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The interaction between values and self-identity on fairtrade consumption: The value-identity-behavior model

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ABSTRACT

The interplay between egoistic and altruistic values, self-identity, and ethical behaviors remains underexplored, despite its significance in ethical consumption. This study investigates these dynamics by developing and testing the Value-Identity-Behavior model using a robust dataset of 3023 participants from three leading fairtrade markets in Europe: the U.K., France, and Germany. Our findings reveal that self-identity positively influences willingness to pay (WTP) for fairtrade products, as consumers are more inclined to pay a premium when these products align with their self-concept. Both altruistic and egoistic values shape self-identity, although their impacts differ. Specifically, egoistic values such as monetary, visual, and functional considerations negatively affect WTP, while sensory and altruistic values enhance it. Additionally, egoistic values uniformly moderate the relationship between self-identity and ethical behaviors. Interestingly, altruistic values exert a negative moderating effect, suggesting that when altruistic values are dominant, self-identity expression becomes less critical for ethical purchasing decisions. The study concludes with theoretical insights and practical recommendations for promoting fairtrade products.

1. Introduction

The surge in consumer interest in ethical and health-conscious products reflects growing awareness of the impacts of purchasing fairtrade (FT) products (Fairtrade International, 2023; Oh & Yoon, 2014). Fairtrade, as a global movement promoting sustainable development and equitable trading for producers, has significantly influenced ethical consumption patterns. Despite its recognition as a trusted sustainability label and widespread availability in developed markets, FT products generated a modest $US 9.8 billion in global sales in 2018 compared to over $US 100 billions of organic food and drink (EcoviaIntelligence, 2019; Statista, 2023). This disparity suggests that factors beyond budgetary constraints, such as consumer hesitation and value alignment, may limit FT adoption (Gatersleben et al., 2019; Usslepp et al., 2022).

Ethical consumption literature often emphasizes altruistic values, but debates persist about the role of egoistic values and their integration into FT behaviors (Ladhari & Tchetgna, 2015; Popa Sârghie & Pracejus, 2023). Even for altruistic values, the sluggish growth in the market value of FT indicates that consumers are hesitant to embrace FT consumption in light of the exaggerated role of ethics in mainstream consumption (Andorfer & Liebe, 2015; Davies & Gutsche, 2016). Purchasing FT products is often seen as a way for consumers to express their self-identity, reflecting their alignment with deeply held values (Andorfer, 2013; Andorfer & Liebe, 2012; Chatzidakis et al., 2016; Schenk, 2019). However, expressing an ethical self-identity does not necessarily reflect shared moral values; instead, it can signify a desire to be perceived as part of an esteemed in-group, ultimately serving self-benefit rather than altruistic motives (Davies & Gutsche, 2016). The inconsistent influence of values on self-identity signals a gap to be filled in FT literature. Indeed, experts have called for more research to study the interaction between values, identity, and behaviors (Bardi et al., 2014; De Pelsmacker et al., 2016) in the context of ethical consumption.

The Value-Identity-Personal Norm model (van der Werff & Steg, 2016) emerged from the environmental domain has been a successful theoretical lens used to explain the interaction between values, identity, and ethical behaviors (Ajibade & Boateng, 2021; Ateş, 2020; van der

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Werff et al., 2013, 2014). Despite its success, this model has been criticized for (1) neglecting other values other than biospheric, (2) the need for personal norms, (3) overpassing the direct influence of values on ethical behaviors, and (4) the sole focus on pro-environmental self-identities, which invites improvements. Indeed, overemphasizing morality and pro-environmental identities may shadow ethical consumption not driven by environmental concern (Gatersleben et al., 2019; Yacout, 2023). The strong and direct effect of self-identity on ethical behaviors cast doubt on the need for personal norms in the model (Birch et al., 2018; Chatzidakis et al., 2016; Zaman et al., 2023). Additionally, research has established consumers' ethical behaviors are driven directly by both their egoistic and altruistic values (Kareklas et al., 2014), though their impact slightly when self-identity is incorporated (Van der Werff et al., 2014). To address the identified gap, this study seeks to explore the interplay between values, self-identity, and ethical behaviors by empirically testing the proposed Value-Identity-Behavior model.

The unique contributions of this study are threefold. First, we extend the Values-Identity-Personal Norms by incorporating both egoistic and altruistic values, predicting self-identity. It is worth noting that different egoistic values tend to contribute to self-identity in varying ways. The study confirms the compatibility between egoistic and altruistic values, contingent on what specific egoistic values in consideration. The second contribution emphasizes the mechanism by which self-identity influences willingness to pay, demonstrating the positive moderating effects of egoistic values but negative moderating effect of altruistic values. In case of strong altruistic values, consumers might bypass the expression of self-identity. The results also confirm the partial mediation of self-identity. The third contribution highlights the varying impacts of egoistic and altruistic values on ethical behaviors, noting that distinctive egoistic motives might not exert the same effects on behaviors.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Overview of fair trade, egoistic and altruistic values

The 18th and 19th centuries witnessed the emergence of ethical consumption in Europe and America which paved way for FT products and mainstream the role of ethical consumption in the 20th century (Yen et al., 2017). FT is defined as trade partnerships fostering the sustainable linkages between producers and consumers (Jaffee et al., 2004) which benefits producers in the long-term while offering consumers an ethical choice to exercise (Lee et al., 2015). FT products can facilitate poverty reduction, environmentally friendly production, and better working conditions (Robichaud & Yu, 2022). As at 2022, noticeable key FT achievements acknowledged (1) more than 1.9 million farmers and workers in 70 countries, (2) 1930 FT certified producer organizations, (3) 190 million EUR in FT premium in 2021 for the top 7 products, (4) FT products sold in 143 countries in 2021, (5) 2568 companies licensed more than 37,600 FT products in 2021, and (6) $450,000 in FT premium offsetting more than 650,000 tonnes of carbon emissions (Fairtrade International, 2022). Aligned with the value of FT movement, a dearth of scientific literature pointed out the formation of prosocial behaviors motivated by a true desire to help others (i.e., altruistic values) and to benefit oneself (i.e., egoistic values) (Winterich et al., 2013; Yen et al., 2017).

Previous research has confirmed the role of product attributes in representing and addressing different personal values (Garaus & Treiblmaier, 2021). Although ethical products often align with an individual's conscience and moral values (Garlet et al., 2024), they tend to be judged by both selfish values (e.g., using natural ingredients) and altruistic values (e.g., fair pay for farmers) (Garaus & Treiblmaier, 2021; Garlet et al., 2024; Kareklas et al., 2014; Yadav, 2016). Research suggested that not all attributes have the same importance when it comes to ethical decision-making (Garlet et al., 2024) and that there exists a trade-off in how product attributes are used to fuel purchase decisions (Schuitema & de Groot, 2015). Ethical behavior literature relevant to the influence of altruistic and egoistic values has reported mixed results regarding their influence on purchase intention and behavior (Fuller et al., 2022; Yadav, 2016). Some reinforce egoistic values (e.g., health benefits, belonging, self-satisfaction) as effective drivers of ethical purchase decisions (Andersch et al., 2019; Davies & Gutsche, 2016), while others underscore the importance of altruistic values even when egoistic values are not fulfilled (Schuitema & de Groot, 2015).

Schuitema and de Groot (2015) contended that consumers often evaluate egoistic attributes before ethical attributes. Egoistic attributes frequently include health benefits, price, brand name, cost, physical and functional attributes (e.g., freshness, taste, flavor, nutrition value, texture, food safety, and traceability) (Birch et al., 2018; Garaus & Treiblmaier, 2021; Garlet et al., 2024; Khare, 2019; Nguyen & Dang, 2022). Price premium remains a critical factor contributing to consumers' reluctance to buy FT products (Popa Sârghie & Pracejus, 2023), whereas quality and health attributes play a pivotal role in the decision-making process (Han & Park-Poaps, 2024). As noted by Yadav (2016), the emphasis on egoistic values should be shifted to health benefits and taste as a solution to mitigate health concerns. In a similar vein, traceability ensures food safety and quality, offering egoistic benefits by enabling consumers to avoid foodborne illnesses and swiftly trace contamination sources, thereby addressing health and safety concerns. Likewise, organic attributes can appeal to self-interest, as they are often associated with the perception that such products are healthier and tastier (Frank & Brock, 2019; Nguyen & Dang, 2022). Also, FT products were found to associate with better taste (Carr et al., 2022; Schouteten et al., 2021; Smeding et al., 2023), more natural, and sweeter (Schouteten et al., 2021), or having less calories than the conventional products (Schuldt et al., 2012).

Beyond the selfish choice attributes, ethical concerns are eased when products are not made with child labor, nor involved animal cruelty (Garlet et al., 2024). To this extent, the product quality concept has been extended to embracing concerns about social justice and environmental wellbeing (Martinez 2016), as well as animal welfare and responsible provenance (Schouteten et al., 2021). Experts further articulated that FT products must adhere to the natural environment, retain remuneration in the community of origin, facilitate a sustainable economy, human connection, and social justice (Schouteten et al., 2021; Yen et al., 2017). For those reasons, domestic or local attributes are relevant (Frank & Brock, 2019). Labels are also considered important ethical attributes to influence ethical choices (Garcia-Yi, 2015; Ribeiro-Duthie et al., 2021). Eco-labels indicate adherence to organic agriculture practices, highlighting the environmental, social, and energy value aspects of the product's life cycle (Frank & Brock, 2019). Similarly, fairtrade labels inform consumers that the products meet the fairtrade international production standards, ensuring ethical and sustainable production practices (Schouteten et al., 2021). The country of origin attribute highlights a product's ethical and altruistic benefits by informing consumers about its origin and ensuring fair remuneration for supply chain stakeholders, including farmers in developing countries (Garaus & Treiblmaier, 2021). Packaging is another attribute linked to altruistic value, as Garlet et al. (2024) emphasize, with Frank and Brock (2019) noting that ethical groceries often lose credibility when sold in plastic packaging.

2.2. Self-identity and the value-identity-behavior model

In the context of fairtrade consumption, self-identity refers to the degree to which individuals perceived themselves as conscientious consumers who consider the social implications of their purchasing decisions (Schenk, 2019). The direct link between self-identity and ethical behaviors is rooted in the idea that actions serve as a reflection of one's identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000). This means that individuals who identify as fairtrade-oriented tend to hold a positive stance toward the concept of fair trade. In this vein, their fairtrade purchase intention align

with their fairtrade identity, reflecting a positive meaning towards fair trade (Usslepp et al., 2022).

Self-identity, a core component of the Value-Identity-Personal Norm model (van der Werff & Steg, 2016), has been found to predict pro-environmental behaviors significantly. The model posits that biospheric values shape environmental self-identity, setting off a chain of effects where environmental self-identity predicts personal norms, which in turn influence how strongly an individual identifies as pro-environmental. Value-Identity-Personal Norm model has been a successful guiding framework to investigate both pro-environmental behaviors (Ajibade & Boateng, 2021; Ateş, 2020; Zaman et al., 2023) and pro-social behaviors (i.e., fairtrade consumption) (Chatzidakis et al., 2016; Schenk, 2019).

Going beyond pro-environmental behaviors, researchers argue that models such as Value-Identity-Personal Norm model and its predecessor Value-Belief-Norm theory (Stern et al., 1999) overemphasize altruistic and biospheric values as the most important values underlying pro-environmental behaviors which may shadow ethical consumption that is not motivated by environmental concern (Yacout, 2023). Also, due to overemphasis on altruistic and biospheric values, those models endorse personal norms as a predictor of pro-environmental behavior (van der Werff & Steg, 2016). In fact, empirical results have challenged that postulation backed by a strong correlation between self-identity and fairtrade purchase (Andorfer, 2013; Schenk, 2019). While Chatzidakis et al. (2016) reported a lack of discriminant validity between personal norms and self-identity and eventually had to merge the two under a construct named "internal ethics", analogously, Schenk (2019) did not support the prediction of VIP that personal norm is central to the influence of self-identity on behavior and found the direct effect of identity even stronger than that of personal norm on behavior. Incorporating empirical evidence from previous studies, we further develop our study around the Value-Identity-Behavior model (see Fig. 1), highlighting the significant direct role of self-identity in predicting ethical behaviors.

2.3. Egoistic, altruistic values and self-identity

Based on the premise that product attributes reflect and interpret the underlying values consumers prioritize when making trade-off decisions (Garlet et al., 2024; Schuitema & de Groot, 2015), we categorize the attributes into two sets, corresponding to the egoistic and altruistic values outlined in Schwartz (1992) theory of basic values. In addition to altruistic value, the Value-Identity-Personal Norm model has been extended to incorporate egoistic value (Ajibade & Boateng, 2021; Yacout, 2023). Although altruistic and egoistic values are theorized as inversely correlated with the concerns for self and for others are conceptually viewed as distinct and incompatible (Schwartz, 1992), empirical studies has ratified that these distinct self-views may coexist (Kareklas et al., 2014) and correlate positively (Gatersleben et al., 2014). As a result, egoistic and altruistic values were both found to correlate positively with moral identities (Gatersleben et al., 2014). The Value-Identity-Personal Norm model posits that values influence self-identity by shaping trans-situational life goals (van der Werff & Steg, 2016). The model underscores that ethical consumption is rooted in a sense of obligation, with consumer expressing their ethical stances based on their value-driven priorities. Given the compatibility between egoistic and altruistic values, we propose that adopting an ethical self-view does not necessarily require compromising other priorities, such as egoistic benefits (e.g., visual appeal, texture, flavor, health). For instance, FT products can simultaneously be nutritious, health-promoting, and socially responsible. Therefore, we hypothesize the following.

H1. Egoistic values influence self-identity positively.

H2. Altruistic values influence self-identity positively.

2.4. Egoistic, altruistic values and willingness to pay

Researchers have supported the inclusion of both values, noting that an advertisement combining altruistic and egoistic claims has the greatest impact on brand attitudes, product attitudes, and ethical purchase intentions (Han & Park-Poaps, 2024; Kareklas et al., 2014). Many studies provide empirical evidence to support the direct influence of personal values on FT purchase behaviors. For example, Italian consumers positively evaluate the presence of FT certification (altruistic value) of refined cane sugar packs and are willing to pay a price premium for these FT products (Ruggeri et al., 2021). Similarly, willingness to pay for the FT labeled chocolate is significantly higher among two otherwise identical ones (Enax et al., 2015). It is worth noting that consumers in different countries value product attributes differently. British consumers value egoistic attributes (i.e., quality, grade, taste) more than altruistic attributes (i.e., support FT, social justice) (Davies & Gutsche, 2016), whereas French consumers attach importance to ethical attributes (i.e., Fairtrade) as compared to egoistic attributes (i.e., taste). Additionally, previous studies demonstrated a strong linkage between both egoistic and altruistic motives and willingness to pay (Alonso et al., 2002; Davies & Gutsche, 2016; de Ferran & Grunert, 2007; Gao et al., 2014; Ragaert et al., 2004). For that reason, we hypothesize the following.

H3. Egoistic values influence willingness to pay positively.

H4. Altruistic values influence willingness to pay positively.

2.5. Self-identity and willingness to pay

Previous research supports the direct relationship between self-identity and ethical behaviors (Chatzidakis et al., 2016; Gatersleben et al., 2019; Schenk, 2019; Usslepp et al., 2022; Yen et al., 2017; Zaman et al., 2023). Indeed, when a particular behavior becomes associated with someone's role identity, that person is more likely to behave consistently with that identity (Chatzidakis et al., 2016). In our studied context, this denotes that an individual who identifies as a fairtrade consumer tends to hold a positive view of fair trade (Usslepp et al., 2022), as they regard ethical concerns as a significant aspect of their identity. As such, it is reasonable to hypothesize that.

H5. Self-identity influences willingness to pay a premium for FT products positively.

2.6. The moderating role of egoistic and altruistic values

Experts have confirmed the inconsistent relationship between values and self-identity, depending on their congruency, measurement, and context. Van der Werff et al. (2014) exemplify that even with strong environmental values, choosing a car over a bike due to living far from work may not position yourself as an environmental-friendly person or that the someone else such as the government is responsible to solve environmental problems. This suggests that a strong biospheric value does not necessarily align with an equally strong environmental self-identity, reflecting the malleable self, particularly when individuals express their values in alternative ways. Unlike purely altruistic behavior, prosocial behavior such as FT represents a form of impure altruism (Zlatev & Miller, 2016). This underscores the idea that consumers evaluate values that benefit both themselves and others, potentially leading to a motivational conflict where they must balance fulfilling their moral obligations with pursuing self-serving motives (Andersch et al., 2019).

While the specific mechanisms through which egoistic and altruistic values interact with self-identity to influence ethical behavior remain unclear, scholars have emphasized the need for research investigating these interactions (Bardi et al., 2014). It is posited that individuals express their identity through behavioral intentions in ways that align with

the centrality of their personal values (De Pelsmacker et al., 2016). De Pelsmacker et al. (2016) found that consumers driven by egocentric motivations (i.e., self-enhancement) tend to express their green self-identity directly through intentions to adopt electric cars, with minimal consideration of moral obligations or environmental consequences. In contrast, those with strong self-transcendence values – prioritizing the wellbeing of others and the community over personal gain – translate their green self-identity into intentions primarily through heightened environmental concern and a sense of moral obligation, rather than direct expression of self-identity. As such, they confirm the positive moderating effect of egoistic value and the negative moderating effect of altruistic value. The following is thus hypothesized.

H6. Egoistic values moderate the relationship between self-identity and willingness to pay a premium for FT product positively.

H7. Altruistic values moderate the relationship between self-identity and willingness to pay a premium for FT product negatively.

The effect of values on FT groceries consumption has been reported to be fully mediated by self-identity and that the direct effect of value approaches zero and is insignificant in the presence of self-identity (Schenk, 2019). Similarly, Ajibade and Boateng (2021) provided evidence to support that environmental self-identity mediated the influence of altruistic values on engagement with ethical behaviors. However, Van der Werff et al. (2014) found the partial mediation effect of self-identity on the relationship between values and ethical behaviors (e.g., reduce meat consumption). Gatersleben et al. (2014) further expound that the partial or full mediation effects of self-identity depend on the operationalized specificity of variables. For example, a full mediation is likely to occur for a general pro-environmental behavior and environmental identities. Ajibade and Boateng (2021) provided empirical evidence in consonant with this point, demonstrating that egoistic values influenced only anthropocentrism – an environmental identity centered on the notion that nature exists to serve human purposes - among seven environmental identities examined in their study. Nonetheless, empirical evidence cumulatively suggests the mediating role of self-identity.

H8. Self-identity mediates the relationship between willingness to pay a premium for FT product, (a) egoistic values, and (b) altruistic values.

3. Participants, method, and design

3.1. Participants and measurement

We concentrate on Germany, France, and the U.K. for three reasons. First, they are in the top 3 contributors at national level to the FT markets (Statistia, 2024). Second, those countries are relatively similar in terms of the individualistic cultural values (Hofstede, 2003) which might help determine the salience of egoistic values in consideration. Third, the large sample of different countries could provide external validity for our test hypotheses. We chose FT fruit (i.e., mango) as a case study for two reasons. In FT context, mango remains one of the most appreciated tropical fruits by European consumers with the U.K., Germany, and France among key importers for mangoes in Europe between 2018 and 2022 (CBI, 2024) and mango is one of the most accessible products in the FT fruit basket, yet its growth is sluggish (Ellen, 2009).

A big dataset of 3023 self-administered participants from the UK (1,009), France (1002), and Germany (1012) (50.3% female, age range 18–65 with no single age group (5-year interval) exceeding 17%) completed an online survey created in Qualtrics and distributed via the Prolific survey platform. Fifty seven percent have children under 18 in the family. The majority of household monthly income is below € 37,500. Cross-sectional data were gathered from the three countries using a unique random sample from Prolific's participant panel between June and August 2022. Participants were screened to confirm their current experience with FT fruit and were asked to reflect on their most recent purchase in the last three months. On average, participants took approximately 13 min to complete the survey. Participants' characteristics can be found in Table 1.

Likert scale was used from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree" to measure self-identity, and willingness to pay. Similar to Schenk (2019), self-identity was measured with the two original items adapted from (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992). Willingness to pay comprised four items adapted from (Konuk, 2019). For egoistic and altruistic attributes, a Likert-like scale from 1 "least important" – 7 "most important" was used with 21 attributes reviewed from fruit- and/or FT-related literature (Alonso et al., 2002; Britwum et al., 2021; de Ferran & Grunert, 2007; Fairtra; de International, 2022; Garcia-Yi, 2015; Onwezen et al., 2019; Ragaert et al., 2004; Ribeiro-Duthie et al., 2021; Ruggeri et al., 2021) and discussed among authors. For control variables, gender, age, income, and children' influence were shown to have significant effects on ethical consumption behaviors (Carey et al., 2008; Koos, 2021; Li & Kallas, 2021; Summers, 2016). Also, ecommerce shopping frequency was measured by asking the participants how usually they buy fresh mangoes from online channels or platforms with responses ranging from 1 "never" to 5 "always". Country difference was controlled by adding the country construct to the model.

3.2. Common method bias

To address potential common method bias, we followed procedural guidelines recommended by MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012). During the questionnaire design process, we focused on ensuring the questionnaire was clear and straightforward to mitigate potential challenges relevant to participants' comprehension, education level, or cognitive skills. A short definition of fairtrade mango, accompanied by illustrations to ensure consistent understanding among participants. Special care was taken to enhance question clarity, avoiding double-barreled questions, complex syntax, and ambiguous language. Response options were logically labeled to eliminate ambiguity. Additionally, to reduce impulsive responses that might compromise comprehension and accuracy, we emphasized the importance of careful reading and encouraged

Table 1
Participants' characteristics.

Variables and coding	%	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Age		6.07	2.878	1	10
1 = 18-25	5.8				
2 = 26-30	7.7				
3 = 31-35	11.5				
4 = 36-40	9.4				
5 = 41-45	8.4				
6 = 46-50	9.5				
7 = 51-55	9.9				
8 = 56-60	10.8				
9 = 61-65	10.7				
10 = 65+	16.4				
Gender		1.50	0.500	1	2
1 = Male	49.6				
2 = Female	50.4				
Children under 18		0.58	0.494	0	1
1 = Yes	57.9				
0 = No	42.1				
Monthly household income		5.28	3.497	1	13
1 = < € 7500	18.0				
2 = € 7500- €15,000	8.4				
3 = € 15,000- € 22,500	10.9				
4 = € 22,500- € 30,000	11.9				
5 = € 30,000- € 37,500	7.7				
6 = € 37,500- € 45,000	7.3				
7 = € 45,000- € 52,500	9.8				
8 = € 52,500- € 67,500	7.5				
9 = € 67,500- € 75,000	4.9				
10 = € 75,000- € 82,500	3.9				
11 = € 82,500- € 90,000	2.5				
12 = € 90,000- € 97,500	2.1				
13 = > € 97,500	5.2				

participants to answer meticulously.

3.3. Deriving egoistic and altruistic values

Egoistic and altruistic attributes were classified based on their definitions alongside ethical literature review. Specifically, egoistic means acting one's own interest or seeking to alleviate personal suffering or harm, focusing on personal benefits, whereas altruistic refers to acting for the benefit of others without expecting any personal gain (Yadav, 2016). For mentioned rationale, egoistic attributes include skin color, aroma, size, flesh texture, shape, flesh color, sweetness, defects, acidity, special variety, juiciness, ripeness, price, chemical-free claim, food safety certification, food traceability, multiple packs offer, and organic claim. Altruistic attributes comprise packaging, country of origin, and FT certification.

We further run exploratory factor analysis (CFA) to derive egoistic and altruistic from the attributes. For egoistic values, four distinct factors emerge after the first run using principal components analysis with varimax rotation and Eigenvalues greater than 1. Due to cross-loading and communalities less than the cut-off threshold of 0.4 (Hair et al., 2018), skin color, aroma, flesh color, defects, ripeness, and acidity were removed. Four factors remained were named health assurance (chemical-free claim, food safety certification, traceability, organic), sensory value (flesh texture, sweetness, juiciness), visual and functional (size, shape, special variety, multiple packs offer), and money value (price), explaining 54.60% of the total variance explained. For altruistic values, all three attributes converge well into one factor, explaining 62.16% of the total variance explained.

3.4. Structural equation modelling

The newly derived values factors will then feed into the structural equation model (SEM) to test the proposed hypotheses. PLS-SEM was used because of its causal-predictive nature of the analysis, and efficacy regarding estimating conditional process models combining mediating and moderating effects in a single analysis (Sarstedt et al., 2022). Furthermore, Sarstedt et al. (2016) demonstrated through simulation studies that PLS-SEM exhibits no bias when estimating data from a composite model population, regardless of the specified measurement model. In contrast, CB-SEM and PLSc produce significantly biased parameter estimates when applied to composite-based data, making them unsuitable in such cases. Given that the convergence of egoistic and altruistic values requires attributes to exhibit conceptual unity – and similarly for self-identity and willingness to pay – PLS-SEM emerges as the appropriate analytical approach.

We used SmartPLS to analyze the dataset and test the hypotheses developed in the proposed model. We used Cronbach's alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR) to measure internal consistency reliability with satisfactory values above 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021). Outer loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) were taken into consideration to evaluate the measurement model's convergent validity. The favorable threshold for outer loadings should be higher than 0.7. Also, the AVE should be higher than 0.50 denoting the construct can explain at least 50% of the variances of its indicators.

Multicollinearity in the context of PLS-SEM was assessed using variance inflation factors (VIFs) less than 5; a VIF value of 5 or higher indicates a critical collinearity issue and is subject to removal; however, a VIF value between 3 and 5 denotes uncritical collinearity issues (Hair et al., 2021). The issue of common method bias was assessed through Harman's single-factor test, which revealed that a single factor extracted explained less than 50% of the total variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To evaluate the structural model, the coefficient of determination (R^2 value) was used of which, on marketing issues, 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25, as a rule of thumb, were described as substantial, moderate, and weak (Hair et al., 2021). In addition to R^2 value, the f^2 effect size of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively, suggest small, medium, and large effects of the exogenous latent variable.

Unlike CB-SEM, PLS-SEM is not based on covariances and thus a fit measure is not an emphasis (Hair et al., 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2014). Instead, the evaluation criteria, besides collinearity, R^2, and significance and relevance of path coefficients, include the model's predictive relevance – Q^2 (so-called blindfolding) (Sarstedt et al., 2014). Q^2 – the prediction accuracy of the model increase as the disparity between predicted and original values decreases. For a given endogenous construct, Q^2 values greater than zero signify that the path model's prediction accuracy is adequate for that construct (Sarstedt et al., 2014).

4. Analysis and results

4.1. Measurement model

Table 2 illustrates that both Cronbach's α and composite reliability values of all constructs are larger than 0.7 indicating satisfactory internal consistency reliability. All AVE values in the model were larger than the acceptable threshold of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). For discriminant validity testing, all heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) values should not exceed a threshold of 0.85. Health assurance factor and altruistic values demonstrated a high degree of similarity, with the HTMT value approaching the acceptable threshold, necessitating the removal of at least one construct. Altruistic values were retained as they represent the core focus of the study. Moreover attributes like "organic" or "chemical-free" claims may encompass dual meanings, reflecting both egoistic and altruistic values tied to the environmental and sustainability dimensions of the product's entire life cycle (Garlet et al.,

Table 2
Construct measurement, reliability, validity, and VIF.

	France (N = 1002)				
Constructs and items	M	VIF	OL	CR	AVE
Egoistic values				0.821	0.605
Visual & functional[a] Cronbach's α = 0.676					
VF1. Shape	4.397	1.263	0.708		
VF2. Special variety	4.131	1.422	0.858		
VF3. Multiple packs offer	4.183	1.315	0.761		
Sensory value Cronbach's α = 0.716				0.839	0.635
SA1. Flesh texture	6.008	1.353	0.779		
SA2. Sweetness	5.960	1.454	0.771		
SA3. Juiciness	5.869	1.411	0.838		
Money value Cronbach's α = 1.000				1.000	1.000
MV1. Price	5.482	1.000	1.000		
Altruistic values - Cronbach's α = 0.695				0.824	0.611
AV1. Country of Origin	4.453	1.467	0.774		
AV2. FT certification	5.097	1.306	0.854		
AV3. Packaging	4.094	1.342	0.711		
Self-identity Cronbach's α = 0.887				0.946	0.898
SI1. I think of myself as someone who is very concerned with ethical issues	4.190	2.734	0.937		
SI2. I think of myself as a fairtrade consumer	3.910	2.734	0.943		
Willingness to pay Cronbach's α = 0.936				0.954	0.838
WTP1. I would pay more for fairtrade mangos	4.732	3.832	0.923		
WTP2. I am willing to spend more money in order to buy fair trade certified mangos	4.720	3.742	0.929		
WTP3. It is acceptable to pay more for fair trade certified mangos	4.912	3.357	0.904		
WTP4. It is acceptable to spend extra money for fair trade certified mangos	4.936	3.638	0.914		

M- Mean, OL – Outer loading, CR – Composite Reliability, AVE – Average Variance Extract.
[a] Size was removed due to OL < 0.7.

2024). This somehow prove the compatibility between altruistic and egoistic values documented in literature. After that, discriminant validity is no longer a problem (see Table 3). There was no problematic multicollinearity with all VIFs smaller than 4 (see Table 2). Followed the recommendation of Podsakoff et al. (2003), the Harman's single-factor test was performed using SPSS 24. All items measuring latent constructs were loaded into one factor. The total variance explained for a single unrotated factor was only 35.81%, denoting the absence of common method bias.

4.2. Structural model testing

Running the blindfolding procedure with an omission distance of seven yielded cross-validated redundancy values (Q^2) for two endogenous constructs well larger than zero (self-identity: 0.267; WTP: 0.438), thus, supporting the model's predictive relevance. The model was estimated using bias-corrected and bootstrapping with 10,000 sub-samples. Regarding R^2, the model was able to explain 29.9% variance in self-identity, and 52.6% variance in WTP (Fig. 2). Except H1, H3, and H8 were partially supported, all other hypotheses were fully supported (Table 5) (Fig. 2).

In terms of the effect size f^2, it appears that altruistic values have a medium impact on self-identity (0.174), egoistic values show small to trivial impacts such as money value (0.004), visual and functional (0.031), and no impact for sensory value. Regarding WTP, f^2 values of self-identity (0.247), altruistic values (0.167), money value (0.036), sensory value (0.013), and visual and functional (0.033) remained small to medium on WTP (Table 4). This concludes the heterogeneous impact of egoistic and altruistic values on consumers' self-identity and their WTP when it comes to fruit. Regarding control variables, only the influence of age was significant. Younger consumers tend to pay extra for FT fruit. No country difference was observed.

4.3. Mediation and moderation results

Among egoistic values, self-identity only mediated the relationship between money value and visual functional value on willingness to pay for FT mango, thus, only partially supported H6, whereas a full mediation was detected towards altruistic values and willingness to pay, supporting H7. It is worth noting that the mediation effect of self-identity was much stronger for altruistic than egoistic values.

As anticipated, all egoistic values positively moderated the relationship between self-identity and willingness to pay. The moderating effects, ranked in a decreasing order of magnitude, were visual and functional value (0.106), sensory value (0.069), and money value (0.029). Hence, H6 was supported. Similarly, the negative moderating effect of altruistic values on the relationship between self-identity and willingness to pay corroborated H7.

5. Discussion

To address study aims and the research hypotheses, we examined how FT consumption being influenced by self-identity, egoistic and altruistic values and the interaction between them. We have made several significant contributions to the current body of FT literature and Value-Identity-Personal Norm model.

First, our investigation of egoistic and altruistic values adds to the call that others values may be relevant in the context of ethical behavior, which the Value-Identity-Personal Norm model has overlooked (Gatersleben et al., 2019; Yacout, 2023). Those authors also noted that placing excessive emphasis on morality and ethical identities may overshadow instances of ethical consumption driven by factors other than ethical concern. Thus, our inclusion of egoistic values enhances the understanding of value-identity congruity; for example: egoistic values align with egoistic identities, such as anthropocentrism, as highlighted in the study of (Ajibade & Boateng, 2021). In this case, we demonstrated that both egoistic and altruistic values play a role in influencing ethical self-identity (**H1**, **H2**) and willingness to pay (**H3**, **H4**), and that both

Table 3
Discriminant validity – HTMT.

	WTP	age	ALT	ALT x SI	children	country	gender	income	MV	MV x SI	OP	SI	SV	SV x SI	VF	VF x SI
Willingness to pay (WTP)																
age	0.099															
altruistic values (ALT)	0.675	0.112														
altruistic x self-identity (ALT x SI)	0.226	0.018	0.273													
children	0.085	0.321	0.143	0.020												
country	0.003	0.017	0.06	0.001	0.087											
gender	0.011	0.104	0.016	0.038	0.028	0.009										
income	0.021	0.013	0.02	0.029	0.007	0.014	0.002									
money value (MV)	0.139	0.08	0.072	0.088	0.050	0.058	0.065	0.005								
money value x self-identity (MV x SI)	0.136	0.054	0.114	0.039	0.031	0.059	0.011	0.018	0.061							
online purchase frequency (OP)	0.204	0.295	0.354	0.092	0.210	0.129	0.075	0.012	0.056	0.101						
self-identity (SI)	0.657	0.126	0.647	0.119	0.166	0.082	0.064	0.009	0.011	0.140	0.330					
sensory value (SV)	0.222	0.097	0.337	0.050	0.051	0.038	0.061	0.018	0.149	0.01	0.060	0.173				
sensory value x self-identity (SV x SI)	0.117	0.023	0.049	0.236	0.036	0.055	0.01	0.015	0.006	0.099	0.064	0.137	0.196			
visual functional value (VF)	0.291	0.144	0.836	0.048	0.260	0.162	0.11	0.036	0.205	0.112	0.429	0.522	0.297	0.064		
visual functional x self-identity (VF x SI)	0.009	0.095	0.081	0.543	0.079	0.002	0.02	0.019	0.097	0.123	0.200	0.060	0.062	0.200	0.078	

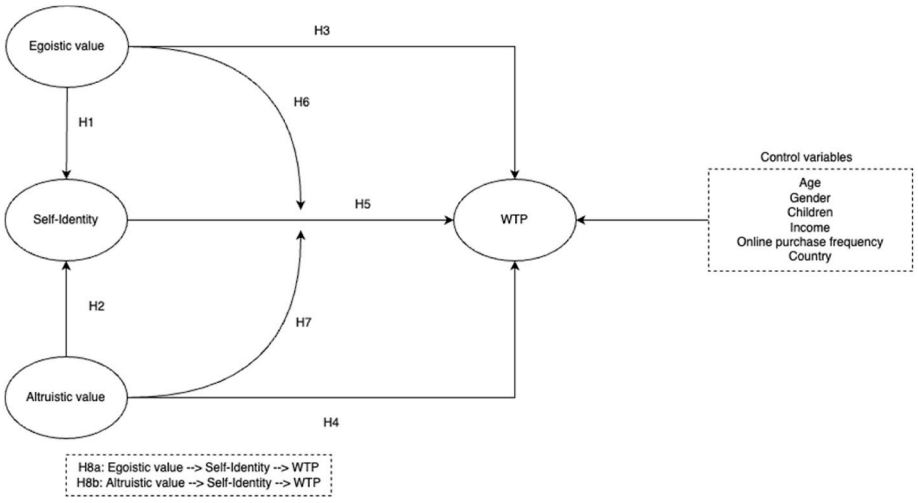

Fig. 1. The Values-Identity-Behavior model.

values are compatible in guiding identity formation, and behavioral intentions. Our unique contribution further elucidates the contrasting influence between egoistic values, namely money, and visual and functional values. Individuals who place a high priority on monetary value are less likely to cultivate an ethical self-identity, while visual and functional values enhance self-identity. Regarding willingness to pay, the positive effect of sensory value contrasted with the negative effects of monetary, visual, and functional values underscores the importance of distinguishing between different egoistic values. This finding refines the notion of value compatibility from prior studies (Gatersleben et al., 2019; Kareklas et al., 2014), suggesting it depends on specific egoistic values in question. Meanwhile, the influence of altruistic values remains consistent, as documented in the ethical consumption literature (Fuller et al., 2022; Han & Park-Poaps, 2024; Konuk, 2019). We provided further evidence to support the argument by Popa Sârghie and Pracejus (2023) that altruistic motives significantly increase the willingness to pay a FT premium as oppose to the prominent role of egoistic motives in influencing purchases of other ethical products, such as organic products (Yadav, 2016).

The findings confirm the positive direct influence of self-identity on paying a premium for FT product (**H5**) as documented in FT literature (Chatzidakis et al., 2016; Usslepp et al., 2022; Yen et al., 2017). This implies that when a specific behavior aligns with an individual's role identity (e.g., ethical self), they are more likely to act in a manner consistent with that identity. Regarding our second contribution and to our best understanding, we are the first to formulate and test the moderating effects of egoistic and altruistic values on the relationship between self-identity and FT behavior. As expected, the positive moderating effect of egoistic values (**H6**) and negative effect of altruistic values (**H7**) shed light on the mechanism of interaction between personal values and self-identity. We argue that consumers are more likely to bypass the expression of their moral identities with strong altruistic values which are more likely to be translated directly into ethical behavior, reflecting the malleability of the self. On the other hand, consumers adhering to egoistic values may feel the urge to express their ethical self-identity into the willingness to pay a premium for FT product similar to the case of electric car adoption (De Pelsmacker et al., 2016). In other words, having an ethical self-identity does not mean egocentric people are deeply concerned about moral obligation. For example, an individual with an ethical self-identity might choose to purchase FT mango not out of a deep moral obligation but because it aligns with their appreciation for sensory value, such as the sweetness, juiciness, or texture; visual and functional value, such as special varieties or multiple packs offer; or money value, such as the belief that it offers good value for its price compared to non-FT alternatives.

By confirming the partial mediation effects of self-identity (H8a, H8b), we offer valuable insights that extend our understanding of mediation effects beyond the value-identity matching effect proposed by Gatersleben et al. (2014). Our findings suggest that the extent of mediation – whether partial or full – may hinge on the strength and type of consumer values. Specifically, values must be sufficiently strong to maintain a direct influence on FT behavior, even when self-identity is present. This could explain the observed partial mediation effects between altruistic values, self-identity, and FT behavior which might otherwise exhibit full mediation. For example, Van der Werff et al. (2014) found that the direct influence of biospheric values on ethical behavior, although still significant, reduced in the presence of self-identity. Regarding the type of values, Schenk (2019) reported that the effect of universalism on FT consumption was fully mediated by self-identity. As noted by Schwartz (2007), universalism values take on different meanings across societies depending on whether or not moral inclusiveness is high. The differing interpretations of values may explain the contrasting finding between ours and Schenk (2019).

6. Theoretical contributions

The study addressed the research problem by making several notable contributions. We answered to the call of Bardi et al. (2014) to examine the interaction between values, self-identity, and ethical behaviors. By virtue of that, we have made several notable contributions to the addressed shortfalls of the Value-Identity-Personal Norm model and the FT literature.

We first offered evidence to rectify the Value-Identity-Personal Norm model into the Value-Identity-Behavior model, emphasizing the direct influence of self-identity on ethical behavior. The well-established direct relationship between self-identity and ethical behaviors in the literature (Gatersleben et al., 2019; Van der Werff et al., 2014; Zaman et al., 2023) suggests that the Value-Identity-Behavior model could pave the way for exploring the direct influence of various identities, such as the car authority identity highlighted in Yacout (2023) study on ethical consumption decisions.

By incorporating both egoistic and altruistic values – factors previously overlooked in the Value-Identity-Personal Norm model (Yacout, 2023) - we also address this gap by extending the model to consider other values influencing both ethical self-identity and behaviors within the FT domain. Among very few studies examining egoistic values on FT behaviors (Ladhari & Tchetgna, 2015; Popa Sârghie & Pracejus, 2023), we unveil that not all egoistic values can be held accountable to reflect self-identity. Regardless, the moderating role of egoistic values necessitates their fulfillment to strengthen the direct influence of ethical

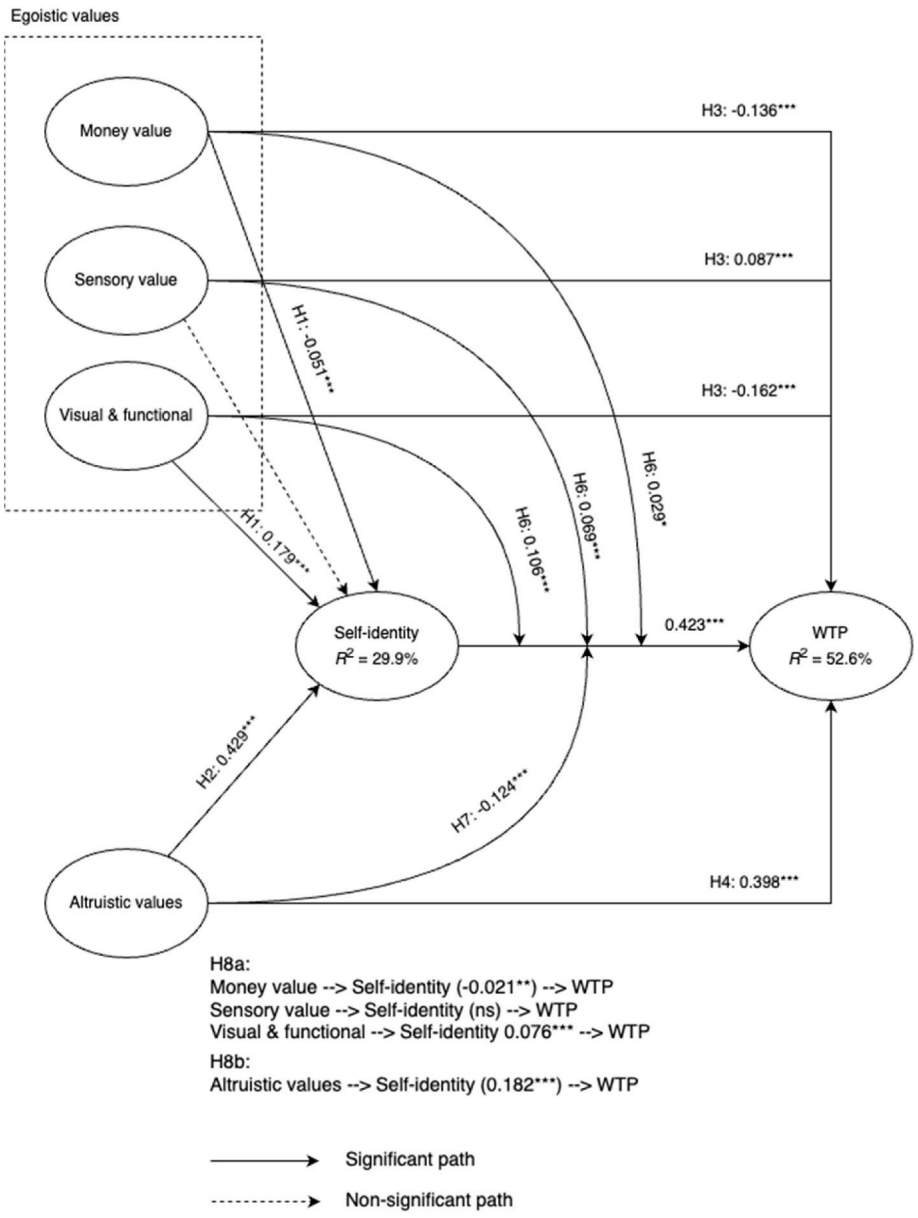

Fig. 2. Results of the empirical model.

self-identity. Conversely, the strong direct effect of altruistic values aligns with their negative moderating influence, collectively diminishing the necessity to project an ethical identity. Our insights thus contribute to expounding and reconciling the current debate of whether or not the role of morality has been overstated (Lundblad & Davies, 2016) and why both values should be considered in the context of FT consumption. This introduces our next contribution regarding the mediating role of self-identity.

Consumers with strong altruistic values are more inclined to engage in ethical behaviors directly, with minimal reliance on expressing their self-identity, thereby highlighting its partial mediating role. In contrast, egoistic values exhibit varying levels and directions of indirect influence through self-identity, underscoring their moral complex relationship with ethical behaviors. This extends our understanding beyond the question of whether both values should be included or deemed compatible in influencing self-identity (Andersch et al., 2019; Popa Sârghie & Pracejus, 2023; Yadav, 2016). Instead, the focus should shift toward identifying the specific egoistic and altruistic values that exert indirect influence through self-identity and assessing the magnitude of their impacts.

7. Managerial implications

Several managerial implications can be drawn from our findings. First, we challenge the widely held belief that egocentric consumers tend not to express their ethical self-identity and that ethical consumers are mainly driven by their prosocial or self-less values. We thus recommend retailers to convey the message that personal benefits align with and contribute to the wellbeing of the world as a whole. Specifically, an overemphasis on egoistic values may act as a double-edged sword, potentially reducing the willingness to pay a premium for FT products. Instead, retailers should focus on enhancing the cognitive pathway through self-identity by emphasizing visual and functional value, while leveraging consumers' desire for self-identity expression.

In contrast to the argument by Han and Park-Poaps (2024) that advertisements are most effective when the focus solely on egoistic claims, such as low price, good quality, and personal health benefits, and that the inclusion of altruistic claims offers no added value, our findings

Table 4
Effect size f^2.

	Self-identity	WTP
Altruistic value	0.174	0.167
Age		0.004
Children		0.000
Altruistic values x Self-identity		0.025
Country		0.000
Gender		0.001
Income		0.000
Money value	0.004	0.036
Money value x Self-identity		0.002
Online purchase frequency		0.000
Self-identity		0.247
Sensory value	0.000	0.013
Sensory value x Self-identity		0.009
Visual & functional	0.031	0.033
Visual & functional x Self-identity		0.018

Table 5
Hypotheses testing.

	Paths	β (t-stat)	p	Supported
Main effects				
H1	Money value → Self-identity	−0.051 (3.134)	0.000	Partial
	Sensory value → Self-identity	0.001 (0.065)	0.948	
	Visual & functional → Self-identity	0.179 (8.425)	0.000	
H2	Altruistic values → Self-identity	0.429 (21.302)	0.000	Yes
H3	Money value → WTP	−0.136 (9.868)	0.000	Partial
	Sensory value → WTP	0.087 (5.946)	0.000	
	Visual & functional → WTP	−0.162 (8.818)	0.000	
H4	Altruistic values → WTP	0.398 (21.673)	0.000	Yes
H5	Self-identity → WTP	0.423 (24.047)	0.000	Yes
Moderation effects				
H6	Money value x Self-identity → WTP	0.029 (1.959)	0.050	Full
	Sensory value x Self-identity → WTP	0.069 (3.788)	0.000	
	Visual & functional x Self-identity → WTP	0.106 (5.689)	0.000	
H7	Altruistic values x Self-identity → WTP	−0.124 (7.634)	0.000	Yes
Mediation effects				
H8a	Money value → Self-identity → WTP	−0.021 (3.090)	0.002	Partial
	Sensory value → Self-identity → WTP	0.000 (0.065)	0.948	
	Visual & functional → Self-identity → WTP	0.076 (7.666)	0.000	
H8b	Altruistic values → Self-identity → WTP	0.182 (16.137)	0.000	Yes

advocate for the integration of both egoistic and altruistic appeals, with a stronger emphasis on altruistic values. While Han and Park-Poaps (2024) focus on organic cotton apparel, Popa Sârghie and Pracejus (2023) highlight distinct value-driven patterns between organic and FT products, favoring altruistic and prosocial motives in driving the willingness to pay an FT premium. Based on this, marketers should develop advertisements that combine egoistic claims – such as affordability, sweetness, juiciness, and good texture – with altruistic appeals, including fair remuneration for local producers, adherence to FT standards, and environmentally friendly packaging.

For countries embracing strong altruistic values such as France, the U.K., and Germany in our study, marketers might want to emphasize altruistic values by displaying FT or eo-friendly certification logos prominently on shelves and packaging, reinforcing the ethical value of the products. Also, stores can QR codes on products to access augment reality experiences that showcase the journey of the product and its impact on the community. Alternatively, emphasizing the message that purchasing FT products equates to giving back could be highly effective (Zlatev & Miller, 2016)

8. Conclusions, limitations, and future directions

A burgeoning demand for FT products emerges in the wake of the FT movement. The important role of self-identity on willingness to pay for FT products has been proven in literature; however, to date, the interaction between values, self-identity, and ethical behaviors has received scant attention. The results of this study bridge this gap by exploring the mechanism through which values and self-identity interact, ultimately predicting ethical behaviors.

Value elicitation through product attributes has shown potential to articulate the interaction between values and self-identity. The pivotal role of egoistic and altruistic values stresses the importance of considering both, as well as the specific values and their strength. The study provides evidence to demonstrate values not only are indicators of self-identity but also guiding principles to influence how self-identity determines ethical behaviors. Furthermore, when a particular value becomes sufficiently prominent, consumers may take a cognitive shortcut, directly engaging in behaviors congruent with the values they uphold.

This study is not without limitations. First, we only consider top developed countries contributing to the FT global movement. It would be valuable to reevaluate the Value-Identity-Behavior model for collectivistic and developing countries from the Global South (e.g., Vietnam, Thailand, Pakistan). Second, value elicitation was done through amalgamating different attributes relevant to the focal product (i.e., fruit) of our study. This poses two limitations. For different FT products, future researchers might need to come up with relevant attributes peculiar to a specific product of interest (e.g., fashion products) (Lee et al., 2015). As consumers from different countries might interpret values differently due to their preferences, and cultural differences, our results might not be generalizable. For that reason, examining other values could provide external validity for our proposed model as well as offer boundary conditions for changes which certainly add value to our findings. Although this study focuses on ethical self-identity, future research is recommended to probe into other identities relevant to the behaviors in question, thus extending the model. As the Value-Identity-Behavior is centered around self-identity, it certainly neglects other potential determinants of behavior such as social norms, knowledge, trust, anticipated guilt, or mindfulness. Future research therefore can improve the model to introduce their new perspectives. As other demographic characteristics such as marital status might be related to consumers' willingness to pay a higher price for FT products, future research should also control for various demographic characteristics relevant to their study context.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Sara Quach: Writing - review & editing, Supervision, Conceptualization. **Robin E. Roberts:** Writing - review & editing, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Data curation, Conceptualization, Supervision. **Simon Dang:** Writing - review & editing, Writing - original draft, Visualization, Validation, Software, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Alec Zuo:** Writing - review & editing, Investigation, Data curation, Conceptualization, Supervision. **Park Thaichon:** Writing

- review & editing, Supervision.

Ethical statement

This study was conducted in accordance with applicable laws and institutional guidelines and received approval from the University's Ethics Committee (Approval Reference: 2019/391, dated 03/01/23). The privacy rights of all human participants were respected, and informed consent was obtained prior to their involvement in the study.

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Declaration of competing interest

We have no competing interests to declare.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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