in Canada [34] and Portugal [35], employing quantitative and qualitative methods, respectively, come to similar conclusions. They find three groups, one that is highly motivated by the fair trade claim, one that is more price and quality oriented and one that is a mix of both. While these studies shed light on behavioral patterns and orientations of typical fair trade consumers, they do not tell us much about how fair trade consumption is related to other behaviors of a lifestyle, since they conceptualize lifestyles only in one behavioral domain.

A second line of research broadens the perspective and situates fair trade consumption within ethical and sustainable lifestyles. Based on a qualitative analysis in Spain, Papaoikonomou [36] finds that self-declared ethical consumers apply sustainability principles to various domains in their life and therefore combine the consumption of fair trade products with other types of sustainable behaviors. Likewise, Pícha and Navrátil [37] find a strong statistical association between a Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS) and the preference for products by companies with similar values, including fair trade [41]. Together, these studies demonstrate that fair trade consumption can be part of a sustainable lifestyle. However, as already indicated, we go beyond explaining fair trade consumption by sustainable lifestyles and study their embeddedness into broader lifestyles covering different areas of everyday life.

The focus on broader lifestyles is an important step forward in research on lifestyles and fair trade consumption. The problem is that all of the above studies refer to domain-specific lifestyle typologies. The differentiation between domain-specific and broader lifestyles follows a classification developed by Otte [24]. Domain-specific lifestyle typologies are operationalized with indicators from the same subject matter as the explanandum [21]. So, for example, to explain the purchase of fair trade products, a typology is

derived from fair trade consumption and/or ethical and sustainable behaviors [34–37]. Such typologies have limitations. First, they are conceptually and empirically very close to the behavior that needs explaining. They therefore run the risk of being uninformative or even tautological. This is the case, for example, when the purchase of fair trade products is explained by a lifestyle based on buying products with ethical or sustainable attributes. It does not really come as a surprise that fair trade consumption is correlated to other forms of sustainable behaviors. Second, research in the sociology of consumption has highlighted [10,18] that the embeddedness of ethical consumption into lifestyles extends beyond sustainable behaviors and orientations. Lifestyles usually comprise various other dimensions such as aesthetics, hedonism, tradition, ethnicity, cosmopolitanism, level of activity, or privateness. This implies a holistic perspective on broader lifestyles running across various domains of social life.

A third line of analysis takes a step into this direction by focusing on cosmopolitan orientations, which have been shown in cultural sociology to be an emerging dimension of broader lifestyles [23]. In fair trade research, cosmopolitanism is conceptualized as cultural openness [42] or identification with a global community [43]. Quantitative studies have consistently found a positive correlation with fair trade consumption [42,43]. Interestingly, Nijssen and Douglas [42] point out that cosmopolitan consumers have a favorable image of fair trade stores although they do not necessarily have strong ethical beliefs. This hints at the additional explanatory contribution of broader lifestyles. However, cosmopolitanism is just one dimension of such lifestyles; thus, they have to be analyzed in a more encompassing fashion.

Research on human values represents the final line of investigation related to lifestyles [4,5,16,17]. Value theories comprehensively address general orientations underlying fair trade consumption. Research on the purchase of fair trade products has found positive correlations with political, prosocial, and religious values and negative correlations with tradition, hedonism and power values. Value research shows that fair trade consumption is connected to general orientations, which potentially result in more or less coherent lifestyle patterns across various domains of social life, since lifestyles are based on underlying general orientations.

Research on cosmopolitanism and basic human values thus provide evidence for the relevance of broader lifestyle dimensions beyond the domains of ethics, politics, and sustainability. However, in light of the definition above, they are not lifestyle concepts in a proper sense because they exclusively refer to the level of orientations and exclude measures of behavioral expressions [21,32]. The behavioral aspects of lifestyles are important because particular behaviors such as fair trade consumption must fit into the overall pattern of behaviors and the routines of a lifestyle to a certain extent. Furthermore, studies on basic human values ignore relevant dimensions of lifestyles in the general population. First and foremost, this concerns an orientation towards highly legitimate cultural practices with high social prestige. We refer to this dimension as distinctive lifestyles. It has repeatedly been identified in cultural sociology as one of the most important dimensions of contemporary spaces of lifestyles [25,26,40,44]. It is of particular interest since sociologists have raised the question whether ethical consumption is part of a distinctive lifestyle combining participation in highbrow culture with expensive consumption patterns practiced by high status individuals (see below, 27–29). While ethical and aesthetical consumption orientations do not necessarily go together, it is especially high-status consumers who combine both. Likewise, Baumann et al. [7] show that political consumption resembles high-status consumption very much in its correlates. Thus, it is a very pressing research question whether ethical consumption in general and fair trade consumption, in particular, are shaped by its embeddedness into distinctive, broader lifestyles.

In sum, studies on human values cannot appropriately address the arguments from the sociology of consumption. The extent to which fair trade consumption is enmeshed in repertoires of behaviors with non-ethical meanings is unclear. To answer this question, the empirical analysis needs to investigate the unique explanatory contribution of broader

lifestyles beyond ethical and political orientations. In the next steps, we therefore present a theoretical account of broader lifestyles, their functioning and their structure.

## 2.2. Why Do Broader Lifestyles Influence Fair Trade Consumption?

Sociologists of consumption have repeatedly stressed the ways in which ethical, sustainable, and fair trade consumption are systematically embedded in practices, beliefs and values, stretching over various situations and social domains [10,18]. Broader lifestyles and orientations should therefore allow us to predict attitudes and behaviors in specific situations. However, in order to explain these correlations, we must explicate the mechanisms linking broader lifestyles, orientations, and specific attitudes and behaviors on the micro-level. Rössel [38] therefore argues for a theory of constrained choice. Actors pursue those behaviors that are most strongly in accordance with their lifestyle-related goals, given the constraints they face in the decision situation. These lifestyle-related goals come in two types [45].

First, general orientations are used to perceive, categorize, evaluate, and finally select courses of action [22]. They establish cultural preferences [38]. Depending on their orientations, individuals (dis-)value the intrinsic taste (aesthetic preferences), the political and ethical consequences (political and ethical preferences) or the costliness (economic preferences) of goods, for example, which influences their choice between fair trade and conventional products. The hierarchy of general orientations and specific preferences has been well documented in empirical research on human values [46]. In short, general orientations shape the relative importance of decision criteria.

Second, individuals also evaluate new behaviors in terms of the symbolic fit with their existing lifestyle [45]. Individuals hold mental representations of typical lifestyles, i.e., typical patterns of behaviors in a society. They avoid cognitive dissonance between new behaviors and the existing behaviors of their lifestyle, especially those behaviors related to their sense of self—a mechanism well established in theories of cognitive dissonance [47]. For example, fair trade might be stereotypically linked to alternative forms of consumption, inconsistent with a self-image as a person who leads a traditional way of life. Hence, broader lifestyles shape the extent to which behaviors fit with the personal or social identity.

According to the model of constrained choice outlined here, individuals take situational constraints into account when pursuing lifestyle-related goals. These constraints are linked to the individual's social position, namely the endowment with economic and cultural resources, such as income and education. Importantly, the analysis needs to show that lifestyles are statistically related to consumption independent from resource endowment [45]. Since income and education covary with dimensions of broader lifestyles, differences between lifestyle groups might simply reflect the effect of these variables, if they are not carefully controlled for. Previous research has analyzed the role of prices, income and willingness to pay for fair trade consumption and ethical consumption more generally. It shows that economic considerations are important in a majority of studies [48], but results are not consistent overall, with some studies showing, e.g., no effect of income on fair trade consumption [11,49].

Besides behavioral goals, lifestyles also shape behavioral routines. Since lifestyles and orientations are relatively stable over the life course [39], individuals make similar decisions on repeated occasions. Over time, consumption decisions based on general orientations and symbolic fit become habitualized. The lifestyle then serves as a script for everyday behavior, reducing the cognitive effort for consumption choices [25,50]. As a result, at least for some consumers, it becomes self-evident and “natural” to buy fair trade products because it is a part of their day-to-day routines.

In sum, broader lifestyles are connected to fair trade consumption via three mechanisms: (i) underlying general orientations establish the relative weight of decision criteria, (ii) the symbolic fit with the existing lifestyle defines the cognitive consistency with a person's identity, (iii) repeated decisions based on stable orientations and lifestyles result in consumption routines.



### 2.3. How Are Broader Dimensions of Lifestyles Related to Fair Trade Consumption?

If we hypothesize that broader lifestyles are related to fair trade consumption, it begs the question what major dimensions of broader lifestyles are. In lifestyle research, such dimensions are usually identified by applying statistical methods, such as principle component or cluster analysis, to a broad range of behaviors from various social domains. Based on a meta-analysis of over two decades of lifestyle research in Germany, Otte [24,40] concluded that all these diverse typologies can be approximated with two dimensions of broader lifestyles. First, the distinctiveness of a lifestyle, which reflects orientations and behaviors with varying levels of social prestige in a society. It is directly related to the hierarchy of cultural tastes [25] and therefore demarcates status groups in the classic Weberian sense, i.e., groups whose status is “grounded in the honor, esteem, and prestige” [22] (p. 268) ascribed to their life conduct. Persons with a distinctive lifestyle tend to consume highbrow culture, quality news media and spend more money on things like restaurants and visits to museums. The second dimension consists in the level of modernity of lifestyles. It differentiates between behavioral practices that are more traditional on the one hand (e.g., to religious and traditional family values) and on the other hand practices that are connected to hedonism, openness, personal fulfillment, and activity. Together, these two dimensions offer a parsimonious description of the main lifestyles in the general population. Empirical studies have applied this typology successfully to a broad range of explananda, such as air travel [51], online shopping [52], wine consumption [53], or political preferences [24], among others. Their connection to fair trade is, of course, an open empirical question. Yet, based on historical developments and previous research, we can derive expectations on their relation to fair trade consumption.

Regarding the dimension of distinction, sociologists have argued that ethical consumption is generally more prevalent among high-status consumers with prestigious lifestyles in western, contemporary societies [27,28]. For one, fair trade products are ascribed aesthetic qualities that are highly valued by consumers with high-status orientations, such as superior taste or an authentic design [54]. The attractiveness of fair trade products for consumers with distinctive orientations should have become especially pronounced with the mainstreaming of fair trade, for which Switzerland with its comparatively high level of per capita consumption and the early adoption of a marketing approach by its national labeling association Max Havelaar is clearly a pioneer [55]. Previous empirical research on lifestyles has clearly shown that, in general, the lower the costs for choosing a product, the more strongly a product is aestheticized, and the more diversified product supply is, the stronger is the social differentiation of consumers according to lifestyles [38,56]. All three factors increase the opportunities for consumers to choose products consistent with their lifestyles. Mainstreaming has rendered all three conditions more favorable. Mainstreaming has led to a highlighted concern with the non-ethical qualities of fair trade products (i.e., taste, design), the development of fashionable organic grocery stores [57], increased availability and diversification of fair trade goods, and the reframing of fair trade as “solidarity through lifestyle” instead of an alternative approach to international trade [58,59]. All these factors are hence conducive to the choice of fair trade products based on distinctive lifestyles [9,55]—at least until fair trade consumption becomes so prevalent that it loses its function as a resource for social distinction (which was not the case at the time of the study when fair trade still represented a niche for most product categories [60]). Previous empirical research on fair trade consumption supports this argument. Schenk [55] and Koos [9] both compared fair trade markets with various degrees of mainstreaming and found that the social differentiation of consumers in terms of orientations and social-structural underpinning was higher in the mainstreamed markets.

However, distinctive lifestyles should also be related to ethical preferences and identities. According to recent work by Reckwitz [29], contemporary high-status consumers strive for an authentic lifestyle that combines self-actualization, cultural openness, diversity, and creativity—in short, the aestheticization and the ethicization of everyday life. Kennedy, Baumann, and Johnston [28] explain the emergence of this specific configuration of ori-

entations by a tension between, on the one hand, the societal norms of democratization, tolerance, inclusivity, and cosmopolitanism and, on the other hand, the ongoing tendency of high-status groups to demarcate symbolic boundaries to other groups (i.e., constructing personal and social identities). By consuming ethically, high-status individuals can “most effectively balance the competing goals of democracy and distinction” [28] (p. 397). In line with this argument, previous studies have shown that high-status consumers combine aesthetic and ethical criteria when making food choices [28], that sustainable consumption behaviors, such as meat avoidance, living space, and practicing yoga, are strongly related to high-cultural aesthetic orientations [22], and that environmentalism and social consciousness are positively correlated with a need for status consumption [41]. In sum, we expect:

**Proposition 1.** *The distinction dimension of broader lifestyles is positively correlated with fair trade consumption.*

The relation between the modernity dimension of broader lifestyles and fair trade consumption is more ambiguous and complex. On the one hand, sociologists and political scientists have argued that the rise of ethical consumption must be understood against the backdrop of reflexive modernization [30]. Accordingly, the bonds of tradition have weakened over the course of the twentieth century. Actors have consequently become more reflexive and knowledgeable of the social conditions of modernity. At the same time, globalization has been affecting more and more areas of everyday social life. Together, globalization and greater reflexivity have led to the awareness of the manifold interlinkages between everyday consumption and global problems, such as poverty in the Global South or environmental destruction [18]. Fair trade consumption should hence be positively correlated with such modern lifestyles, stressing reflexivity and de-emphasizing tradition as guiding principles of everyday life.

On the other hand, research has also found that individuals who use religious principles as a criterion in their purchase behavior consume more sustainably and buy more fair trade products [17,61]. In Switzerland and elsewhere, fair trade has strong origins in religious groups. Still today, church-based NGOs support fair trade in Switzerland [58]. This implies a positive correlation of fair trade consumption with religious, more traditional lifestyles. On the other side of the spectrum, modern lifestyles entail variety-seeking and hedonistic values [24]. Fair trade might not lend itself to the expression of these orientations, since it might be perceived as an eschewal of fun and hedonism [4]. For example, according to previous research, young and modern consumers value fashionable attire and well-known brands more than the authenticity of fair trade products [62,63]. A negative correlation of fair trade consumption with modern, hedonistic lifestyles could therefore be expected.

In sum, these lines of reasoning lead to contradictory expectations. Depending on the relative effects of reflexive modernization, religiosity, and hedonism, the correlation with the modernity dimension could be positive, negative or zero. We hence formulate an undirected, explorative proposition, stipulating that a relationship between this dimension of broader lifestyles and fair trade consumption exists.

**Proposition 2.** *The modernity dimension of broader lifestyles is correlated with fair trade consumption.*

### 3. Data and Methods

The empirical analysis is based on a standardized mail survey conducted in the summer of 2011 in the city of Zurich, Switzerland. It is unique in providing detailed information on fair trade consumption, broader lifestyles, and other major determinants of ethical consumption for a representative sample of the population. Furthermore, the pronounced mainstreaming and the widespread consumption of fair trade products make Switzerland an interesting case for our research questions. Right from the start, the Swiss national labelling organization Max Havelaar has adopted a market approach to fair trade

and enabled the introduction of fair trade products in supermarkets as early as 1992 [55,58]. The wide offer of fair trade goods in various outlets counts as one of the reasons for the high level of fair trade consumption in Switzerland [8]. In 2011, Switzerland was the leading country regarding the purchase of fair trade products per capita with 33 Euros per year [64]. As outlined above, these conditions favor the social structuration of fair trade consumption by broader lifestyles because fair trade is not confined to a small niche of the population [9,38,55]. Switzerland is hence a case where the link of broader lifestyle dimensions to fair trade consumption should be especially clearly observable. Since fair trade markets in various countries such as the UK, Germany, Canada, Spain, and the United States [2] have experienced similar tendencies of mainstreaming and growth more recently, Switzerland as an avant-garde country might serve as an example for other contexts.

The population of the survey consisted of all residents of the city of Zurich over 18 years of age and of Swiss or German nationality. We thus have data on the general urban population. A random sample of individuals was drawn from the population register. There was no reference to fair trade consumption in the title of the survey in order to minimize self-selection of fair trade consumers. The questionnaire was conducted with pen and paper, and offered in German. Participation was incentivized with a gift. After initial contact, non-respondents received two reminders. Together, these measures resulted in an excellent adjusted response rate of 42 percent ( $n = 2400$ ).

The dependent variables follow from the theoretical discussion on the explanatory mechanisms linking broader lifestyles to fair trade consumption (Section 2.2). One group covers self-reported consumption behaviors. First, we analyzed the purchase frequency of fair trade groceries. It is measured on a seven-point scale, ranging from “never” to “several times a week” (see Table A1 in Appendix A for the wording of all items and descriptive statistics). Second, we were interested in the breadth of fair trade consumption. Respondents indicated for a variety of food and non-food products (banana, coffee, handicrafts, footballs, flowers, clothing, and others) whether they have ever purchased the fair trade version. We computed an additive index, ranging from zero to 18. Finally, we analyzed how often consumers frequent specialized stores for fair trade products, namely organic grocery stores and worldshops. Both represent alternative distribution channels, raising awareness on sustainability issues. The scales have a range from 1 (never) to 6 (more than once a week). Thus, we are able to analyze if the two broader lifestyle dimensions are correlated with all indicators of fair trade consumption, or just with certain patterns of such consumption.

The second group of dependent variables covers the three mechanisms connecting general lifestyles and consumption behavior: decision criteria, identification, and routinization. First, in line with the results of previous research [49], we included the three most important decision criteria for the choice of fair trade products. For ethical and political criteria, we employed the so-called fair trade consciousness, which measures the attitude towards the exploitation and poverty of farmers and workers in the Global South. The FT-consciousness emerged as a very robust determinant of the purchase of fair trade products in previous studies [11,12]. It is measured with six items on five-point Likert scales (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.77$ ). Higher values indicate a stronger fair trade consciousness. Next, we measured intrinsic product quality on five-point scales, ranging from “not important at all” to “very important” based on two items related to overall quality and taste. Given the small number of items, internal consistency of intrinsic quality is sufficient with  $\alpha = 0.60$ . Finally, we included economic criteria, namely price, measured with a single item. Regarding the operationalization of identification, two items measure the extent to which respondents view the purchase of fair trade products as consistent with their self-image ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ). Finally, routinization of fair trade consumption was measured with two items indicating the extent to which buying fair trade products is part of the respondent’s day-to-day shopping routine ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ). The items for identification and routinization were measured on five-point Likert scales. Higher values indicate stronger identification and routinization.



To measure the dimensions of broader lifestyles, we employ a standardized instrument developed by Otte [24,40]. It has two critical advantages in light of our research questions. First, it is based on a systematic meta-analysis of lifestyles in the general population. It thus exhibits high content validity in terms of measuring broader lifestyles covering different areas of behavior and not just domain-specific patterns. Second, the high degree of standardization enables comparability to other studies based on the same instrument (e.g., 51,53), a rare feature in lifestyle research [32]. The typology comprises two dimensions, both measured with five items: the distinctiveness of consumption ( $\alpha = 0.57$ ) and modernity ( $\alpha = 0.53$ ). Items for the distinctiveness dimension refer, among others, to the maximum expenses in restaurants and the frequency of going to art museums, readings books or national newspapers. Modernity is measured with items referring to the importance of family traditions, religiosity or going out and enjoying life, for example (see Table A1 in Appendix A). Each dimension has a value range of 1 to 4. Higher values indicate higher status or more modern lifestyles. The internal consistency of the lifestyle dimensions is just sufficient and similar to other applications [51]. It needs to be noted, however, that Otte [24] does not recommend Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for lifestyle typologies. In modern, western societies, lifestyles are not perfectly coherent. A certain amount of fragmentation is therefore to be expected. Otte has previously validated the dimensionality and coherence of his lifestyle model based on correspondence analysis [24], which was also used by Bourdieu in his well-known analysis of lifestyles [25]. Since the typology has been validated in previous studies and has the outstanding advantage of being comparable to other studies based on the same measurement, we consider it an appropriate instrument with acceptable overall quality.

To isolate the unique explanatory contribution of broader lifestyle dimensions for fair trade consumption, we need to control for prosocial and political orientations (see Section 2.1) and for factors constraining the consumption of fair trade products (see Section 2.2). Prosocial orientations are measured with the value type universalism. Studies have consistently found that universalism is most strongly correlated to fair trade consumption out of all the value types in the Schwartz-typology [4]. It is operationalized with three items from the PVQ21—a well-established measurement instrument in value research. Reliability is acceptable with  $\alpha = 0.58$ , similar to other studies [65]. Political orientation is measured on a 10-point scale with lower values representing a conservative, right-wing orientation and higher values representing a liberal, left-wing orientation. Regarding constraints, we included measures on net equivalent household income and highest level of education (low = compulsory minimum level of education; intermediate = qualifications giving access to higher education; high = university degree or equivalent). Finally, we included gender, age, and the frequency of doing the shopping in the household as additional control variables.

Compared to other studies in Switzerland [19,51], we find an overrepresentation of individuals with distinctive lifestyles in our sample. Most likely, this reflects the urban lifestyles of our population and the greater interest of these lifestyle groups in the topic of the survey. A comparison with official statistics for the study population further shows that individuals with higher education (53% with a university degree in the sample vs. 28% in Zurich) are overrepresented. There is no substantial response bias in terms of gender, age, and income.

Since all of our dependent variables have quasi-metric scales with five points or more, we ran a series of OLS-regressions to estimate the effects of the two dimensions of broader lifestyles on various aspects of fair trade consumption (behaviors, decision criteria, identification, routinization), taking into account constraints, political and prosocial orientations, and the additional control variables. Furthermore, we conducted a mediation analysis to investigate how the three mechanisms (decision criteria, identification and routinization) connect the broader lifestyle dimensions to actual fair trade consumption. In these ways, we control for possible interdependencies between our explanatory variables. We employed multiple imputations to handle missing values [66]. Twenty imputations were generated. An inspection of the distributions of the variables in each imputed dataset

allowed an assessment of the validity of the procedure. No anomalies were detected. We used Stata 14 for all computations.

#### 4. Results

The first series of regression models, summarized in Table 1, estimates the total effects of the two dimensions of broader lifestyles on various aspects of fair trade consumption. For the first dimension, distinctiveness, we obtain very consistent results. This dimension is a significant and substantial covariate of all nine aspects of fair trade consumption. Respondents with such lifestyles buy more often fair trade groceries, buy a larger variety of food and non-food fair trade products, frequent specialized shops for sustainable consumption more often, find ethical and intrinsic quality attributes more and economic criteria less important, consider the purchase of fair trade to be consistent with their personal identity, and integrate fair trade into their day to day consumption routines. This clearly supports previous research in assuming that ethical, i.e., fair trade consumption is related to such distinctive lifestyles and broadens this for a differentiated set of forms of fair trade consumption [18,27–29].

**Table 1.** Behaviors of fair trade consumption, decision criteria, identification with fair trade consumption, and routinization of fair trade consumption regressed on dimensions of broader lifestyles (OLS-regressions). Standardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

	FT Purchase	Breadth	Worldshop
<b>Distinctiveness</b>	0.192 *** (0.06)	0.200 *** (0.13)	0.097 *** (0.03)
<b>Modernity</b>	0.017 (0.07)	0.006 (0.14)	−0.041* (0.03)
<b>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.04	0.04	0.01
	Organic store	FT-Consc.	Quality
<b>Distinctiveness</b>	0.202 *** (0.05)	0.146 *** (0.03)	0.245 *** (0.02)
<b>Modernity</b>	0.068 ** (0.05)	0.034 (0.03)	0.099 *** (0.02)
<b>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.05	0.02	0.08
	Price	Identification	Routinization
<b>Distinctiveness</b>	−0.297 *** (0.04)	0.143 *** (0.04)	0.161 *** (0.04)
<b>Modernity</b>	−0.080 *** (0.04)	0.001 (0.04)	−0.017 (0.04)
<b>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.10	0.02	0.02
<b>n</b>	2440	2440	2440

Closer inspection reveals some finer distinctions. First, we find differences between the two specialized shops for sustainable consumption. The correlation is substantially higher for organic grocery stores than for worldshops. This reflects the stronger “conventionalization” of organic stores, emphasizing environmentalism and quality, which is especially attractive to distinctive consumers practicing a lifestyle of health and sustainability [22,41]. Worldshops on the other hand, are more strongly associated with political activism for the Global South and social justice and usually do not cater very much to more aesthetic criteria of consumption. This interpretation is supported by a second pattern in our results. The correlations with the dimension of distinctiveness are substantially larger for intrinsic and economic decision criteria than for fair trade consciousness, identification,

and routinization. Hence, the distinctiveness dimension of a lifestyle is more strongly linked to criteria related to a market logic (quality, price) than to a stricter logic of ethical consumption practices (fairness, poverty reduction, identification, routinization) [9,55]. Thus, fair trade consumption is embedded in distinctive lifestyles as long as they match the specific pattern of aesthetic *and* ethical criteria of such lifestyles. A stricter and more austere form of ethical consumption is less closely related to the lifestyle dimension of distinction.

The second lifestyle dimension, modernity, is significantly correlated with only four out of the nine dependent variables. We find a negative correlation between modern lifestyles with frequenting worldshops and a positive correlation with the visit of organic grocery stores. As before, this points to differences in the social underpinnings between the consumers of these two channels for sustainable consumption. Moreover, we find a positive correlation with quality as a decision criterion and a negative correlation with price. In all cases, however, the partial correlations are rather weak. Modernity as the second dimension of broader lifestyles is thus only of subordinate importance to fair trade consumption.

The patterns identified so far are also reflected in the explained variance by the two dimensions of broader lifestyles. Intrinsic quality and price as decision criteria exhibit the highest values with around nine percent on average. The motivations and practices with more ethical and political meanings (fair trade consciousness, identification, routinization, worldshops) exhibit the lowest values with around two percent on average, thus supporting our interpretation of the correlative pattern. The remaining behaviors of fair trade consumption, including purchase frequency, lie in between with around four percent on average. Hence, overall, explained variance by broader lifestyle alone is on a low to medium level, yet, strikingly low for the ethical and political elements of fair trade consumption.

So far, we can conclude that fair trade is consistently more often practiced by consumers with an overall distinctive lifestyle [18,27–29]. However, the previous analysis has not clarified whether these correlations simply reflect the greater economic and cultural resources or the ethical and political values of distinctive consumers. To assess the unique explanatory contribution of broader lifestyles, we introduce these variables (and some additional controls) in the second series of OLS-regressions, thereby taking into account possible interdependencies between the variables (Tables 2 and 3). By and large, the statistical effects of the two dimensions of broader lifestyles are very robust. The distinctiveness consumption is still a positive, highly significant covariate of all nine aspects of fair trade consumption. We observe the biggest reductions in the partial correlations in the cases of the fair trade consciousness, price as a decision criterion, and identification. But even there, the effects remain substantial. All other effects remain practically unchanged. In the case of modernity, there is only one notable difference. The correlation with organic grocery stores becomes insignificant. According to additional analysis, the reduction of the effect is primarily due to the political orientation. Thus, only if modern consumers have a more leftist political orientation, do they frequent organic grocery stores more often.

More interesting is the comparison between the standardized effects of general lifestyles and the effects of political and ethical orientations and the constraints. Here, three groups of dependent variables can be differentiated, consistent with our findings on the overall explanatory power of lifestyles above. In the first group, the statistical effects of the distinction dimension of lifestyles are around the same size as the effects of the ethical and political orientations and the constraints. This is true for the behavioral aspects of fair trade consumption (purchase frequency, breadth, and visiting organic grocery stores), with the exception of worldshops. Second, for intrinsic quality and price, the *ceteris paribus* effects of the distinction dimension are substantially stronger than the effects of the ethical and political orientations. This is especially true for quality as a decision criterion, which is statistically unrelated to universalist values and political orientation. Price as decision criterion is the only dependent variable that is also substantially related to income, reflecting the impact of economic resources on the consumer's budget constraint. Moreover, in the cases

of quality and price, modernity of the lifestyle plays a minor role, too. In a third group, the effects of the political and prosocial orientations are substantially stronger than the effects of the distinctiveness dimension. Unsurprisingly, these are the aspects of fair trade consumption with stronger ethical and political meaning. The fair trade consciousness, identification with fair trade, and visiting worldshops are the paradigmatic cases, strongly correlated with a leftist political orientation, but the same is true for routinization. Nevertheless, even here, the correlations with the dimension of distinctiveness are considerable. All in all, our results show that certain aspects of fair trade consumption are driven more strongly by ethical and political considerations (visiting world-shops, identification with fair trade, fair trade consciousness), whereas other are driven more by distinctive lifestyle choices (intrinsic quality and price as criteria).

**Table 2.** Behaviors of fair trade consumption regressed on dimensions of broader lifestyles, controlling for ethical and political orientations and constraints (OLS-regressions). Standardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

	FT Purchase	Breadth	Worldshop	Organic Store
<b>Distinctiveness</b>	0.183 *** (0.07)	0.210 *** (0.14)	0.098 *** (0.03)	0.190 *** (0.06)
<b>Modernity</b>	−0.020 (0.08)	−0.042 (0.15)	−0.048 * (0.04)	0.010 (0.06)
<b>Universalism</b>	0.180 *** (0.07)	0.152 *** (0.13)	0.092 *** (0.03)	0.147 *** (0.05)
<b>Leftist orientation</b>	0.160 *** (0.02)	0.219 *** (0.04)	0.150 *** (0.01)	0.131 *** (0.02)
<b>Household Income</b>	−0.035 (0.00)	−0.095 *** (0.00)	−0.043 (0.00)	−0.016 (0.00)
<b>Education High <sup>1</sup></b>	0.013 (0.09)	0.031 (0.17)	−0.005 (0.04)	0.043 (0.07)
<b>Education Intermediate <sup>1</sup></b>	0.007 (0.09)	0.029 (0.18)	0.001 (0.04)	0.035 (0.07)
<b>Age</b>	0.002 (0.00)	−0.020 (0.00)	0.031 (0.00)	−0.058 * (0.00)
<b>Gender (women) <sup>2</sup></b>	0.077 *** (0.07)	0.139 *** (0.13)	0.111 *** (0.03)	0.076 *** (0.05)
<b>Shopping: always respondent</b>	−0.085 *** (0.08)	−0.054 * (0.15)	−0.013 (0.04)	−0.008 (0.06)
<b>Shopping: mostly respondent</b>	0.019 (0.10)	0.033 (0.19)	0.014 (0.05)	0.049 * (0.08)
<b>Shopping: mostly/ always other person</b>	−0.052 * (0.11)	−0.067 *** (0.22)	−0.009 (0.05)	−0.037 (0.09)
<b>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.14	0.20	0.07	0.13
<b>n</b>	2440	2440	2440	2440

<sup>1</sup> ref. category: low education; <sup>2</sup> ref. category: men; <sup>3</sup> ref. category: all household member equally.

In a final step, we present models in which we regressed the behaviors of fair trade consumption on the three mechanisms explaining the relation between lifestyle dimensions and fair trade consumption (Table 4). As our theoretical model suggests, the behavioral aspects should depend on orientations, routinization, and identification. The goal is hence to assess whether the ethical, aesthetic, and economic decision criteria (1), identification (2), and routinization (3) are statistically related to the behavioral aspects of fair trade consumption and therefore function as mediators of the lifestyle effects. All five variables are significant covariates of the purchase frequency of fair trade products, the breadth of fair trade consumption, and the visit of organic grocery shops. In the case of visiting worldshops, only the fair trade consciousness, the price criterion, and routinization are statistically significant. Additionally, we conducted a series of Sobel tests to estimate the

level of significance for the indirect effects of the two dimensions of broader lifestyles on the behavioral aspects of fair trade consumption, thereby completing the mediation analysis [67]. All indirect effects of the distinctiveness of consumption are significant on at least the five percent level, with the exceptions of the path via quality and the path via identity on the visit of worldshops. For modernity, the paths via quality and price are significant on the 10 percent level only, except for the case of visiting worldshops. Overall, these results confirm that broader lifestyles, especially the distinctiveness dimension, are indirectly related to the behavioral aspects of fair trade consumption via the postulated theoretical mechanisms [38,45].

**Table 3.** Decision criteria, identification with fair trade consumption, and routinization of fair trade consumption regressed on dimensions of broader lifestyles, controlling for ethical and political orientations and constraints (OLS-regressions). Standardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

	FT-Consc.	Quality	Price	Ident.	Routin.
<b>Distinctiveness</b>	0.115 *** (0.03)	0.238 *** (0.03)	−0.207 *** (0.04)	0.115 *** (0.04)	0.140 *** (0.04)
<b>Modernity</b>	−0.026 (0.03)	0.047 * (0.03)	−0.051 * (0.05)	0.005 (0.04)	0.008 (0.05)
<b>Universalism</b>	0.255 *** (0.02)	0.018 (0.02)	−0.100 *** (0.04)	0.216 *** (0.04)	0.222 *** (0.04)
<b>Leftist orientation</b>	0.301 *** (0.01)	−0.003 (0.01)	−0.059 ** (0.01)	0.252 *** (0.01)	0.229 *** (0.01)
<b>Household Income</b>	0.003 (0.00)	0.047 * (0.00)	−0.212 *** (0.00)	−0.016 (0.00)	−0.044 * (0.00)
<b>Education High <sup>1</sup></b>	0.010 (0.03)	−0.001 (0.03)	0.016 (0.05)	−0.003 (0.05)	−0.008 (0.05)
<b>Education Intermediate <sup>1</sup></b>	0.003 (0.03)	0.015 (0.03)	0.015 (0.06)	−0.022 (0.05)	−0.013 (0.05)
<b>Age</b>	0.008 (0.00)	−0.114 *** (0.00)	−0.007 (0.00)	0.120 *** (0.00)	0.141 *** (0.00)
<b>Gender (women) <sup>2</sup></b>	0.119 *** (0.03)	0.084 *** (0.02)	−0.004 (0.04)	0.064 ** (0.04)	0.103 *** (0.04)
<b>Shopping: always respondent <sup>3</sup></b>	−0.003 (0.03)	−0.007 (0.03)	−0.033 (0.05)	−0.015 (0.04)	−0.027 (0.05)
<b>Shopping: mostly respondent <sup>3</sup></b>	0.020 (0.04)	0.059 ** (0.04)	−0.012 (0.06)	0.001 (0.06)	0.020 (0.06)
<b>Shopping: mostly/always other person <sup>3</sup></b>	−0.003 (0.04)	0.022 (0.04)	0.017 (0.07)	−0.034 (0.06)	−0.038 (0.07)
<b>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.26	0.10	0.15	0.18	0.20
<b><i>n</i></b>	2440	2440	2440	2440	2440

<sup>1</sup> ref. category: low education; <sup>2</sup> ref. category: men; <sup>3</sup> ref. category: all household member equally. FT-Consc. = Fair trade consciousness; Ident. = Identification; Routin. = Routinization.



**Table 4.** Behaviors of fair trade consumption regressed on decision criteria, identification with fair trade consumption, and routinization of fair trade consumption, controlling for constraints (OLS-regressions). Standardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

	FT Purchase	Breadth	Worldshop	Organic Store
<b>FT-Consciousness</b>	0.071 ** (0.05)	0.083 *** (0.10)	0.089 *** (0.03)	0.104 *** (0.05)
<b>Quality</b>	0.139 *** (0.05)	0.058 ** (0.10)	−0.025 (0.03)	0.076 *** (0.04)
<b>Price</b>	−0.077 *** (0.03)	−0.045 * (0.06)	−0.079 *** (0.02)	−0.159 *** (0.03)
<b>Identification</b>	0.131 *** (0.05)	0.135 *** (0.09)	0.050 (0.02)	0.110 *** (0.04)
<b>Routinization</b>	0.361 *** (0.04)	0.402 *** (0.09)	0.218 *** (0.02)	0.157 *** (0.04)
<b>Household Income</b>	−0.029 (0.00)	−0.066 *** (0.00)	−0.048 * (0.00)	−0.019 (0.00)
<b>Education High <sup>1</sup></b>	0.035 (0.07)	0.065 ** (0.14)	0.011 (0.04)	0.074 ** (0.06)
<b>Education Intermediate <sup>1</sup></b>	0.041 (0.08)	0.081 *** (0.15)	0.027 (0.04)	0.079 ** (0.07)
<b>Age</b>	−0.031 (0.00)	−0.059 ** (0.00)	0.010 (0.00)	−0.077 *** (0.00)
<b>Gender (women) <sup>2</sup></b>	0.022 (0.06)	0.091 *** (0.12)	0.089 *** (0.03)	0.045 * (0.05)
<b>Shopping: always respondent <sup>3</sup></b>	−0.082 *** (0.07)	−0.054 ** (0.13)	−0.016 (0.03)	−0.018 (0.06)
<b>Shopping: mostly respondent <sup>3</sup></b>	−0.002 (0.09)	0.012 (0.17)	0.004 (0.04)	0.031 (0.08)
<b>Shopping: mostly/always other person <sup>3</sup></b>	−0.042 * (0.10)	−0.057 *** (0.19)	−0.001 (0.05)	−0.037 (0.08)
<b>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.35	0.40	0.13	0.20
<b>n</b>	2440	2440	2440	2440

<sup>1</sup> ref. category: low education; <sup>2</sup> ref. category: men; <sup>3</sup> ref. category: all household member equally. FT-Consc. = Fair trade consciousness; Ident. = Identification; Routin. = Routinization.

## 5. Discussion

According to the sociology of consumption, broader lifestyles should contribute in relevant ways to the explanation of fair trade consumption [10,18,19]. Fair trade consumption can be seen as embedded within patterns of behaviors spanning over various domains of social life, i.e., broader lifestyles. Such lifestyles have an orientating function and contribute to the maintenance of personal and social identities in contemporary societies [21]. Our results support this argument. The two main dimensions of broader lifestyles are significant covariates of fair trade consumption. This is especially true for the distinctiveness dimension of lifestyles, which is substantially related to all the aspects of fair trade consumption included in the analysis, ranging from the frequency of purchasing fair trade products, to the choice of distribution channels, to the importance of decision criteria, to the identification with and routinization of fair trade consumption. The modernity dimension is a robust covariate of only a subset of these aspects, namely frequenting world-shops and the importance of quality as well as price for making consumption decisions.

We are hence able to show that fair trade is embedded into broader lifestyles [24]. Fair trade consumption is not only embedded into domain-specific lifestyles, first and foremost a lifestyle of health and sustainability [37], but also into lifestyles spanning over different domains of social life. In addition, while previous studies on broader lifestyles have mostly focused on aesthetic behaviors and products (i.e., buying fine wine or going to

the opera), we find that such lifestyles are also connected to consumption behaviors with ethical meaning [28,51]. They make a unique explanatory contribution, even taking the endowment with economic and cultural resources (income and education) and prosocial and political orientations (universalism values and political values) into account. Hence, differences between lifestyle groups in terms of distinctiveness and modernity do not simply reflect the social position of high-status consumers or their ethical and political views. They rather reflect orientations, mental representations and routines specific to these lifestyle groups [21]. Broader lifestyles are an important addition to the explanations in research on fair trade consumption.

We obtain very consistent results regarding the first dimension of general lifestyles: distinctiveness of consumption. It is a highly significant, substantial, and very robust determinant of all included aspects of fair trade consumption. Respondents with a more distinctive and prestigious lifestyle are more strongly engaged in fair trade consumption. Proposition 1 is fully supported by the data. This corroborates previous findings on the positive relationship between distinctive lifestyles and sustainable behaviors [22,27,28,41]. However, distinctive lifestyles covary most strongly with more fashionable aspects of fair trade and less with rather austere and strongly politically motivated aspects of fair trade consumption (e.g., visiting world shops).

This does not mean, of course, that political and ethical orientations are irrelevant for fair trade consumption—quite the opposite. Lifestyles, values and political orientations each have an additive effect on fair trade consumption. Hence, we find the strongest engagement in fair trade consumption for consumers with distinctive lifestyles, universalist values and a leftist political orientation. This resonates with recent accounts in cultural sociology [22]. Several authors have characterized the lifestyle of high-status consumers by a combination of aesthetic and ethical orientations. Reckwitz [29] speaks of the aesthetization and the ethicization of everyday life and Kennedy, Baumann and Johnston [28] of an overlap of the “foodie disposition” and ethical consumption. In the case of fair trade consumption, we find a similar pattern. The highest levels of fair trade consumption can be observed for those individuals combining a distinctive lifestyle with prosocial and leftist political orientations.

The results are less consistent regarding the second dimension of broader lifestyles: modernity. It is a significant, albeit weak covariate of visiting worldshops, aesthetic decision criteria (intrinsic product quality) and the economic decision criterion (price). Modernity is thus of secondary importance for fair trade consumption. The second proposition is not fully supported. The dimension of modernity might be too ambiguous in order to explain fair trade consumption in a consistent and uniform way, subsuming orientations that are related to fair trade consumption in various manners, such as religiosity, hedonism, reflexivity, or an action orientation.

Apart from the direct effects of broader lifestyles on fair trade consumption, the analysis also sheds light on the mechanisms connecting lifestyles and behavior. By theoretically separating three mechanisms for the influence of lifestyles on the micro-level (orientations, symbolic fit, repeated decisions) [38,45] and including measures for these intervening variables in the analysis (decision criteria, identification, routinization), we were able to open-up the black-box between broader lifestyles and fair trade consumption to a larger extent than usual. The empirical findings of the mediation analysis confirm the theoretical model. Lifestyles have an orientating function, consolidate personal identities, and enable consumption routines [10,25]. The distinctiveness of consumption is linked to actual behavior via all five mediators. Fair trade consciousness, identification, and routinization represent intervening variables conceptually related to ethical consumption practices. In contrast, intrinsic product quality and price as decision criteria represent mediators related to a market logic. The lifestyle dimension of modernity, in contrast, is only weakly connected to behavior via the latter. In line with previous studies [9,55], this implies that mainstreaming—emphasizing the market logic for fair trade—strengthens

the connection between fair trade consumption and general lifestyles since lifestyles are related to behavior via aesthetic and economic decision criteria besides ethical aspects.

Finally, broad lifestyles have been suggested as a segmentation tool to develop tailor-made interventions for sustainable development [19,20,32]. This approach is only feasible, however, if such lifestyles explain a substantial amount of the variance in the dependent variables. In our analysis, explained variance ranged from 2 to 10 percent and is thus on a low to medium level, much in line with other studies on broader lifestyles, which usually report 5 to 10 percent of explained variance in the dependent variables [45]. A rather clear pattern emerged: aesthetic and economic aspects (intrinsic quality and price) exhibit the highest amounts of explained variance, followed by behaviors (purchase frequency, breadth, visiting organic grocery shops), followed by aspects with ethical and political meaning (fair trade consciousness, identification, routinization, worldshops). Since explained variance is overall on a low to medium level in the case of fair trade consumption, we conclude that broader lifestyles should be seen as an addition rather than a substitute to segmentations based on sociodemographic characteristics, prosocial values, or political orientations [19].

## 6. Conclusions: Fair Trade Consumption as a Distinctive Practice

### 6.1. Key Findings

Our empirical study on the embedding of fair-trade consumption into the major dimensions of broader lifestyles clearly shows that such lifestyle dimensions contribute substantially to the explanation of fair trade consumption. It supports the contention in the sociology of consumption that sustainable behaviors are enmeshed in a larger web of practices, behaviors, and values running across various domains of social life [10,18]. However, this was only true for the dimension of distinctiveness, whereas the dimension of modernity emerged as being only of minor importance [17,30,61–63]. Persons with a lifestyle focused on high culture aesthetic criteria, authenticity and expensive consumption in fields like food and culture clearly exhibit a stronger pattern of fair trade consumption in comparison to other persons [22,28,29,41]. These effects are very robust even after controlling for political and ethical motivations, which have been a highlighted focus of previous research [4,5,11,12,14,16,17,49,61]. Furthermore, the covariation with lifestyles is particularly strong for more market-oriented aspects of fair trade consumption, like buying in organic grocery stores, quality and price criteria and to a somewhat lesser degree for the frequency and breadth of fair trade consumption. In these areas of fair trade consumption, distinctive lifestyles emerged as one of the most important—if not the most important—determinant. Finally, the analysis confirmed the theoretical model of the three mechanisms connecting broader lifestyles and behavior [38,45]. Broader lifestyles are linked to fair trade consumption via the importance of decision criteria (ethics, quality, price), identification, and routinization.

### 6.2. Limitations

We would like to highlight three limitations of our research. First, the data from 2011 could be somewhat dated. Thus, they do not include current trends of the further mainstreaming of fair trade consumption in Switzerland. However, since Switzerland was one of the major trendsetting countries in the mainstreaming of fair trade consumption, they are definitively useful in studying this phenomenon, especially since they include measures of the major lifestyle dimensions and other major determinants of fair trade consumption. Moreover, in the last decade, mainstreaming of the fair trade market in Switzerland has continued. Compared to 2011, consumers in Switzerland spent on average nearly three times as much on fair trade products per year in 2020 (from 34 CHF up to 99 CHF) [68]. The general structure of the retail market in terms of market shares is to a large extent comparable, however. Cane sugar (with an increase from 16% to 92% market shares from 2011 to 2020) and banana (with an increase from 55% to 56% market shares) are the two most successful products. Others, like fruit juice (9% to 32%), pineapple (15% to 32%), rice (9% to 26%), chocolate (2% to 14%), or tea (7% in both points in time) still represent niche

products, despite some of them having experienced substantial growth [60,68]. One notable development in the market has been the increasing availability of brand products with fair trade ingredients, be it in the guise of popular supermarket brands or manufacturer brands, such as Cailler chocolate. As pointed out in the theoretical discussion in Section 2.3, all three factors (general market growth, availability of products, branding of fair trade products) should have further improved the conditions for explaining fair trade consumption by broader lifestyles. This is consistent with our empirical findings, showing that broader lifestyle dimensions are strongly linked to the aesthetic and economic aspects of fair trade consumption. Thus, the current market situation in Switzerland is clearly comparable to that of 2011, however, with an even stronger degree of mainstreaming of fair trade. We would hence actually expect the effects of broader lifestyles nowadays to be at least comparable to the situation ten years ago. With regard to other countries, which were not as advanced in 2011 in terms of fair trade consumption as Switzerland, we expect similar results for more recent data. However, this has to be tested with data for other locations and other time points. Second, due to their cross-sectional character our survey data are only supporting correlative conclusions. Thus, the causal patterning of the covariation between certain attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles cannot be finally decided based on our empirical results and our empirical data. Third, using a validated and standardized scale for measuring broader lifestyles has some clear advantages, first and foremost the potential to compare our results to other research on lifestyles using the same instrument. Yet, unfortunately, the broader lifestyle dimensions do not reach good reliability in terms of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  according to conventional standards. Our results regarding the correlations with the two main dimensions of broader lifestyle therefore warrant some caution. Even if the creator of this lifestyle model argues against using measures like Cronbach's alpha [24] future research should develop improved lifestyle scales, combining high reliability with content validity in order to appropriately capture contemporary, fragmented lifestyles and try to replicate our findings (see also [40]). We also encourage future research to develop and test reflective and formative measurement models for broader lifestyles by means of structural equation modelling, comparing them to the traditional operationalization used in the present study. This was beyond the scope of the present application.

### 6.3. Future Research

The empirical results clearly support the importance of the major dimensions of broader lifestyles, especially the distinctiveness dimension, for fair trade consumption. Future research should take up this result and test it based on more recent data and for different countries, where the mainstreaming of fair trade consumption has taken a different route or is not as advanced compared to Switzerland [57,58]. The corroboration of our results by additional studies would be an important endeavor for research on sustainable consumption. Additionally, theories of the consumption of fair trade should be more strongly linked to theories in organizational sociology and the sociology of markets. We should more systematically analyze in what way changes in the organization of fair trade (i.e., mainstreaming) affect the conditions for the influence of particular determinants of fair trade consumption (i.e., broader lifestyles) [9,55,57]. Furthermore, future research should focus on the causal relationship between the major dimensions of broader lifestyles and sustainable consumption behavior. Suitable approaches should rely on other research designs and employ experimental methods, if possible, or the collection of panel data with large-scale surveys. Finally, the fact that consumers with distinctive lifestyles exhibit higher levels of fair trade consumption does not necessarily mean that they also pursue a more sustainable lifestyle in general. For example, individuals with distinctive lifestyles fly more frequently [51] and have more spacious homes [22]. It might also be the case that they engage less in sustainable behaviors such as slow fashion or meat substitutes because these products may be considered inferior in terms of intrinsic quality. Hence, future research should also investigate patterns of sustainable behaviors and link them to broader lifestyles, especially the distinctiveness dimension.

#### 6.4. Managerial and Policy Implications

Our empirical results clearly show that fair trade consumption appeals to individuals with distinctive lifestyles. This group makes consumption choices based on aesthetic and quality criteria and tends to disregard prices in consumer decisions. Thus, the mainstreaming of fair trade seems to be a very successful strategy to reach this population segment, especially by focusing on the quality and the aesthetic appeal of the products offered and by fashioning the retail outlets in an aesthetically appealing way, e.g., done in many of the more modern organic grocery stores. However, since fair trade consumption is also influenced by ethical and political motives, this mainstreaming should not move too much in the direction of a consumerist approach. This would decrease the appeal not only to the more strict adherents of sustainable consumption, but also to the more lifestyle-oriented consumer segment. The economic appeal of sustainable consumption is to a certain degree in its renunciation of economic interest [25]. Strategies of mainstreaming should therefore be planned very carefully, not to dilute or even crowd out the moral and political aspects of fair trade consumption in the names of quality, aesthetics, “lifestyle choices”, or value-for-money [57,59].

Consistent with these remarks, in terms of population segmentation, we advise for a combination of typologies based on distinctive lifestyles [24,40] and ethical motivations (such as value typologies [65]) since broader lifestyles alone exhibit a low to medium explanatory power. However, a combination of these typologies would be a very powerful and efficient instrument for the segmentation of a market or to devise target-specific interventions for sustainable behavior.

A final note on ethical consumption and social inequality [7]: in contemporary societies, consumer behavior in the marketplace has become an increasingly important avenue for political participation besides institutionalized politics, such as voting [10]. Since fair trade consumption is structured in terms of distinctive lifestyles with high social status and prestige, we do observe a participation gap in ethical consumption in this case. Policy-makers, political actors, NGOs and political analysts should take into account that fair trade consumption is more often practiced by culturally (and not only economically) privileged groups, with a tendency to reflect the ethical and political goals, views, and preferences of individuals with high social status.

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## Appendix A

Table A1. Item wordings and descriptive statistics of the variables.

Variable	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Percent Missing
<i>FT consumption</i>				
FT purchase	In general, how often do you buy fair trade groceries?	4.33	1.66	2%
Breadth	What fair trade products have you purchased before? Additive index including coffee, tea, chocolate, honey, spices, flowers, clothes, etc.	5.77	3.39	1%
Worldshop	Where do you buy groceries? Worldshop	1.33	0.73	0%
Organic store	Where do you buy groceries? Organic store	1.97	1.31	1%
FT-consciousness	How do you assess international trade with the Third World?			
	The small farmers and workers in the Third World are exploited in international trade.	4.08	0.81	2%
	I am ready to do something against the exploitation of the farmers and workers in the Third World.	3.94	0.94	3%
	There are so many problems in the world. There can be reports about the exploitation of farmers in the Third World no longer shock me. [reverse coding]	3.87	1.13	3%
	I doubt that the farmers in the Third World are actually receiving unfair prices for their products. [reverse coding]	3.94	1.20	3%
	If farmers or workers in the Third World are indeed being exploited, I would regret this, but I would probably not do anything about it. [reverse coding]	3.72	1.07	4%
	I would like to contribute to making trade with the Third World become fairer.	4.21	0.89	2%
Quality	How important are the following to you when shopping for food?			
	Get high quality products	4.32	0.72	5%
	Get good tasting products	3.91	0.96	5%
Price	How important are the following to you when shopping for food? Get low price products	3.06	1.02	6%
Identification	Buying fair trade products is part of my self-image.	2.98	1.14	5%
	I am someone to whom the purchase of fair trade products fits well.	3.38	1.00	6%
Routinization	Including fair trade products in my shopping decisions is part of my everyday shopping routine.	3.05	1.16	5%
	When purchasing products from the Third World, it is normal for me to look for fair trade products.	3.25	1.10	5%
<i>Broader lifestyles</i>				
Distinctiveness of consumption	I maintain an upscale standard of living.	2.41	0.76	2%
	Maximum amount of expenses in restaurant	2.61	0.98	4%
	Visiting art exhibitions, galleries	2.52	0.93	1%
	Reading books	3.46	0.79	4%
	Reading national newspaper	3.36	0.94	1%
Modernity	I live according to religious principles. [reverse coding]	3.29	0.92	2%
	I hold on to old traditions of my family. [reverse coding]	2.81	0.89	2%
	I go out a lot.	2.15	0.80	2%
	I enjoy life to the fullest.	2.83	0.76	2%

Table A1. Cont.

Variable	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Percent Missing
<i>Control variables</i>				
Universalism	She thinks it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. She believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life.	4.52	1.26	3%
	It is important to her to listen to people who are different from her. Even if she disagrees with them, she still wants to understand them.	4.62	1.07	3%
	She strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to her.	5.05	1.01	3%
Leftist orientation	We have a scale here that runs from left to right. When you think of your own political views, where would you rank these views on this scale?	6.32	1.94	6%
Household income	Net equivalent household income in CHF	5178	2628.27	6%
Education	Highest level of education	-	-	3%
Age	Age in number of years	48.86	18.02	2%
Gender	0 = men; 1 = women	0.56	0.50	1%
Shopping	Who buys the groceries in your household?	-	-	2%

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