

Spreading Sustainable Coffee through Promotional Activities in Japan

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1. Research Background and Objectives

Currently coffee is produced in 60 countries which are located in tropical and subtropical areas. Coffee is said to be the most traded commodity among all the agricultural products. The total area of coffee production is more than 1200 million hectare, which is equal to the area of England. What is more, as many as 2500 million small scale farmers in the world are working to produce coffee in developing countries. These numbers explain that production of coffee has a significant impact on social economy and environment. In order to alleviate poverty and protect the global environment, it is urgent to shift the production, distribution and consumption of coffee in a sustainable way. In fact, such idea has already been put into practice in the form of 'Sustainable Coffee'. Sustainable coffee is differentiated from other types of coffee because it is produced in a socially and environmentally friendly way and is considered to have an additional value. However, currently awareness of sustainable coffee is very low in Japan and diffusion is going quite slow. In this research, the main objective is to identify the current status of sustainable coffee and to reveal the obstructive factors of spreading sustainable coffee by conducting promotional activities .

2. Methodology

Firstly, literature review and information gathering in producing country are done in order to define the additional value of sustainable coffee. Next, Three promotional activities: 1) working as an ecotourism guide at a coffee farm, 2) organizing a symposium at university and 3) organizing exhibition and tasting event at environmental festival are conducted to find out current status and possibility of spreading sustainable coffee to Japanese consumers in the future. In addition, results of interviews and consumer questionnaire, which are conducted during the activities, are shown to get a better understanding of Japanese consumers' reactions towards sustainable coffee.

3. Results and Discussion

Firstly, throughout the literature review and field study, it was revealed that unique agricultural practices such as shade-grown coffee, installation of compost, providing good working conditions for farmers are done in sustainable coffee farm. What is more, it was found that ecotourism is conducted as a means of spreading sustainable coffee in producing countries and it is quite effective to convey the additional value of sustainable coffee.

By conducting two promotional activities (symposium and tasting event) in Japan, the author found out that although the availability of certified products is increasing in Japan, many people still feel that diffusion is not going well and more effort should be put to spread sustainable coffee in Japan.

At the tasting event, the author conducted consumer questionnaire and found out that many consumers show willingness to buy and pay more for sustainable coffee when they know about the benefits of sustainable coffee. What is more, throughout the interactive communication with the participants of this event, it was implied that sustainable coffee can be promoted by collaborating with different stakeholders including companies, NGOs, and educational institutions.