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# Grounded Theory as a Macromarketing Methodology: Critical Insights from Researching the Marketing Dynamics of Fairtrade Towns

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## Abstract

This paper details and justifies Grounded Theory as a methodology for researching into significant and emerging macromarketing phenomena, through an exploration of its use to investigate the marketing dynamics of the Fairtrade Towns Movement. The paper describes the research 'journey' undertaken from the initial consideration of Fairtrade Towns as an under-researched and challenging topic, through to the final production of new theory rooted in the reality of the research context. The philosophy and systematic processes that underpin Grounded Theory are explained, along with examples of how the key processes of data collection and analysis were undertaken. The insights generated in this paper demonstrate Grounded Theory as a suitable, yet underused, research approach available to macromarketers. It is revealed as a methodology that can bring rigor and confidence to research into emerging macromarketing themes, and the paper concludes by considering its potential for application in key spheres for future research.

## Keywords

Grounded Theory, Qualitative Research, Macromarketing, Fair Trade, Fairtrade Towns,

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**Introduction: Grounded Theory, Underused in Macromarketing?**

Grounded Theory (GT), developed in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, is a widely used qualitative research method (Bryant and Charmaz 2007; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Although initially intended specifically for sociologists, it is employed across various disciplines and is particularly strongly represented in health and nursing studies (e.g. Montgomery and Bailey 2007; Robrecht 1995) and psychology, and eventually became used in management fields (Goulding 1998). A central focus of GT is that it seeks to generate theory and ideas (Glaser 1978) from data that is 'systematically collected and analyzed throughout the research process' (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p.12). This interplay between data and analysis is central to GT (Charmaz 2006; Glaser 1978), making it particularly valuable in emerging areas of study which present limited opportunities to start from a given theoretical perspective. Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue that because GT formulates theory directly from the research data, it offers clarity of insight into new and only partially understood phenomena.

GT was originally developed as a specific and detailed methodology involving both an underlying philosophy and a distinct set of activities. How much of the philosophy and how many of the activities a given researcher applies, varies in practice. Some studies represent a 'formal' or more 'textbook' application of GT, others only adopt certain elements to inform and enrich other types of enquiry. For this paper our interest is in its application as a complete and coherent methodology.

Both in relation to the broad field of marketing (Hunt 1994), and specifically for macromarketing (Dholakia and Nason 1984), there has been discussion of a need to embrace a

wider range of methods and to generate new theories. GT appears to have the potential to address such a need. However, Goulding (1998) argues that in marketing scholarship GT is both misunderstood (particularly in terms of being considered 'atheoretical') and underused compared to other interpretive methodologies such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, and semiotics. The claim of underuse also appears to apply within macromarketing, and can be examined by a search for references to the methodology in past issues of the *Journal of Macromarketing*. Of the eleven papers referring to it, most do so only implicitly through a reference to a GT based source when discussing phenomenological research in general, with one paper (Harker and Harker 2000) describing the GT approach as just guiding the data analysis in the study. None approach a full and 'formal' application of the methodology. This underuse is curious given the apparent suitability of GT for macromarketing topics which, in concerning the intersections between society and marketing, inevitably involve complex stakeholder relationships and the need to consider many variables simultaneously. This makes the type of model building and testing so popular within micromarketing research less useful in such contexts. Valor (2007) for example, in justifying the use of GT in studying consumer responses to ethical clothes trading, argues that the additional layer of complexity introduced by ethical dimensions of consumer behavior, plus the tendency of quantitative studies in the field to provide contradictory results, makes GT an ideal approach for understanding what is actually happening in such a research context.

This paper seeks to demonstrate the suitability and potential of GT in macromarketing research contexts, by reporting and discussing a research effort that applied GT as closely as possible to the spirit of Glaser and Strauss's original vision, subject to circumstances and the specific procedural demands of undertaking doctoral research.

**Study Context - Fairtrade Towns**

Fairtrade has been a key marketing success story of recent decades. Detailed analysis of its growth and the factors behind it have been provided by a number of scholars (see for example Doherty, Davies and Tranchell 2013; Moore, Gibbon and Slack 2006; Nichols and Opal 2005). Such contributions cover a wide range of micromarketing and macromarketing issues from the influence of producer branding and packaging strategies (Davies, Doherty and Knox 2009), through to support for Fairtrade from the Vatican (Doran and Natale 2011). This paper aims to focus on GT as a methodology rather than the phenomenon it was applied to, therefore it suffices here to outline briefly the nature of Fairtrade and its relationship to macromarketing.

Fairtrade aims to address the limitations of neo-liberal trade by developing a trading system that understands and supplies economic security, social welfare and environmental knowledge to producer communities normally exploited through the practices of free trade. This aim has been embraced by retailers and consumers alike in the UK and elsewhere (Doherty, Davies and Tranchell 2013; Golding and Peattie 2005). The Fairtrade Movement progressed relatively rapidly from its early years as a fringe activity involving inferior products marketed to highly motivated consumers, often via obscure channels, on a 'solidarity' basis (Golding and Peattie 2005). In 2003 UK sales were valued at less than £100m, but in the past decade Fairtrade has become part of the market offerings of global brands such as Starbucks, Nestle and Cadburys (Doherty, Davies and Tranchell 2013), achieving UK sales valued at 1.78 billion in 2013 (Fairtrade Facts and Figures 2014). It is also undeniably a macromarketing success story. Moore, Gibbon and Slack (2006) theoretically frame the mainstreaming of Fairtrade as such, suggesting that macromarketing literature, with its emphasis on sustainable consumption,

ecocentrism and a consequent need to change the dominant social paradigm, provides a sound framework for analysing empirical studies of Fairtrade marketing and the mainstreaming of the movement.

Fairtrade strongly reflects each of Hunt's (1981) core dimensions of macromarketing. It represents a ***marketing system*** as an entire production and consumption system in which products are positioned based on how they have been produced and traded, and on the promise of producer communities benefitting from a 'fair' commodity price. It demonstrates the ***impact and consequence of marketing systems on society***, although unlike macromarketing studies that focus on the impact on consumers (e.g. social impacts of advertising), Fairtrade studies also focus on producer communities (explored in some detail by Geiger-Oneto and Arnould 2011). Fairtrade standards provide farmers a living wage, ensure investment in producer communities and protect the environments in which production takes place. It is therefore a form of marketing with a strong and direct social benefit beyond the economic supply chain. Finally, it demonstrates ***the impact and consequence of society on marketing systems*** as growing consumer demand for fairly traded products has pushed mainstream manufacturers to adopt Fairtrade sourcing and marketing. A high profile example being Starbucks succumbing to social pressure to adopt Fairtrade products in response to a grassroots campaign led by Global Exchange.

The strength of these linkages means that Fairtrade marketing scholarship could be viewed as inherently macromarketing in nature, and some of it has a strong macromarketing perspective without explicitly positioning itself as such (e.g. Jaffee 2007; Witkowski 2005).  In relation to the *Journal of Macromarketing* however, Fairtrade remains somewhat under-

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represented, with only three previous papers explicitly focused on it (Beji-Becheur, Pedregal and Ozcaglar-Toulouse 2008; Golding 2009; Geiger-Oneto and Arnould 2011). Fairtrade research concerning macro issues tends to focus on producer communities, either in terms of marketing (e.g. Geiger-Oneto and Arnould 2011) or of economics and governance (e.g. Raynolds and Taylor 2004; Smith 2009). Consumption related research tends to focus on the individual consumer and their response to the Fairtrade offering, and is dominated by micro-marketing perspectives (e.g. consumer willingness to pay any price premium involved, (Wright and Heaton 2006)), albeit in the context of ultimately addressing a set of macromarketing issues (such as social and economic justice for producers as market participants, (Geiger-Oneto and Arnould 2011)).

The Fairtrade Movement is over 40 years old. However, Fairtrade Towns only began in September 2001 with the accreditation of Garstang in the UK as the world's first Fairtrade Town. Within a year Fairtrade Towns were being described as one of Britain's most active grassroots movements (Kelly 2008), and by November 2013 the UK had 573 accredited Fairtrade Towns (Fairtrade Towns 2013) that adhere to, and are audited upon, the following five requirements:

1. The local council must pass a resolution supporting Fairtrade, and serve Fairtrade coffee and tea at its meetings and in offices and canteens.

2. A range of Fairtrade products must be readily available in the town's or city's shops and served in local cafés and catering establishments (targets are set in relation to population).

3. Fairtrade products must be used by a number of local work places (estate agents, hairdressers etc) and community organizations (churches, schools etc).

4. The council must attract popular support for the campaign.

5. A local Fairtrade steering group must be convened to ensure continued commitment to Fairtrade status.

(Fairtrade Towns 2013)

This accreditation ensures that the promotion of Fairtrade consumption through the mechanism of a Fairtrade Town represents a complex and multi-stakeholder marketing phenomenon. Despite their rapid growth, Fairtrade Towns' role in promoting and developing Fairtrade consumption remains under-researched. Although Nichols and Opal (2005) provide a conceptual exploration of their nature, role and potential value, empirical research is lacking. Fairtrade Towns are also interesting from a macromarketing perspective because they involve commercial marketing and consumption operating at the level of a geographical community. Community based consumption interests macromarketers as one level of study for marketing systems from a macro perspective (Dholakia and Nason 1984; Layton and Grossbart 2006). However, although macromarketing research exists concerning issues such as community based social marketing, or marketing to communities of interest, community-based marketing processes, of the sort apparent within Fairtrade Towns, again represent an under-researched topic within either micromarketing or macromarketing scholarship. There are examples of local market based macromarketing studies, and Layton and Grossbart's (2006) review of the discipline note several, but they are few compared to studies of national markets or industry

systems. Fairtrade Towns also take us beyond micromarketing perspectives, and the conventional range of market actors, to include as active participants a range of stakeholders more normally thought of as elements of the marketing environment (such as churches or educational institutions).

This paper reflects upon the methodology that underpinned a PhD research journey, embarked upon to understand the Fairtrade Towns Movement from a marketing perspective, and undertaken at a time when little empirical research or data existed. Most available information derived from event promotion and public relations campaigns from the Fairtrade Foundation and early Fairtrade Town groups. An initial literature search revealed only two academic papers (Alexander and Nicholls 2006; Malpass et al. 2007), two book chapters (Barnett et al., 2011; Nicholls and Opal 2005), two consultation documents (Around 2006; Taplin 2009), and various newspaper / general publications (e.g. The Guardian 2007 and 2008), specifically dedicated to Fairtrade Towns. These publications generated empirical findings and conceptual renderings that viewed the Movement in several macromarketing contexts included mainstreaming alternative consumption, consumer-producer relationships and engagement, the dynamics of social movements, alliances and networks, globalized responsibility and ethical consumption.

Fairtrade Towns were clearly an unsuitable subject for research using deductive methodologies, as there could be little confidence in the results of any hypothesis testing or deductions derived from such a limited knowledge base of mostly non-empirical findings. Nichols and Opal (2005) identify Fairtrade Towns as a distinctive form of marketing network, but without exploring how such networks operate. This study addressed this research gap by seeking to explore the marketing dynamics of Fairtrade Towns and their functioning  Given the

absence of pre-existing 'rich data' (Strauss and Corbin 1998) and empirical knowledge to work with, GT was chosen as a suitable methodology. The study followed the interpretivist belief that empirical knowledge from those directly involved held the epistemological key to understanding the Fairtrade Towns Movement's marketing dynamics. Therefore, the aim was to explore the social world of the Movement by exploring the activities and actions of Fairtrade Town group members within their town to develop rich data from and about the key stakeholders involved in its construction (which included activists, schools, churches, public services, retailers and community groups). This was achieved by capturing qualitative data from these insiders' social situations, views, motives, interactions, interpretations and everyday actions (Blaikie 2000).

The insights generated shed light on Fairtrade Towns as both a macromarketing success story and as a particular application of place-based marketing, and also on how they operate as marketing networks. However, those findings are not the focus here, and instead inform other papers. This paper concentrates on the insights the research yielded about the suitability of GT's theoretical perspective and methodological processes as an approach to understanding macromarketing phenomena. Although some of the findings about Fairtrade Towns are inevitably highlighted by such a discussion of the methodology, the nature, application and value of GT for macromarketing research are the focus of this paper, not the findings of the study itself nor Fairtrade Towns as a context.

**GT: Context to Application**

GT has been the focus of some controversy, particularly in relation to the analysis of data, resulting in an infamous split between the technique's founders (Goulding 2002). This led to two

schools of GT research evolving: one associated with the early work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and further developed by Glaser (1978; 1998) and therefore often termed '*Glaserian*' or '*formal*'; and alternatively the '*Straussian*' approach, following the later ideas of Strauss & Corbin (1998). These move GT away from a very exclusive focus on the data to develop more of a balance between data collection/analysis and formal theory building (Walker and Myrick 2006).

The existence of these two schools of thought is typically presented to researchers as a choice (e.g. Annells 1997). However, more experienced researchers can recognize it as a false one. Although there are technical differences relating to data collection and coding (Walker and Myrick 2006), many of the perceived differences reflect subtle nuances of language more than substantive differences in application. Despite GT's highly specified processes, it can be more pragmatically applied allowing the researcher to consider and choose the appropriate theoretical perspective, data collection techniques, coding paradigms and theory development mechanisms to suit their research subject. Pragmatism and a hybrid approach also allow the researcher to cope with the constraints of time, resources and access to key individuals and organizations that are inevitable in real-life research situations, and which can make a very 'pure' and formal application of Glaserian GT difficult.

One constant perspective across the two schools of GT thought is the necessity to view data collection and analysis as one and the same thing:

'Both Glaser's and Strauss's versions of grounded theory use coding, the constant comparison, questions, theoretical sampling, and memos in the process of generating theory. Moreover, both versions adhere to the same basic research process; gather data,

code, compare, categorise, theoretically sample. Develop a core category, and generate

a theory.' Walker and Myrick (2006, p.550)

Such a process formed the backbone of this research project. At the outset, the study took an

ontological stance recognizing that the most appropriate way to unearth the marketing functions

and dynamics of Fairtrade Towns would be to understand the behavior, opinions and functions of

those engaged in them. This approach could generate data resembling thick biographical

interpretations of the experiences of the people most actively involved (Denzin 1989; Vidich and

Stanford 1998).

**Pluralistic Methods: Ethnographic Participation and Semi-structured Interviews**

GT, and its need to acquire 'rich data' revealing participants' views and actions (Charmaz

2006), comes with an acceptance that everything learnt in the research field can be classified as

data. This 'extends the range of qualitative serviceable data' Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.161),

offering researchers the opportunity to introduce flexibility (if necessary) and to use mixed data

collection methods, as was the case here. Extending data collection beyond informants' accounts

marks one of the differences between GT and phenomenology (Goulding 1998).

Inductive qualitative researchers mostly rely on interviews and observation which are

perceived as the key to understanding human interaction in a variety of contexts (Stern 2007).

GT literature takes this for granted, and its guidance and conceptualization generally refer to data

derived from interviews (see for example the practical 'how to' publications of Charmaz (2006);

Goulding (2002); and Strauss and Corbin (1998)). This study followed a theoretical perspective

of symbolic interactionism and the philosophy of Blumer (1969, p.39), who suggests that the researcher participating in the social setting being researched will have greater knowledge of it:

> 'The task of scientific study is to lift the veils that cover the area of group life that one proposes to study. The veils are not lifted by substituting, in whatever degree, a pre formed image for firsthand knowledge. The veils are lifted by getting close to the area and by digging deep into it through careful study. Schemes of methodology that do not encourage or allow, betray the cardinal principals of respecting the nature of one's empirical world.'

Symbolic interactionism is argued by Clarke (2005) and Charmaz (2006) to be a suitable, robust and clear theoretical perspective upon which the techniques and procedures for developing GT can be based. Indeed GT and symbolic interactionism have considerable shared academic DNA, that can be traced back to Mead's (1934) *'Mind Self and Society'*. Blumer (1969), a student of Mead, developed upon his work to introduce *'Symbolic interactionism'* that also influenced the development of GT led by Blumer's student Anslem Strauss (Hammersley 1990). Furthermore, it respects the 'Chicago Tradition' (Hammersley 1990) of qualitative enquiry that Robrecht (1995, p.170) encapsulates as researchers observing, recording and analyzing data acquired in a 'natural setting'. GT, in its quest to develop theory, embraces symbolic interactionism because it generates conceptually-based meaning by inquiring how social structures, processes and symbols influence human behavior (Dey 2007). This study sought such meaning by seeking to understand the dynamic micro, meso and macro interactions occurring between the people of the movement; the places and spaces they occupy and construct;

and the five Fairtrade Town accreditation goals set by the Fairtrade Foundation, as demonstrated in Figure 1.
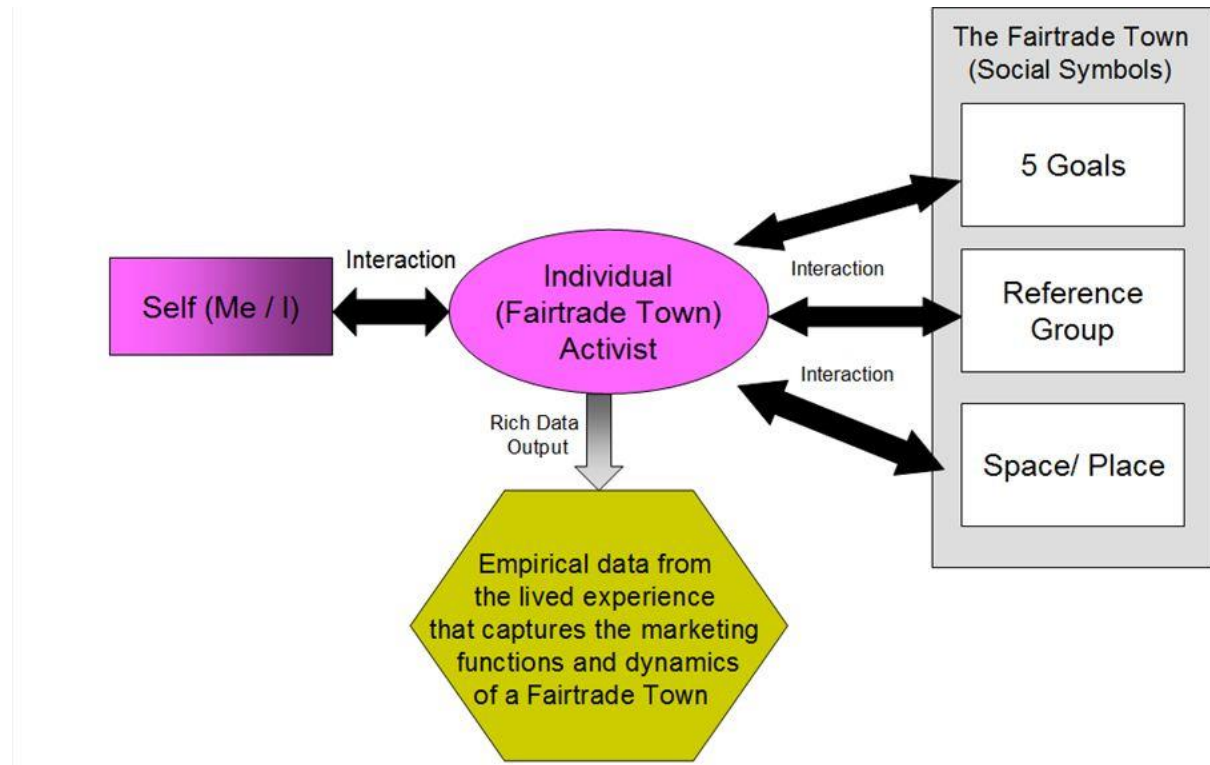


**Figure 1:** Fairtrade Towns a Theoretical Perspective: Symbolic Interactionism

Figure 2 illustrates the use of GT in this study and how data was acquired from several sources, all of which were significant in considering 'what is happening here?'. Although the main two sources were from ethnographic participation and semi-stuctured interviews, GT allows for other serendipitous moments of data collection (Glaser 1998). For example the opportunity arose to spend three days in Garstang with the original founder of the Fairtrade Towns Movement including interview and discussion opportunities and a narrated town tour, all  providing a wealth

of additional data. In total these activities generated 110,432 words for coding including the ethnographic reflective journal (13,352 words) sixteen semi-structured interviews (64,061 words) and the semi-structured Founder's interviews and the record of narrated tour (33,019 words). Figure 2 also illustrates the evolving process of the methodology and the different coding paradigms used at different stages.
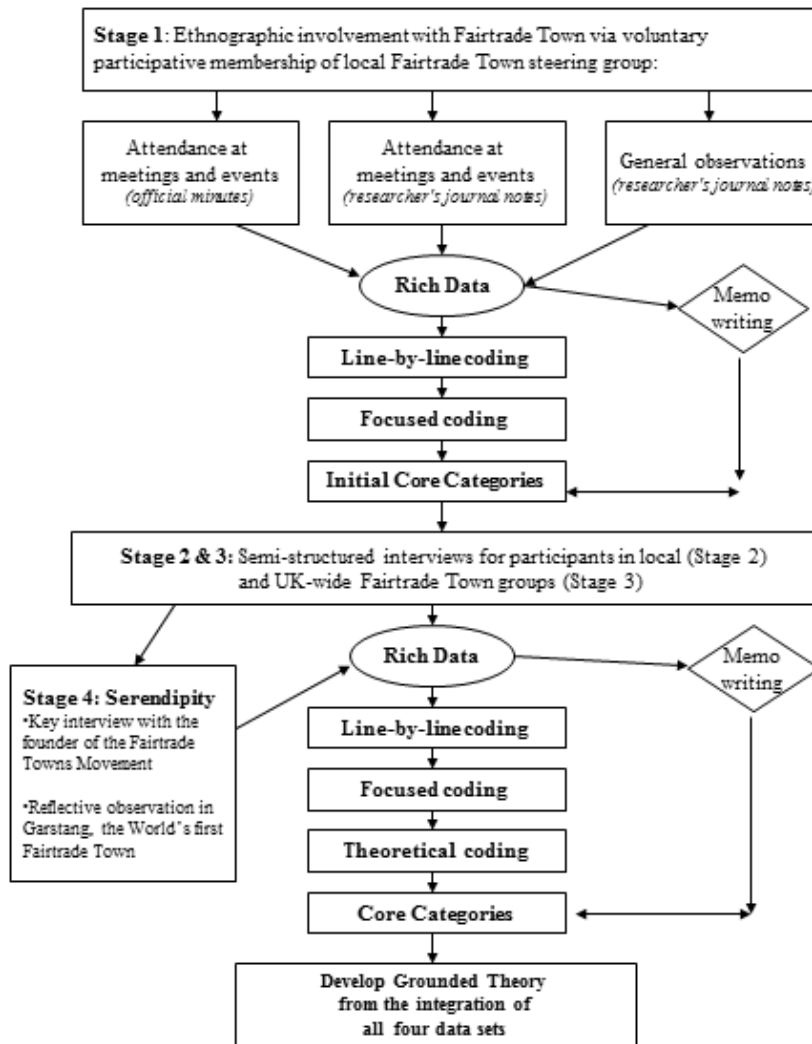


**Figure 2:** Fairtrade Towns: Using Grounded Theory

Source: Samuel (2011)

*Ethnographic Participation*

The empirical research began with ethnographic participation in the Carmarthenshire Fairtrade Town Steering Group. This was chosen principally for convenience as the researcher's local group, but later experience of other groups suggest there was nothing unrepresentative about it. Although researchers may not readily associate GT with ethnography, it has ethnographic roots that lie in a 1965 study of death and dying undertaken by Glaser and Strauss (Morse 2009). Ethnography attempts to understand behavior from within its naturalistic habitat, helping to interpret how people give meaning to their experiences within society (Bray 2008). Since the marketing of Fairtrade products through a Fairtrade town involves a multiplicity of stakeholders, it is difficult to fully understand without becoming involved. Over three years (a time scale determined by the process of theoretical saturation as discussed later in the paper) the researcher was fully immersed in everything the group did, attending and participating in all meetings, contributing to strategy and actively participating in all events and (with permission) recording its 'life' through participation and observation (Charmaz 2006). This helped to generate a better understanding of the geographical and culturally bound research setting and aided 'the art and science of describing a group' (Fetterman 1998, p.1).

Participant observation is the main data-collection technique used in ethnographic research and requires the researcher's involvement within the community's natural environment over an extended time period (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002). The research process involved going 'native' and positioning oneself within the social process of the group to view the empirical world from experience, as opposed to mere observation. Therefore, as Blumer (1969, p.38)

posits: 'the empirical social world consists of ongoing group life and one has to get close to this life to know what is going on.' Researching people in their own space and time helps the researcher gain a close and intimate familiarity with the people involved and their functions and dynamics (Rainbow and Sullivan 1987). Ethnographic participation in a Fairtrade Town therefore, helped to develop an understanding from within of how and why the people involved construct meaning and formulate actions to promote Fairtrade consumption.

A point of capture, planning and reflection for all activities was the Steering Group meetings which were usually held bi-monthly. These meetings acted as the main source of data for the first part of this study, where a reflective journal was completed that aimed to document what was happening. This journal was augmented by analysis of documents produced by the group and observations and field notes taken when engaged in community events or other activities such as market research for the Group.

Whilst it would be wrong to suggest that the field notes collected at this stage show evidence of becoming progressively focused on key analytical ideas, data analysis through open coding did help to achieve this. Following the suggestion of Charmaz (2006, p. 25) the aim was to; 'seek data, describe observed events, answer fundamental questions about what is happening, then develop theoretical categories to understand it.' Whilst this process demonstrated its suitability to the research endeavor and the methodology, limitations of the ethnography emerged during the three year process. Firstly, the limited times and places available in which to immerse oneself in the activity (mostly confined to Steering Group meetings and events) resulted in data that was interpreted through one's own lens and a single case study. The resulting indications suggested that the data was insufficient to help the researcher to see things clearly 'from the

perspective of others' (Crotty 1998, p.76). As Vidich and Stanford (1998, p.78) argue, ethnography risks becoming a *'piece of writing'* that struggles to truly present an 'unfiltered record of immediate experience and an accurate portrait of the culture of the "other"'. Secondly, the fact that data codes were insufficient to justify a desired state of theoretical saturation meant the research process needed to stay in the field and glean additional data taken directly from the perspective of others.

The ethnography helped to develop the initial codes (both line-by-line and focused) and core categories that were used to inform stages 2 and 3 of the investigation (as per Figure 2). It also avoided the risk of the researcher entering the interview stage with a poor understanding of participants' frames of reference. Extended participation in the movement ensured an understanding of its cultural paradigms, language and belief systems. This was valuable in informing both the question design (as recommended by Strauss & Corbin (1998)) and analysis for the following stages of the research process. Ethnographic participation both helped to knit together the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism with the methodology of GT, and to allow enculturation into the Fairtrade Towns Movement. Such enculturation is potentially valuable in macromarketing research which often concerns the intersections between marketers and marketing and other social institutions or social systems (e.g. religious or political) and particular groups of people (Layton and Grossbart 2006). Ethnographic involvement with such institutions or groups can provide an understanding which more arm's length or short-term interactions are unlikely to provide.

In addition to informing the questions to be asked in the later stages of the research, and assisting the hermeneutic analysis of the data generated, the ethnography allowed for the

distillation of specific questions to guide the research. For example two questions that emerged from the ethnography were: What influence did Fairtrade Town group members yield in their community and how did it manifest itself as a marketing dynamic used to promote Fairtrade consumption?

*Semi-Structured Interviews*

The second and third phases of the research involved open, semi-structured interviews which aimed to add depth to the ethnographic data. Interview participants were encouraged to talk freely about the relationships between the individual, the steering group, the Fairtrade Foundation and their town as a 'place.' Semi-structured interviews allowed respondents the freedom to contextualize their own experiences of the marketing of, and within, their Fairtrade Town, whilst keeping them focused and steering them away from considering their personal interaction with the broader Fair Trade Movement. The interviews used open-ended questions to draw out as much narrative as possible to 'explore the interviewer's topic and fit the participant's experience' (Charmaz 2006, p.29). Both Charmaz (2006) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) advocate the use of questions that create an unstructured interview and act only as general guidelines, suggesting the use of terms such as:

- 'Tell me' (e.g. 'Tell me how your local community has responded to the actions and activities of the Fairtrade Towns movement');

- 'What do you think' (e.g. 'What do you think have been the main challenges your Fairtrade Town has faced?');

- 'Could you describe' (e.g. 'Could you describe a typical Fairtrade Town?');

- 'How did/has' (e.g. 'How has your Fairtrade Town evolved in your time as a member?');

Questions designed in this way helped to ensure that data gathered built a rich picture of the 'participant's views, experienced events and actions' (Charmaz 2006, p. 29). Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility allowing questions to be omitted, reordered or followed up and allowed new questions to emerge in the form of further prompts (Duffy, Ferguson and Watson 2002). For example, some interviewees wanted to communicate via short stories to describe their activities and to help express themselves. This was noted and probing for more stories became part of the interview process, leading to richer data being presented and helping interviewees to better express the perceived needs that FTTs addressed and interviewees' actions, activities, perceptions, expectations and attitudes towards them. This process is in keeping with GT which emphasizes that once concepts emerge it is the researcher's responsibility to probe them further. This ensured that specific areas identified as important when attempting to capture 'what is happening' in a Fairtrade Town could be explored in more depth and took the research beyond superficial, under-saturated responses.

**Theoretical Sampling and Saturation**

GT calls for a different sampling approach to traditional qualitative research methodologies. It argues that data gathering should be driven by the evolving theory that results from constantly comparing data at each stage of collection (Draucker et al. 2007). In a spirit of 'letting the data talk', theoretical sampling was used here, to both guide the type of questions asked and inform the researcher of who to interview next. The research process used an inductive sampling technique capable of developing accurate emerging theories, demonstrated through a systemic

confidence in where and who to glean appropriate rich data from (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

Warren (2002, p.87) identifies this as theoretical sampling carried out through the 'snowball

process' that locates one respondent who 'fulfils the theoretical criteria,' and then helps the

interviewer locate others. Figure 3 demonstrates how interview data informed the research

process of where, or who, to go to next. Initial interviews were conducted in three key Fairtrade

Towns, Garstang as the World's first Fairtrade Town, Cardiff, the city whose University was

supporting the study, and Carmarthen where the research began with ethnographic participation.

These interviews led to the application of theoretical sampling through the trajectory of how the

research participants informed the research sample. For example, the Garstang group identified

Keswick as an example of a very pro-active Fairtrade Town and recommendations to interview a

member of that town's steering group were made. This was subsequently followed up as part of

the theoretical sampling method. By using this process, the data becomes part of the sampling

technique and, reflecting the true essence of GT, helps further validate any theory derived from

it, as even the process of sampling is handed over to the participants of the Movement.

Therefore, this study's application of theoretical sampling additionally ensured that any resulting

theory was grounded in the social context of the participants' world (Blumer 1969).
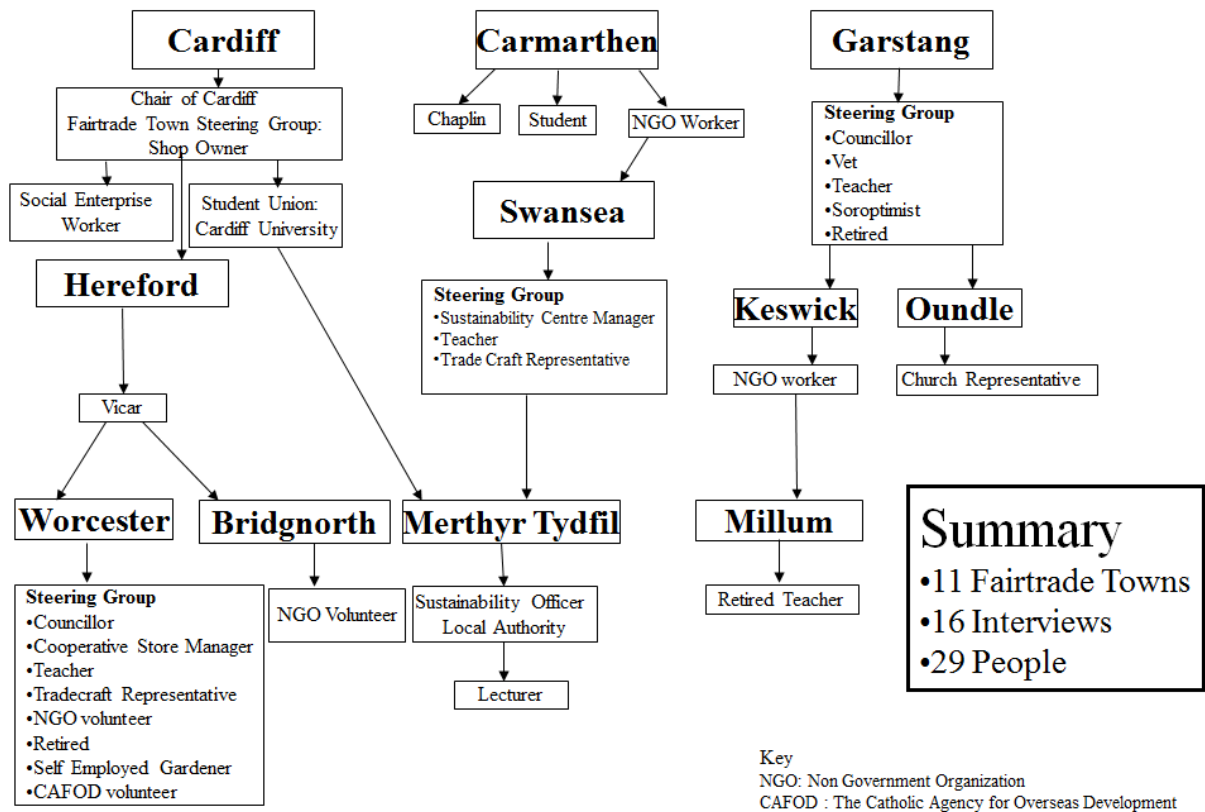
**Figure 3:** Theoretical Sampling Trajectory: People to place, people to people

Data collection ends when no new information is being gleaned and no new core categories, or relationships between them and their context, are emerging (Locke 2001; Strauss and Corbin 1998). In GT this point is termed 'theoretical saturation' (Strauss and Corbin 1998) and should inform the researcher when their field work is complete. For this study, the research process attempted to stay close to *'Glaserian'* principles of GT, letting the data guide the research. The process of theoretical sampling played out, perhaps not in a strictly *'Glaserian'* format but in the way interview questions in the second and third stage of this research were presented. The interviews created dialogue with respondents capturing the relationships between conditions, consequences, actions and interactions in the process of establishing a Fairtrade Town. This

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dialogue became what Denzin (1989, p.32) describes as 'thick interpretations' providing rich

biographical data that further augmented/eradicated or developed new codes and core categories

upon which theory was developed. This enabled a systematic investigation of both the people

and symbols that would come to represent 'theory' when conceptualizing the marketing

functions and dynamics of the Fairtrade Towns Movement. In this study, theoretical saturation

for some aspects of the data started to occur early on. Line-by-line coding, constant comparison

and freestyle memo writing confirmed this, with full saturation for all questions becoming

evident around the eleventh interview. At this stage the research process was witnessing similar

answers over and over again; answers that were supported by the ethnography. For example, the

importance of schools and young people was a constant, and the use of one's own social capital

and networks appeared to be a ubiquitous process in Fairtrade Towns with everybody expressing

this process directly or indirectly. These forms of qualitative saturation led to what Glaser and

Strauss (1967, p.61) interpret as an 'empirical confidence', the point at which the data allows the

researcher to fully validate, explain and conceptualize the core categories formed. Having the

confidence to finish the data collection process did, however, prove to be unnerving in practice.

The conventional research norm of identifying a certain sample size necessary to give clarity to

the data, and the belief that each new interview will bring up new issues to explore, combined to

prevent the researcher from taking a decision to finish. This study as a result, probably undertook

three or four more interviews post-saturation, more due to the researcher's insecurity than to

academic necessity.


**Data Process and Analysis**

In the true spirit of GT, attempting to stay as close to the data as possible was also demonstrated

in the coding process. Despite the potential of software such as NVivo and MAXQDA to code and analyze qualitative data, a decision was made to complete the process in person and by hand as recommended by Glaser (1978, p.59) who states 'always code your own data'. Although software still requires researchers to code their data, the formatting and input requirements were felt to add an undesirable time lag between data collection and analysis here. Coding by hand enabled the researcher to code data immediately after transcription, simultaneously connecting data collection and analysis, a process Charmaz (2006, p.48) suggests 'can help you go further and deeper into the research problem as well as engage in developing categories'. Coding by hand also reduces any temptation to 'force–fit' data into preconceived categories of existing codes as it avoided any need to reprogramme software with new codes. Coding by hand added confidence to the process of data analysis, helping it to stay fluid and iterative to continually form, merge and discard categories and codes upon which the GT for this study was built.

To reduce the risk of researcher bias GT requires that the researcher maintains an objective stance towards the data collected. Through the multiple viewpoints collected and the constant interplay between the researcher and FTTs the research process allowed the researcher to become immersed in the data. This required the researcher to think comparatively by examining data at a dimensional level through the process of constant comparison. This intertwining of data collection with data analysis results in the researcher being shaped by the data, prior to the data then being shaped by the researcher (Strauss and Corbin 1998). This process is evident in the coding practices used and the manner in which theoretical sampling was applied here (as detailed in this paper).

*Coding For Theory*

Data analysis in GT offers an array of procedures to choose from. Despite highly specified procedural routes presented by some, a more pragmatic adaptation can be applied, as was the case for this study. Pragmatism allowed the researcher to consider and choose the appropriate coding paradigms and theory development mechanisms that was felt best suited the study.

Data analysis in GT involves a set of coding processes that begins with 'open coding' (Goulding 2002; Walker and Myrick 2006). This allows concepts to be identified by breaking down data into 'distinct properties and dimensions' (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Here open coding took the form of line-by-line coding, analyzing each line of data by asking the key GT question, 'what is happening here?' in search of insight (Goulding 2002; Strauss and Corbin 1998). This process ensures a critical perspective on both data collection and analysis and releases the shackles of becoming too immersed in the respondents' world so as to accept it without question Charmaz (2006). Such coding also helped to conceptualize and classify events, acts and outcomes, and the subsequent codes and categories that emerged could become the root and branch of the developed theory. As Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.66) argue:

> 'Doing line-by-line coding through which categories, their properties, and relationships emerge automatically, takes us beyond description and puts us into a conceptual mode of analysis'

*Focused Coding for Core Categories*

The next step was 'focused coding,' which condensed the data to understand it as a whole by constantly comparing experiences, actions and interpretations across all the data sets collected (Charmaz 2006). Focused coding helped to conceptualize how previous line-by-line codes relate

to each other (Charmaz 2006; Glaser 1978; Strauss and Corbin 1998). For example Figure 4 demonstrates how focused coding helped to determine relationships within line-by-line codes. It shows how several codes were identified as synergistically linked to the theme of social connections, although at first glance the line-by-line codes appear to be about lobbying individuals and organizations to consume and supply Fairtrade. Focused coding enabled further relationships in the data to emerge, and identified the use of individuals' social connections as central to the process of lobbying. This focused coding allowed the research to reveal a broader concept that had general implications for the marketing success of Fairtrade Towns.

**Line by Line Codes**

- It is important for Fairtrade Town Members to have credibility as both individuals and group members for them to effectively investigate, promote and lobby organizations to promote, sell and consume Fairtrade products.
- Fairtrade Town Members' interests and friendships are used to engage the voluntary sector to become involved in Fairtrade Town activities.
- Further relationships need to be made: A major success of Fairtrade Towns is derived from people championing (promoting) Fairtrade consumption within their place of work and the social organizations they belong to.
- Fairtrade Town Members are consistently encouraged by their peers to promote the development ethos of Fairtrade among their social networks.
- The Chamber of Commerce is helping facilitate Fairtrade promotional activity to business organisations.
- Links with the Local Council is increasing the possibility of Fairtrade promotion to headmasters and teachers.
- Eco-schools coordinators have been invited to attend all future meetings, linking Fairtrade to schools' sustainability agendas and increasing the prospect of furthering promotional opportunities to the younger generation.

**Focused Code: Social Connections**

**Figure 4:** The Process of Focused Coding

In addition to focused codes, the production of free flowing *'memos,'* as described by Glaser (1998), played a key role in facilitating the evolving process of data collection, analysis and theory building. Memos captured thoughts, facilitated contrasts and identified connections within the data (Charmaz 2006). Such memos, created after each stage of data collection and

analysis, allowed the researcher to transform field notes and codes into theoretical accounts of

what is going on (Montgomery and Bailey 2007). Memos became the bridge between data

collection, analysis and draft writing and helped to initiate data analysis and coding throughout

the research process (Charmaz 2006).  For example an extract from a memo produced for this

study can be seen in Figure 5. This demonstrates analysis through free flow writing and presents

an example of an early conceptualization of theory. Combining the coding process with memos,

under the overarching principles of the constant comparative method of data analysis, also

helped to provide validity in the conceptualization process.

"*Positive competences that have helped the group become more trust worthy to the community it attempts to influence appear to start with the dependence of members to use centrally provided resource packs and information from the Fairtrade Foundation.  This assistance appears to operate on various levels.  The data demonstrates that members use and refer to these resources available to support their campaigning.  This information appears to act as a promotional resource used by the group but perhaps more important it is also used as an educational resource by members.  On considering the axels of this data the data starts to expose the potential 'necessity' of this central resource because without which it may prove impossible for members to firstly have a standardized understanding of Fairtrade, this is proving from the data and literature  to be a challenge that has yet to be overcome. Interestingly members not only demonstrate differing perceptions of Fairtrade but also differences in their understanding and expectations, and role of the Fairtrade Town group.   The group reliance on a centralized standardizing control system appears to be imperative, it also appear that those centralized resources are also acting as an agent to introduce the group to other groups and thus improving connections to increase the success of the activities they have partaken in thus far.   It appears that the central support provided by the Fairtrade Foundation has facilitated the group's confidence and subsequent competences giving them the confidence and credibility to present themselves as Fairtrade ambassadors in the places they occupy within their town.*"

**Figure 5:** Memos: Free flow writing for theory

Pulling together all the data strands (data codes and memos) of the study gave depth to the research output and facilitated the production of accurate 'core categories.' Glaser (1978) indicates that theory is generated around core categories whose primary function is to integrate theory and 'render it dense and saturated' Holton (2007, p.279). Core categories conclude the process of data analysis by generating core variables (Holton 2007) upon which emergent GT can be inductively conceptualized with confidence (Dey 2007; Hallberg 2006). This process allowed for differing perspectives to emerge and, as new data was interpreted, it served to change, augment or even discard previously constructed codes, core categories and the subsequent theory.

From this sequential and iterative process of collecting and coding different data sets, three core categories emerged, which between them (including the interplay between them) captured the marketing dynamics within Fairtrade Towns:

1. **Pressure and support**: theorizing that the use of macro and meso level social capital had been used in Fairtrade towns to credibly lobby and advise people and places to adopt Fairtrade consumption habits;

2. **Marketing through the pluralities of place**: theorizing that Fairtrade Towns had developed a place-based marketing dynamic where people, products, spaces and places are networked around a number of unique-to-place activities that proved capable of developing a town's capacity to promote and consume Fairtrade products;

3. **Validity**: theorizing that Fairtrade Towns validated their existence to achieve developmental aims through intrinsic support from the Fairtrade Foundation and extrinsic

support through actors made up of individuals, organizations, social movements and Fairtrade producers who validate their actions.

The development of core categories requires the judgment of 'the theorist', in this case the researcher (Dey 2007, p.111). This judgment was based on core categories being chosen for their credibility and ability to encapsulate the large variety and quantity of empirical data collected and analyzed during this study (Locke 2001). Therefore, each core category was conceptualized or named to represent, what Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.121) outline as, 'the variations in data by grouping similar items according to some defined properties'. The suitability and subsequent naming of each core category followed the recommendations of Dey (2007) who, based on Glaser (1978), suggests that core categories must be central, stable, complex, integrative, incisive, powerful and highly variable. Dey's suggestions can be seen in the conceptualization of core categories for this study that display evidence of:

- Conceptualizing the variations of data relationships and recurrent patterns under one statement, showing complexity and variable sensitivity in saturation;
- Being incisive when setting out the implications for developing theory;
- Being powerful enough to analyze and draw inclusive conclusions.

Figure 6 shows an example of how line-by-line and focused coding informed the development of an initial core category. The diagram demonstrates how constant comparison identified fifteen line-by-line codes that share a unifying similarity; these codes subsequently generated three focused codes that conceptualized relationships in the line-by-line codes. Both

coding processes ultimately led to the conceptualization of the core category 'Pressure and support'.
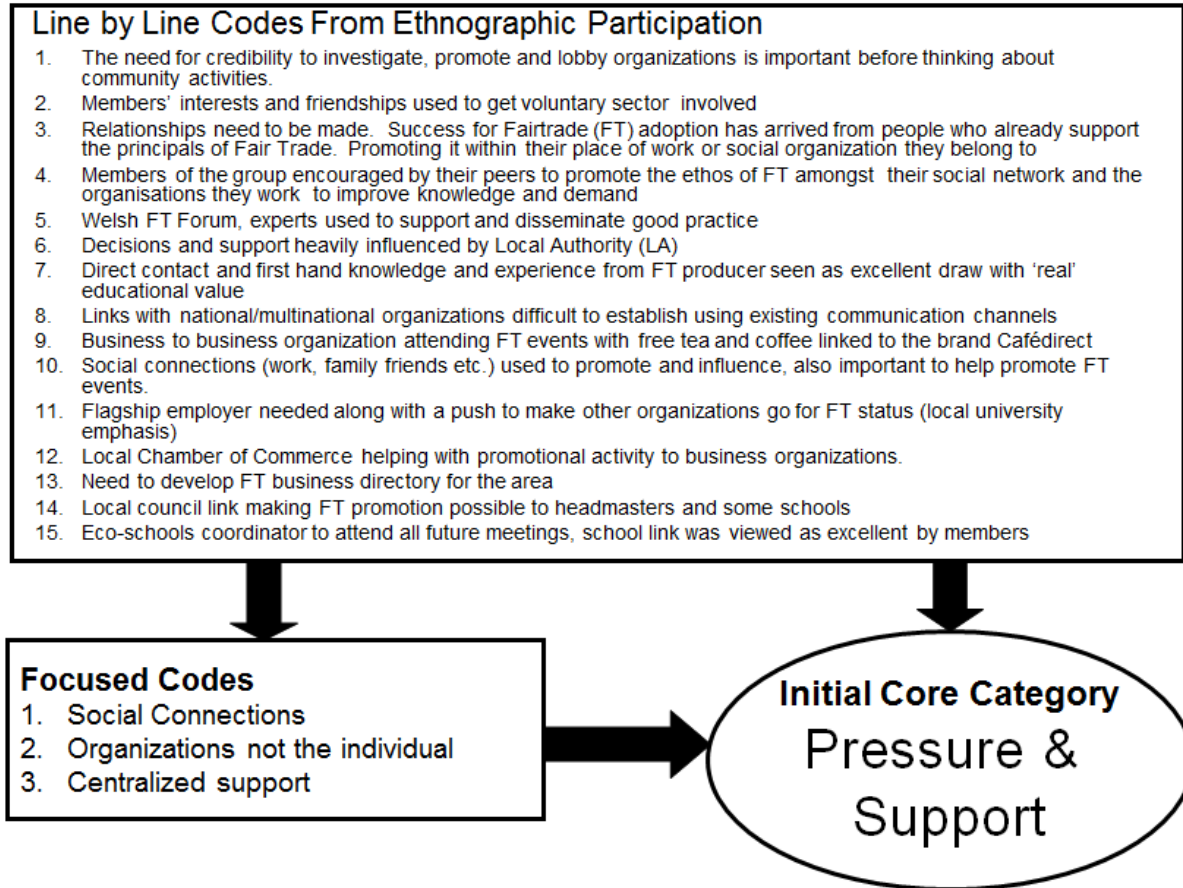


**Figure 6:** Coding for a Core Category.

*Theoretical Coding*

The additional step of theoretical coding was used despite Walker and Myrick's (2006) suggestion that it can be difficult to follow. It was used to integrate fractured parts of the data to further conceptualize how line-by-line, codes, focused codes and core categories relate to each

other and could be integrated into theory (Glaser 1978).  The process applied two 'coding families' taken from the work of Glaser (1978, pp.74-75) 'The Six Cs' and 'Process'.  Line-by-line and theoretical codes were further analyzed to help build theorized writing capable of interpreting the data through the lens of the three core categories that emerged (Glaser 1978). The coding family of 'The Six Cs' standing for causes, context, contingencies, consequences, conveniences and condition, is referred to by Glaser (1978, p.74) as the 'bread and butter theoretical code.'  Its application in this study ensured that the codes that emerged from the coding processes were further analyzed to look for consequences, dependent variables, causes and their 'process'. Process therefore became the second family of theoretical coding used, as a way of 'grouping together two sequencing parts to a phenomenon' that happened over a period of time (Glaser 1978, p.74). This form of focused coding also demonstrated an ability to help further develop precision, clarity, coherence and comprehension (Chamaz 2006) to the emerging core categories. Applying both coding families to theoretically code data helped to identify what happened over a period of time as a result of the causal consequences of the symbolic interactionism between the individual, their peers and the place. An example of how Glaser's six C's were used to help build the core category 'Validity' in this study can be seen in Table 1.

## Six Cs

| Causes | Local Councils passing a resolution to consume/ champion Fairtrade (FT) on their premises is perceived as important in adding value to FTs perception and the impact of FTTs. Viewed as an encouragement to normalize FT consumption within a specific place. **(Pl)** <br> Reliance on Local Council (Sustainability Officers)  for introductions to schools and various other groups **(Pl)** <br> Organisations from all three sectors (commercial, public, third sector) supporting FTTs perceived as very beneficial **(Pl)** <br> Use of producer tours key to developing understanding and adding 'realism' to FT **(Pe)** <br> Key influencers (such as teachers, academics and council leaders) are seen as essential to FTT success **(Pe & Pl)** <br> A key activity is getting people to try FT products to influence future purchase and discussion **(Pe)** |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| Contexts | FTT group perceived as intermediaries between high level FT ideology and consumption changes amongst organisations and consumers **(Pe & Pl)**<br>Individual skills of people in the town being utilised to facilitate FTTs' activities, build capacity and knowledge **(Pe)**<br>Workplace and job role is seen as integral in introducing new participant to FT **(Pl)**<br>Contribution of experience and kudos of NGO work to the group **(Pe)**<br>NGOs help supply FT products for group and individual taste trials **(Pl)**<br>Use of central assistance with producer tours and FT fortnight being used as a promotional vehicle **(Pe)**<br>Promotion of FT in church sermons linked to social justice **(Pl)** |
| Consequences | Success perceived as moving FT into the mainstream: Gaining consumer endorsement & Getting FT stocked in supermarkets. FT bought by 'regular' people **(Pe & Pl)**<br>FTTs have given group members a platform to add value and credence to promoting FT and aiding their lobbying activities within their town **(Pe)**<br>FTT members have a key role to play by personally purchasing FT in order to always encourage others **(Pe)**<br>Key influencers (belonging to organisations such as Universities, Schools etc) are seen as key to adding value to FTTs' activities **(Pe & Pl)**<br>Opportunity taken to further promote FT as part of certain peoples' job role, examples include NGO workers, clergy and officers at local councils **(Pe)**<br>Use of FT producer is key to developing consumer understanding and adding a sense of realism to FT **(Pe & Pl)**<br>FTT helps people achieve greater lobbying power in places of work **(Pe & Pl)** |
| Contingencies | Need to put peoples' minds at rest about any negative press of FT through utilizing peoples' trust and respect of others (social capital) **(Pe)** |
| Covariance | The growth of the FT movement and availability of more FT products has led to a feeling of being able to *'make a difference'* **(Pe & Pl)**<br>FTTs hold more FT knowledge than others groups and people in the town **(Pe)** |
| Conditions | FTT members' recognition of oneself as an FT consumer. The importance of this is linked to understanding FT in order to promote it **(Pe)**<br>Knowledge and experience of FT coming from University and other places of work and socialization **(Pl)** |

**Table 1:** Core Category: Validity (People (Pe) and Places (Pl)) of Fairtrade Towns (FTT)

Table 1is included, not with the intention of discussing the elements combined within it, but to illustrate how the Six C framework helped the researcher consolidate their thinking by better understanding how previously derived codes related to one another. As Glaser (1978, p.72) notes, theoretical codes help conceptualize how open codes and core categories relate to each other as *'hypotheses to be integrated into a theory.'* In this study the synthesizing process of theoretical coding added breadth and depth to the data (by identifying the significance of people and places), contributing to a conceptual level of writing that fully justified and grounded the theory of Fairtrade Towns' 'validity' (Holton 2007).

**Reflective Overview**

This paper has outlined the justification and use of GT as a valid, and ultimately valuable, methodology to explore the macromarketing phenomenon of the marketing dynamics of the Fairtrade Towns Movement. The experience gained in applying the methodology highlights a number of issues relevant when considering the method's suitability, application and rigor within this field of research and across other spheres of macromarketing. A recurrent theme within these issues is 'confidence': the confidence that the methodology can generate for the researcher; the confidence needed to apply it; the confidence that can be placed in findings and theory generated by it; and the confidence with which it can be recommended for researching other macromarketing phenomena.

That GT both provides confidence for, and requires confidence in, a researcher was demonstrated in the early stages of this research. This study of Fairtrade Towns started from a basis of little academic knowledge about a subject that was rapidly evolving as well as under-researched. This made planning an enquiry that asked the right questions, of the right people, and reviewed the appropriate literature challenging. With little pre-existing theory to build upon, even the theoretical framework for the study was itself inductively produced as part of the research methodology. Tackling research in this way can seem daunting, but GT not only copes with, but encourages such a 'clean slate' mentality. As Glaser (1978, p.2) frames it: 'The first step in gaining theoretical sensitivity is to enter the research setting with as few predetermined ideas as possible, especially a logically deducted prior hypothesis.' GT provides guidance for the researcher in such uncharted waters by directing the research and helping to construct appropriate questions, identifying who to interview and what bodies of literature to consult. Such

situations will not be uncommon within macromarketing which remains the primary pursuit of a relatively limited number of academics (Shapiro 2006). For macromarketers sufficient theory may not pre-exist to allow them to follow their micromarketing peers in building and testing models of marketing processes with any degree of confidence. GT provides a methodology through which that initial theory can be generated in a rigorous way. The inductive ethos of GT and its ability to help critically analyze phenomena or situations means that the methodology has the rigor to assist academic research in recognizing the complexity of those rapidly emerging social world(s) of macromarketing that remain undefined by previous hypotheses (Pettigrew 2000).

That GT requires confidence in the researcher is partly reflected in the degree to which it departs from other methodologies (particularly in its purest forms) in the relationship between the research process and the academic literature. To enter into a field of research with little pre-existing dedicated literature and allow the fieldwork to dictate the literature considered (and not vice versa), particularly for doctoral research, requires confidence on the part of both the candidate and the supervisor. It also requires confidence to invest the time and effort in getting close enough to the social reality of the phenomenon in order to understand the experiences of those involved, which in this case represented a four year period of fieldwork. Along the way the researcher also discovered that confidence was required to recognize the choice between the GT variants promoted by the disciples of each of Strauss and Glaser as a false one. Ultimately the research was best served through a compromise between purism and pragmatism when trying to establish 'what is happening' in the towns being studied. Similarly confidence was required to decide the point at which saturation had occurred and to halt the fieldwork process.

Although the ethos of GT provides confidence for the researcher using it, so too does the process the methodology follows. The ethos of GT is based on the assumption that theory is inductively produced from data and, as a result, when conceptualized, can portray a very accurate description of reality. This ideology and the process of coding provided the researcher with two key reassurances of the validity of the resulting theory:

1. The development of theory is embedded in the research process and can therefore be traced directly back to the data collected;
2. Theory is not just presented as a personal interpretation of reality; it is socially constructed from the people and processes that have been investigated.

These reassurances are significant when researching emerging disciplines, as research outputs generated under these circumstances need additional validation and demonstrable rigor to be academically accepted. Like any other doctoral research, this study into Fairtrade Towns had limitations related to time, access to individuals and organizations and the use of a single town for the in-depth ethnography. However, applying GT as rigorously as possible generated confidence that, despite such limitations, the findings and theory generated were robust. As with any interpretivist approach researcher bias is a risk since the results will potentially be colored by the researcher's interpretation of the evidence. However, because GT ensures that the interpretation takes place whilst the data gathering is ongoing, it presents opportunities to reflect back interpretations to respondents in order to verify them. Another aspect of GT that can inspire confidence (but also to an extent require it) is its flexibility and encouragement to include serendipitous moments of data collection. This played a part in this study by allowing the inclusion of key sets of data generated from unexpected opportunities that augmented the theory

developed. When researching emerging disciplines, having a clear data collection research path at the start, although perhaps attractive, can potentially limit the investigation. GT in this case provided both direction and flexibility in data collection which helped to construct a saturated picture of what was happening. Such direction and flexibility in data collection may be invaluable when conducting research into embryonic and rapidly emerging phenomena, of the type common in macromarketing contexts.GT's suitability for under-researched and complex multi-stakeholder phenomena explains part of its potential suitability for macromarketing research. There are however other factors that suggest a good potential match between the discipline and the method. Two of these relate to the 'follow the data' philosophy and avoidance of pre-conceptions about the field of enquiry and its boundaries (Glaser 1978). A significant component of the macromarketing agenda concerns the unintended consequences of marketing systems (Layton & Grossbart 2006). Since they are unintended, they may occur in unexpected places and beyond the frame of reference of a study with a pre-determined scope. GT's emphasis on following the data where it leads encourages the researcher to tease out and investigate the stories that participants want to tell, and treat whatever is found as data (Charmaz 2006), whether it was sought for or not. This improves the chances of identifying the type of unintended consequences that interest macromarketers. Similarly macromarketing research, in studying marketing systems (Hunt 1981), naturally poses questions for researchers about how those systems should be defined and delineated. A key contribution of macromarketing lies in its ability to aid our understanding of 'system levels transcending the channel' (Dixon & Wilkinson 1989, p.62), but once beyond the certainties of channel structure, macromarketing researchers may lack guidance on where to draw the system boundaries. GT does not require the researcher to pre-define the system in terms of structure, boundary conditions, scope, participants, cultural

context or any of the other aspects of marketing systems that interest macromarketers (and are set out in detail by Layton and Grossbart 2006). Instead GT  allows them to learn and build up an understanding through system participants and even through participation. In the case of Fairtrade Towns the range of stakeholders involved, and the varied and evolving roles that they played, emerged through the ethnographic participation and interviews. Some of the insights were surprising, for example when Fairtrade Towns' campaigning developed unexpected synergies with other social and political movements such as Amnesty International, The Slow Food Movement, Transition Towns and Friends of the Earth. Dowling (1983) suggests that as marketing has had to take more account of external economic, social, political and legal changes (ie more 'macro' influences'), so it has had to adopt a more 'open systems' perspective. GT facilitates such an open systems perspective on marketing systems by avoiding the predetermination of system boundaries at the beginning of the study allowing unforeseen or previously unexplored elements of, or influences on, the system to be identified and included in the research.

A final element of fit relates to the coding processes involved in GT. These involve constant comparisons and attempts to aggregate issues (including consequences) derived from discussing elements of a marketing system to generate focused codes and core categories. This helps the researcher to better understand the relationships between micromarketing processes within marketing systems and the macromarketing issues being researched. For example Fairtrade producers were regularly invited over to Fairtrade Towns to disseminate their development story to existing and potential consumers. It emerged that the micro level interaction between producer and consumer made the Fairtrade message more 'real' and

subsequently helped strengthen the perceived validity of Fairtrade's macro level developmental goals.

**Conclusions**

The study of Fairtrade Towns that underpins this paper concerns itself with a macro analysis of consumption through determining the behaviors of, and influences on, ethical consumption that exists in the places and spaces of everyday life. Although it considers ethical consumption, which is typically a micromarketing concern, it goes beyond the conventional depiction of the channel-based Fairtrade marketing system to include the range of stakeholders acting within communities promoting that system. As Dholakia and Nason (1984) argue, the same marketing system can be examined from a micro or a macro perspective. It is the consideration of the societal effects and/or the overall systemic characteristics of that system that help to distinguish research as macromarketing. A key benefit of GT is that it allows the understanding of a system's structure, boundaries, operation and effects to grow from the insights of the people who comprise it. It can avoid the risk of researchers adopting a view of a marketing system that is partial and over-simplified because it is inherited from a marketing literature that is frequently dominated by micro perspectives.

The approach to GT demonstrated in this paper outlines the methodology's suitability and practical application to researching macro perspectives of consumption and its value in researching and developing theory from what Holt (1997, p.344) refers to as 'the messy contextual details of consumer life'. However, it is reasonable to question the extent to which this means that it can be applied with equal confidence in other macromarketing contexts. In

mapping out a future research agenda for macromarketing, Layton and Grossbart (2006) outline four broad sets of research challenges, each of which could potentially benefit from enquiries informed by the ethos and practices of GT as follows:

*The Market:* macromarketing research seeks to better understand the relationships and systemic consequences of market interfaces between consumers, businesses, the economy, place and space, civic and civil society, social connections and patterns of behavior (Layton and Grossbart 2006). It includes topics relating to the nature and roles of marketplaces, alternative marketplaces, and the links between markets, families and households in relation to well-being and welfare. Researching the multifaceted systemic nature of marketplaces requires researchers to enter a complex social world interpreted variously by social actors whose actions, beliefs, interactions, and identities are understood to socially construct marketplaces (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Capturing and analyzing data from a diverse set of actors can prove daunting when attempting to develop a theory capable of explaining 'what is actually happening' from a variety of perspectives (McCallin 2003, p.203). This study of Fairtrade towns belonged primarily to this research category and required an understanding of the stakeholders with a direct involvement in the marketing process including retailers, local government offices, NGO representatives, educational institutions, social enterprises, civic institutions and consumers. This represents exactly the type of complex multi-stakeholder context that makes macromarketing phenomena challenging to research, and that makes GT an appropriate methodology (Valor 2007).

*Marketing and Quality Of Life:* macromarketing research seeks to understand different perspectives on quality of life and the positive and negative roles that marketing plays in this

field (Layton and Grossbart 2006). This study did not explicitly focus on quality of life, but the roots of GT and the foundations of its application as a methodology emerged from a quality of life study. Glaser and Strauss's (1965) seminal work '*The Awareness of Dying'* led to their 1967 book '*The Discovery of Grounded Theor*y'. Perhaps not coincidentally *'quality of dying and death'* is something that Layton and Grossbart (2006) identify as one of the most neglected facets of quality of life research in macromarketing. Quality of life is challenging to research since it is a multidimensional and frequently contested concept to which marketing activities (both commercial and social) can both contribute and subtract (quite often simultaneously). Examples of GT used to research issues relevant to a holistic understanding of quality of life are published in a collection of studies edited by Strauss and Corbin (1997).

*Marketing Ethics:* is a category of macromarketing research interested in discovering how integrity, trustworthiness, transparency, responsibility and fairness is understood, presented and applied to marketing by consumers, organizations and other stakeholders (Murphy, Laczniack and Prothero 2012). It encompasses the societal risks posed by marketing processes and the injustices that may develop from the pursuit of market efficiencies. A study concerning Fairtrade such as this could also be viewed as an ethics-based study, and unusually one that goes beyond the narrow concept of consumer ethics to consider the ethically inspired involvement of a range of other stakeholders in promoting and facilitating the consumption of ethically produced and traded goods. The roots of GT in such an ethically charged field as a study of death and dying demonstrates that it is a method that has great value in such contexts, and the studies brought together by Strauss and Corbin (1997) similarly reveal the use of GT across a range of ethically challenging research topics.

*Marketing and Development:* concerns the desire of macromarketers to find out more

about the complexities of marketing systems and their ability to contribute to, and deal with, economic, social and political systems to contribute to both domestic and international development (Layton and Grossbart 2006). Fairtrade related studies, such as this one, have a developmental dimension (as also highlighted by Geiger-Oneto and Arnould 2011; Raynolds and Taylor 2004; Witkowski 2005,), and for this study the 'Validity' core category partly reflected the contribution to development in producer communities that formed a key driver and validator of any Fairtrade Town initiative. Although focused within consumer communities, the use of GT within this study was effective in exploring and understanding the dynamics of the relationships that exist between governments, NGOs, communities and marketing intermediaries. These types of relationships are also crucial in other macromarketing developmental contexts, and there seems no reason to suppose that GT would not be equally effective and helpful in understanding them.

This paper has outlined the suitability of GT for researching macromarketing phenomena and issues. As a methodology it has been proposed as both potentially useful for, but under-used in, marketing generally and macromarketing specifically. It presents a detailed account of the application of the methodology and its coding paradigms in the context of understanding Fairtrade Towns, a comparatively new phenomenon with little previous theory or empirical attention or outputs dedicated to it. The understanding that emerged from the research process, and the literatures that the research data led the enquiry towards, extended beyond marketing scholarship and into topics more closely associated with social geography or the evolution of social movements. Dholakia and Nason (1984) recognize that macromarketing is a field that contributes to the advancement of knowledge through the integration of social sciences in a quest

to present new 'holistic perspectives' integrating ideas from a number of disciplines including sociology, anthropology, economics, and psychology.  This paper suggests that GT encourages such an approach through an ontological belief that everything you learn in the research field is relevant data (Charmaz  2006), and that research conducted using GT is therefore not limited to specific data sets or disciplines.  Theory developed using GT can enable multidisciplinary social science research to discover the links between micro, meso and macro level activity and to present these findings as overarching concepts with general implications for the area being researched. GT's use of theoretical sampling and insistence that data collection should be driven by the evolving theory (Draucker et al. 2007) helps to confidently inform the research process of where to go and what to look for next, thus letting those subjects whose experiences inform the research further direct the process in search of the richest possible data.  Subsequently macromarketing theory that is developed from such an approach will be able to confidently state that it is grounded in the social context of the participants' worlds (Blumer 1969).

Its history, coding paradigms, qualitative rigor, theoretical sampling, inductive theory building, multidisciplinary integration, systematic data collection and analysis, and an ability to flourish in unknown and complex macro landscapes are all part of what makes GT a strong and rigorous methodology. This makes it highly capable of unearthing new, and much needed macromarketing theories and in doing so help to answer Hunt's (1994, p.23) call for marketing to 'adopt a tolerant, open posture towards new theories and methods'.

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