

2019

A cup of colonialism: A qualitative analysis of Starbucks and Fair Trade Coffee

Katie Grandelli
Hollins University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.hollins.edu/researchawards>

Recommended Citation

Grandelli, Katie, "A cup of colonialism: A qualitative analysis of Starbucks and Fair Trade Coffee" (2019). *Undergraduate Research Awards*. 46.
<https://digitalcommons.hollins.edu/researchawards/46>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship and Creative Works at Hollins Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Research Awards by an authorized administrator of Hollins Digital Commons. For more information, please contact lvilelle@hollins.edu, millerjc@hollins.edu.

A cup of colonialism: A qualitative analysis of Starbucks and Fair Trade Coffee

Katie Grandelli

Hollins University

Research Methods in Social Sciences 216

Professor Tanya B. Schwarz

May 9, 2018

Coffee has long fueled the minds of many people in the world, but only recently have discussions on its production and sourcing methods started to come to light with the advent of the fair trade movement. Within the modern fair trade coffee movements, great weight is placed on the analysis of the lingering effects of colonialism in the coffee industry. In this paper, I argue that the effects of colonialism are perpetuated by Starbucks because of their lack of educational efforts towards consumers on the motivations and goals of fair trade coffee movements.

I first discuss the origin of the fair trade movement, then I turn to the various schools of thought on fair trade coffee that have been identified by scholars past. I describe the theoretical framework of neocolonialism that I use to frame my research before moving onto a description of the methods and strategies that I utilize to collect and analyze data. Then I describe my research findings and explain how they relate to my argument of the perpetuation of colonialism by Starbucks. Before moving onto my conclusion, I give suggestions on how my research could have been limited by restraints during my process. Finally I lay out the conclusion that can be ascertained from my data analysis.

Discussions of literature and theoretical framework

The fair trade coffee movement originated in the 1970s in the Netherlands. This movement seeks to create better economic situations for coffee-producing countries that had previously been controlled by massive coffee companies. According to Gregory Dicum, consumers who desired to create a better economic situation and relationship with producers—who had previously been under colonial control—propelled this change. Consumers who decide

to partake in fair trade coffee do so with the motivation of empowering those who produce the coffee.¹

Literature on fair trade coffee can be divided into two main categories—one on the legacy of colonialism within the greater coffee industry and the second on the motivations of both consumers and coffee companies regarding their approaches to fair trade.

The first school of thought that emerged from research on the coffee industry's influence on the global market is a study of the history of colonialism. The coffee industry was born out of colonialist ventures of European countries (and later the United States) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.² Most scholars agree that in general, the coffee industry has shaken most of the original bonds of colonialism from past centuries, but newer bonds of neocolonialism have instead taken their place.

The legacy of colonialism is then continued through international economic pressure. Since coffee is the second most valuable commodity in the international economy, some countries that are massive coffee producers today are still under the same supply demands that they were when they were colonies.³ This pressure of demand translates to impoverishment from partnerships with the same colonial coffee powers that had a presence in the countries before independence.³ Because of their extensive legacy of only producing coffee, these countries have no other means for diversity within in their national economy. If these countries still want to have some role in the larger international economy, their only way of doing so is via coffee.

¹ Gregory Dicum, "Colony in a Cup," *Gastronomica* 3, no. 2 (2003): 76.

² Michelle Craig McDonald and Steven Topik, "Americanizing Coffee: The Refashioning of a Consumer Culture," in *Food and Globalization: Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World*, eds. Alexander Nützenadel and Frank Trentmann (New York: Berg), 109. ³Ibid, 122.

³ Santori Chamley, "The Price of African Coffee," *New African* 526, (2016): 33.

There is no other infrastructure in place for such countries to compete outside of the coffee market.⁴ Fair trade coffee initiatives seek to help countries in positions like these increase the economic productivity of their coffee markets but also to diversify the greater economic situation in the country.

The second place that scholars have found the enduring legacy of colonialism in the coffee industry is in marketing strategies. Marketing strategies throughout coffee's history range from wildly exotic stories about coffee producing countries to perceived "image laundering" by the modern movements for more sustainable practices.⁵ Scholars identify both of these marketing movements as inherently colonialist they are appropriating the country that is doing all of the work to produce the coffee that consumers desire so much.

Other marketing strategies are seen as controlling specific narratives within countries that will benefit the coffee company while excluding valuable characters who deserve to be in the story that is told about their coffee.⁶ Scholars have also accused coffee giants of "fairwashing" their products and marketing strategies in the hopes of creating more socially responsible consumers. The last marketing method that has been identified by scholars is that coffee companies will make an extra effort while marketing their products to defend them from accusations of past colonialism or exploitative practices.⁷ While the fair trade coffee movement

⁴ Gregory Dicum, "Colony in a Cup," 73.

⁵ Will Low and Eileen Davenport, "Mainstreaming fair trade: adoption, assimilation, appropriation," *Journal of Strategic Marketing* 14, no. 4 (2006): 323 and Terrence H. Witkowski, "Fair Trade Marketing: An Alternative System for Globalization and Development," *Journal of Marketing* 13, no. 4 (2005): 28.

⁶ Frank Trentmann, "Before Fair Trade: Empire, Free Trade and the Moral Economies of Food in the Modern World," in *Food and Globalization: Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World*, eds. Alexander Nützenadel and Frank Trentmann (New York: Berg), 260.

⁷ Dmitri Van Den Bersselaar, "Who belongs to the 'star people'? Negotiating beer and gin advertisements in West Africa, 1949-75," *The Journal of Africa History* 52, no. 3 (2011): 390.

has attempted to take the entire coffee industry towards a more ethical and responsible future, some companies continue to utilize marketing practices that are still harmful and exploitative of coffee producing countries.⁸

Beyond the marketing strategies that have been adopted by coffee companies, there has also been significant pressure from fair trade related non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on these companies. These NGOs are quickly becoming powerful forces in the coffee industry, because they have found ways to “harness the power of the market...leading to positive results.”⁹ Their efforts have had outcomes ranging from Starbucks becoming more fair trade oriented to making the Indian coffee industry as a whole more sustainable.¹¹ The work that activists and NGOs have put into the fair trade coffee industry has already started to create lasting change as seen with Starbucks and the Indian coffee industry, but responsibility to change the entire coffee industry does not rest on them alone. It is the standards for suitability and fairness that the companies set for themselves that are the real determining factor in the creation of a better, more sustainable coffee industry.

Finally, researchers have studied the motivations of consumers towards fair trade coffee. According to these researchers, consumers purchase fair trade coffee do so to appear more socially responsible. These consumers are also critical of the mainstream coffee industry for the exploitative practices carried out by companies who have not joined with the fair trade coffee

⁸ Jean C. Darian, Louis Tucci, Cynthia M. Newman, and Lindsay Taylor, “An Analysis of Consumer Motivations for Purchasing Fair Trade Coffee,” *Journal of International Consumer Marketing* 27, no. 4 (2015): 319320.

⁹ Paul A. Argenti, “Collaborating with Activists: How Starbucks Works with NGOs,” 107. ¹¹Ibid, 102 and Jeffery Neilson and Bill Pritchard, “Green Coffee? The Contradictions of Global Sustainability Initiatives from an Indian Perspective,” *Development Policy Review* 25, no. 3 (2007): 328.

movement.¹⁰ This “conscientious consumer” is one that relies in part on their favorite fair trade coffee selling brands to educate them on the goals of the fair trade movement.¹¹ The main goal of the fair trade coffee movement is to create a consumer who is socially knowledgeable and responsible about sustainable economic measures being put in place where the coffee was being sourced.¹²

Critiques and analysis on background from literature

Based on the previous work of researchers on the coffee industry, one sees how the coffee industry has slowly worked to distance itself from the original colonialism from where it was born. However, while most of the traditional elements of colonialism have disappeared from the industry, there are modern twists in economic issues and marketing strategies that one could argue to be colonialist in nature.

The original strains of colonialism perpetuated by Western nations have finally been put to rest by time and independence for the nations affected. However, there is a second wave of colonialism that lingers in the vacancy left from the first time around. Called neocolonialism by scholars, this again exploits the hard work and resources from nations, all for the benefit for the foreign investors and their respective nations. The profit is being made from instability perceived by other, more powerful and developed nations. The exploitation found in neocolonialism is just a second cycle of colonialism.¹³ Countries that are now bearing the burden of neocolonialism are

¹⁰ Jean C. Darian, Louis Tucci, Cynthia M. Newman, and Lindsay Taylor, “An Analysis of Consumer Motivations for Purchasing Fair Trade Coffee,” 323 and Keith R. Brown, *Buying into Fair Trade*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 97.

¹¹ Carl Obermiller, Chauncey Burke, Erin Talbott, and Gareth P. Green Taste, “‘Taste Great or More Fulfilling’,” 170.

¹² *Ibid*, 167.

¹³ *Aftermath of Colonialism*, ed. Nancy L. Hoepli (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1973), 166.

doing so through monetary ways instead of the military presence that was common during the first waves of colonialism. Former President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, wrote that now “the neo-colonial State may be obliged to take the manufactured products of the imperialist power to the exclusion of competing products from elsewhere.”¹⁴ Outside of economic means, neocolonialism can be found in the imagery that is used to portray the nations affected. Nations in the midst of this second wave of neocolonialism have been displayed through the lens that the artists view them. Most of those lenses are constructed by the Global North’s oversimplification of these countries, and the artwork is meant to invoke wild and exotic thoughts that are not truthful representations at all.¹⁵

Based on my literature review of the past colonialist ties within the coffee industry and a theoretical framework of neocolonialism, I propose the question: To what capacity has Starbucks continued the cycle of neocolonialism when educating their customers about their coffee sourcing and purchasing strategies? This education is vital because without teaching the coffee consumer base about the goals of the fair trade coffee movement, especially economic goals, neocolonialism is allowed to continue.

Current initiatives in place by Starbucks

There are currently two main initiatives that Starbucks has in place to make coffee “the world’s first sustainable product to improve the lives of at least 1 million people in coffee communities around the world.”¹⁶ The first way that they are working towards this goal is with

¹⁴ Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1965), ix-x.

¹⁵ Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Photography at the heart of darkness,” in *Colonialism and the Object*, eds. Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (London: Routledge, 1998), 170.

¹⁶ “Ethical Sourcing: Coffee,” Starbucks, <https://www.starbucks.com/responsibility/sourcing/coffee>, accessed March 3, 2018.

the creation of Farmer Support Centers, which are places where Starbucks freely shares the information and technology that they have developed to improve productivity and sustainability within the coffee industry. The information from these centers is “open to farmers regardless of whether they sell to us [Starbucks].”¹⁷ The second initiative run by Starbucks is their collaboration with Conservation International. This partnership allows both organizations to “explore the viability of scaling the traceability technology and ensuring positive impact to farmers.”²⁰ Again, this partnership prides itself of its transparency and willingness to share information with all parties, regardless if they are associated with Starbucks or not.

Methodology

For this question, I decided to specifically focus on Starbucks because of their prevalence in the global coffee industry. I employed four different methods to collect my data. These methods were to visit brick and mortar Starbucks stores, observe the packaging and labeling of bulk Starbucks coffee in supermarkets, read the information and stories published on both the main Starbucks website and blog website *1912 Pike*, and conduct a survey to learn more about customers’ experiences with Starbucks’ approaches towards fair trade coffee.

Throughout all of these occasions, I drew on Foucauldian understanding of discourse analysis. This method of analysis looks at the structure and linguistic power dynamics within textual sources and how those dynamics affect the greater social structure surrounding them.¹⁸ Discourse analysis allows my research to conceptualize the massive amount of power and sway

¹⁷ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸ David McNabb, *Research Methods for Political Science* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2010), 323-324 and Terrence H. Witkowski, “Fair Trade Marketing: An Alternative System for Globalization and Development,” *Journal of Marketing* 13, no. 4 (2005): 24.

that Starbucks have over their customer base regarding the decisions that are made about education on fair trade goals.

My first method of gathering information was to visit Starbucks stores. Given my time and distance constraints during this period of research, I was able to visit three Starbucks closest to my location in Roanoke, Virginia. The purpose of these visits was to interact with baristas and ask them what they could tell me about the origins of the coffee. These interactions helped me understand the levels of knowledge to which Starbucks chose to educate their baristas on the methodology of their coffee sourcing. Because these everyday baristas are the most recognizable face of Starbucks, their knowledge of Starbucks' initiatives is what will affect any curious and conscientious consumer.

My second way of analyzing Starbucks' marketing and educational methods was to observe the packaging and labeling of bulk Starbucks coffee sold in physical supermarkets. My process when looking at bags of coffee in stores was to find all the types of Starbucks coffee that was sold, whether it be in bagged form, K-cup boxes, or instant drink packets. The first aspect that I was looking for on these products was any mention of a fair trade initiative. The second was a possible explanation about fair trade coffee movements to teach the enquiring consumer about what fair trade was hoping to accomplish either globally or in the specific country that the coffee was coming from. The inclusion or exclusion of these elements on the product are a reflection of the decisions Starbucks made of how much to explain their coffee sourcing philosophy.

The third section of research that I undertook was to analyze literature published by Starbucks on both their main website and their blog, *1912 Pike*. On the Starbucks website, I

analyzed the nine total articles that were linked in the introductory article on their ethical sourcing methods of coffee.¹⁹ On *1912 Pike*, I analyzed the posts under the “Farm to Cup” and “Places” sections of the entire blog site.²⁰ Both of these sections are important to my research

¹⁹ “Ethical Sourcing: Coffee,” Starbucks.

²⁰ “Farm to Cup,” 1912 Pike, <https://1912pike.com/column/farm-to-cup/>, accessed March 6, 2018, and “Places,” 1912 Pike, <https://1912pike.com/column/places/>, accessed March 6, 2018.

because they are the only two categories on the entire website that have any close ties to the coverage of my topic. I collected all of the articles from their respective categories on; there were nine from the Starbucks website, seventy-two from “Farm to Cup,” and sixteen from “Places.”

To organize this data, I coded each article according to the method demonstrated in Figure 1.A, included below.

Coder	Meaning
1	Article includes a focus on selling a Starbucks product
1a	Direct inclusion of “quality of coffee” language
2	Article focuses on people-to-people relationships brought about by coffee
3	Usage of economic language such as “economy/value/growth/prices”
3a	Direct inclusion of “fair trade” language
3b	Direct inclusion of “sustainability” language (in an economic meaning)
4	Marketing of coffee based off of its source origin
5	Miscellaneous—does not fit within other categories

Figure 1.A

For coder 1, my criteria for determining if the article was attempting to sell a product if there was a link or picture to the product itself within the article, as shown in Figure 1.B.

Recognizing the explicit mentions of “quality of coffee” became important to me as I read the articles, because Starbucks has a very clear focus on maintaining that their coffee have the best quality in the industry, while still hoping to maintain their goals of a sustainable, fair trade product.



Figure 1.B

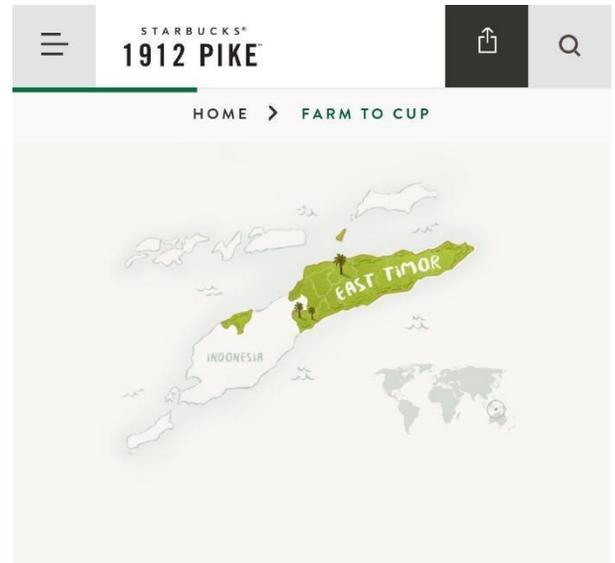


Figure 1.C

Coder 2, on the people-to-people relationships in articles, is an important factor that I discovered because Starbucks very much desires to tell personal stories of success rather than those of just economic success.²¹ From a public relations standpoint, telling personal stories will help bolster any marketing campaign, but from a perspective of neocolonialism and economics, such stories do not help educate people on the latter issues. The instances of economic language—coders 3, 3a, and 3b—were chosen to help me narrow down the extent to which economic issues were discussed in the article, if they were discussed at all. To judge if the article was marketing a profit based off of its source origin for coder 4, I looked for any map or map-related artwork, demonstrated by Figure 1.C. Finally, coder 5, is labeled “miscellaneous” because there were some articles that did not fit in any of the aforementioned categories. The information gathered from this coding process is a part of my demonstration of how the choices made by Starbucks in

²¹“Ethical Sourcing: Coffee,” Starbucks.

the ways they describe and market their products are not wholly representative of the real goals of fair trade.

The fourth and final data collection strategy that I employed was a survey to gauge the experiences of others with Starbucks' marketing and outreach based on their coffee sourcing standards. The questions on this short survey sought to determine if people who had purchased Starbucks coffee knew of the theory of colonialism and Starbucks' coffee sourcing initiatives. I will use the data collected in this survey to understand how and where the participants learned about colonialism. The participants of this survey represented personal acquaintances and fellow students from Hollins University, with the total number of participants being twenty-one. Questions asked centered around the participant's frequency of consuming a Starbucks coffee product, prior knowledge about fair trade, and they were aware with Starbucks' goals regarding coffee sourcing.

Analysis

The results that I received from my data sources broke down into two categories. The first category was an apparent lack of effort made by Starbucks to educate their customer base on the motivations of their coffee sourcing initiatives. The second category was some presence of an educational effort, but such an effort was made in an inconspicuous manner that made such efforts appear to not be widely known.

A general lack of educational effort

The first instance of a general lack of educational effort made by Starbucks comes from the way that bulk coffee is labeled. The Starbucks products that I studied in stores presented a curious puzzle. Some bore the mark of "Conservation International," while other products did

not. The Conservation International logo was placed on the bottom right corner of the back of the packaging, so its absence was easily spotted. Figure 1.D, Starbucks Cinnamon Dolce ground coffee, is an example of a product that did not include such labeling. Figure 1.E, Starbucks Dark French Roast ground coffee, is an example of what this labeling on a product looks like, with the label in the bottom right corner. After inspecting all other Starbucks products in the stores, it became clear that products that were flavored or a blend of non-coffee elements with coffee did not have this mark on their packaging. The only products that carried the symbol of Conservation International were products that were pure coffee with no extra additives like flavoring.



Figure 1.D

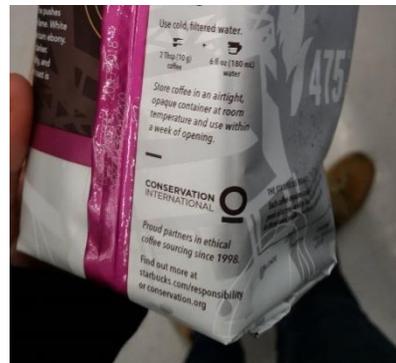


Figure 1.E

Included with the Conservation International logo were the statements “Proud partners in ethical coffee sourcing since 1998” and “Find out more at starbucks.com/responsibility or conservation.org.” These statements, along with the logo of Conservation International, were the only markings on products that were meant to help educate potential buyers about where and how their coffee was sourced. There was no explicit definition written on the packaging about what the goals or methods used by Conservation International affected how this coffee was sourced or produced. Regardless, the labeling itself is indeed a step in the right direction regarding education about fair trade for some Starbucks bulk products to be labeled with the logo

of Conservation International and have two websites full of resources at the buyers' fingertips. However, given that many products sold by Starbucks in stores are lacking such a logo and information, some buyers will possibly remain oblivious to the efforts by Starbucks and Conservation International.

One could hypothesize that the reason that these flavored coffees are not given the same labels as the pure coffee products because they are, in fact, not one hundred percent plain coffee. The addition of flavoring to the coffee could corrupt the labeling about Conservation International given that there is more than pure coffee in the product. Whatever the reasoning is behind the decision to not label seemingly half of Starbucks products with the markings of Conservation International, the fact still remains that only half of all products are in any shape or form able to tell their consumer the origins of the coffee.

The half of Starbucks coffee products that carry the Conservation International logo have the ability to teach their consumers about Starbucks' fair trade initiatives. However, the other half that are not marked by Conservation International do not have even have that chance. Consumers who purchase these products that go unmarked are unaware of the fair trade movements that help countries move away from the legacy of colonialism.

The second portion of evidence that fell under the broader theme of a lack of education on the goals of the fair trade coffee movement are the articles from the Starbucks website and blog, *1912 Pike*. These articles seem to be written with the intent of helping teach the curious consumer about the coffee they are consuming and the company that from which they are purchasing said coffee. All ninety-seven articles were analyzed with the eight different coders

under the strategy described in the “Methods” section of this paper. The results are presented in Figure 1.F below.

Coder and Definition	“Farm to Cup”	“Places”	Starbucks website
1 —Article includes a focus on selling a Starbucks Product	29	4	0
1a —Direct inclusion of “quality of coffee”	32	5	5
2 —Article focuses on people-to-people relationships brought about by coffee	27	5	6
3 —Usage of economic language such as “economy/value/growth/prices”	14	0	5
3a —Direct inclusion of “fair trade” language	1	0	2
3b —Direct inclusion of “sustainability” language (in an economic meaning)	2	0	2
4 —Marketing of coffee based off of its source origin	30	3	0
5 —Miscellaneous—does not fit within other categories	9	8	2
	Total 72 articles	Total 16 articles	Total 9 articles

Figure 1.F

From these articles, the overarching theme occurring in forty-three percent of all articles is the motivation to sell a product, not to educate. Combined with the importance Starbucks places on the quality of their coffee, the desire to sell a product and describe their coffee as high quality are stated in seventy-seven percent of the articles. Compared to these motivations, any economic terminology (the combination of coders 3, 3a, and 3b) are only in twenty-six percent of all articles. In thirty-four percent of these articles, map-related artwork is used to show the consumer the country of the coffee’s origin.

With three-quarters of these articles focused on selling coffee of a high quality, there are multiple instances in which the country is described in an exploitative manner for the purpose of glorifying the coffee they are producing. One egregious example of this comes from an article in the “Farm to Cup” section of *1912 Pike*. Readers are encouraged to “savor this irony: for a country so wild, Papua New Guinea produces some of the most refined and elegant coffees we’ve [Starbucks] ever come across.”²² Another instance of language like this comes from the “Places” section, where an opening statement of a feel-good piece about the work Starbucks has been doing in communities reads, “when it comes to the countries where we source coffee, Papua New Guinea is one of the most exotic.”²³ This is a prime example of how Starbucks is not completely allowing countries and communities that it partners with to fully escape the bonds of neocolonialism. By only marketing the coffee on its being “exotic”, Starbucks is not giving their customers a chance to learn more about the country itself and how it has been affected by the work and goals of the fair trade coffee movement.

The twenty-six percent of articles that do mention economic issues are usually coupled with articles that focus on the relationships that Starbucks has built with individuals involved in key roles of coffee production. The even smaller percentage of articles, only three percent, that explicitly mention “fair trade” do so by mentioning Starbucks’ partnership with Conservation International. The words “fair trade” are never used by Starbucks to describe their own approach to coffee sourcing—only initiatives that they are working on along with other organizations. It is good that economics are discussed in one-quarter of all of these articles, but this one-quarter of

²² “A Journey Back in Time,” 1912 Pike, <https://1912pike.com/a-journey-back-in-time/>, accessed April 18, 2018.

²³ Michelle Flandreau, “Why clean water is so important for coffee communities,” 1912 Pike, <https://1912pike.com/starbucks-reserve-clean-water-project/>, accessed April 23, 2018.

articles depict a lack of focus on the great economic issues that plague the countries that Starbucks source their coffee from. Since neocolonialism has a great focus on the economic control of the affected countries, by choosing to not have a great focus on the economic side of fair trade, Starbucks and the writers of these articles are continuing it.

Thirty-four percent of these articles utilize some sort of map related artwork in an effort to sell their product. These maps appear more like artwork than a factual representation of the country itself. Figure 1.G, a map taken from the article “Starbucks Reserve Nicaragua: Big Bans, Big Flavor” on *1912 Pike*, is an example of an artistic rendering of an entire country being reduced down to a single image that makes it appear more palatable to the rest of the world.²⁴ This reduction fulfills the argument made by Nicholas Mirzoeff that neocolonialism is continued in the artwork depicting countries through a lens that shows powerful Westernized nations what they wish to see in these less-developed countries.²⁵ Depicting countries as one color with just a singular place pointed out is a problem because it completely erases everything else that is a part of the makeup of the entire country. This oversimplification does reduce the confusion that could be caused by excess artwork. However, by making this concession in the name of tidy artwork, these maps serve no other purpose but to be a piece of the argument for the exotic locations that produce coffee for Starbucks.

²⁴ Michelle Flandreau, “Starbucks Reserve Nicaragua Maracaturra: Big Beans, Big Flavor,” *1912 Pike*, <https://1912pike.com/starbucks-reserve-nicaragua-maracaturra/>, accessed April 12, 2018.

²⁵ Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Photography at the heart of darkness,” in *Colonialism and the Object*, eds. Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (London: Routledge, 1998), 170.



Figure 1.G

An attempt for education

The second main theme of the data that I collected was that Starbucks had made some efforts towards being able to provide some education for their customers who were concerned with the economic motivations of fair trade coffee. These two main sets of data that gave results along this trend were my interactions with Starbucks baristas and a survey that I conducted; both have been described in the “Methods” section.

The results I received from my short conversations with baristas at Starbucks were enlightening in regards to how Starbucks decides to train their employees about their coffee sourcing methods.

Two out of three of the baristas that I interacted with gave me the same answer when asked if they could tell where Starbucks coffee came from. Both answers were short—“It [the coffee] comes from literally all over the world...there’s more information on the Starbucks

website.”²⁶ This was all of the information I received, though I had made sure to talk to the baristas when they appeared to not be busy. While I cannot attempt to assume anything about the attitude of the baristas when I talked with them, they appeared to be telling me everything that they knew at that point in time. Cautiously and with respect to the situations of the baristas that gave me these short answers, I state that they probably had not received much, if any, education from Starbucks about the sourcing of the coffee that they were serving and selling.

However, the third of my visits to Starbucks went in a direction much more promising. This barista took the time to have a discussion with me about the various places around the world where Starbucks procures their coffee and used the giant world map painted on one wall of the shop to show where the regions were that produced the most coffee for Starbucks. When I asked him what he knew about Starbucks’ efforts within the context of fair trade, he reminded me of Starbucks’ goal of serving coffee that was sourced in a “responsible manner” and all of the initiatives that were already in place to help specific coffee producing locales all over the world, such as the Farmer Support Centers.²⁷ When I asked this barista where his wealth of knowledge had come from, he told me of his voluntary participation in the Starbucks Coffee Master Program. This program gives its participants a much deeper foundation of knowledge into the values and goals of Starbucks as a company instead of just the introductory information all employees are given.²⁸

²⁶ Interview, 15 April 2018, Starbucks #22002, and Interview, 2 May 2018, Starbucks #11152.

²⁷ Interview, 22 April 2018, Starbucks #09851.

²⁸ “Starbucks Coffee Masters Share Passion for Coffee,” Starbucks Newsroom, <https://news.starbucks.com/news/starbucks-coffee-masters-share-passion-for-coffee>, accessed April 26, 2018.

The most important part of this interviewing process was that the knowledge that the third barista mentioned had gained came from his *voluntary* participation in the Starbucks Coffee Master program. This interview process shows that while there is a way for Starbucks employees to become more familiar and knowledgeable about the coffee sourcing practices that their company practices, such an education is only completed on a voluntary basis by a very small amount of employees around the world. Baristas are the most visible face of Starbucks for consumers, so their potential lack of knowledge about the goals of the movements behind the coffee that they are selling is a perpetuation of neocolonialism.

The final method of data collection, a survey, yielded results on respondent's knowledge of the fair trade coffee movement and initiatives by Starbucks to educate about fair trade and sustainable coffee sourcing methods. On prior knowledge of the fair trade coffee movements, fourteen respondents replied yes while seven said no. All those who selected yes were given the option of describing where and how they had heard of this movement. The fourteen open responses centered around initiatives done by coffee companies (ie. labels on products). One answer was specific to Starbucks, for the respondent said that they had heard of fair trade coffee because of "signs sitting at the register of Starbucks."

However, when the survey respondents were asked if they were aware of Starbucks's commitment of making coffee "the world's first sustainable product,"²⁹ only eight of the twenty-one respondents had heard of this. While that is thirty-eight percent of all the respondents who had heard of this goal, the remaining sixty-two percent of respondents show that Starbucks has not made this commitment very visible to their customers.

²⁹ "Ethical Sourcing: Coffee," Starbucks.

Limitations

I believe that there are ways that I could expand this survey, but I was not able to do so given the restraints of a deadline. The first way that this research could become stronger is to determine the official way that Starbucks trains their employees on the ways in which they work to source towards a sustainable product.

It would also be very beneficial to study the social media channels of Starbucks and potentially interact with such accounts. This would be another way to understand how Starbucks does or does not educate their customers on the goals behind the greater fair trade movements, such as better economic conditions. I had started such a study, but all of Starbucks' normal social media activity was disrupted by the incident regarding race in Philadelphia on 12 April 2018. Following the backlash towards Starbucks resulting from this incident, all their social media channels went on a two week hiatus, not posting anything that was not relevant to their proposed solutions to the repercussions of the incident.

The conclusions in this paper must be prefaced by the limitations that were reached in this research, such as the time frame and the scope of the data collected. Further study should be conducted to develop these conclusions more.

Conclusion

All of the data points that I have collected can tentatively point towards the fact that while Starbucks does value their efforts towards making coffee a more sustainable product, they have failed to keep their customer base educated.

The first evidence that I presented, the education of baristas regarding Starbucks' coffee sourcing initiatives, demonstrated that only through a voluntary choice can employees become able to have an intelligent and worthwhile discussion with customers who want to know about the origins of their drink's coffee. The choices made by Starbucks when labeling their bulk coffee products and only expressing their partnership with Conservation International on half of the products fail to educate everyone who would purchase a bulk Starbucks product on initiatives and partnerships for the betterment of coffee sourcing methods. The literature published by Starbucks on their website and on *1912 Pike* are evidence that Starbucks is more than willing to use the coffee's source country in an exploitative manner to sell the coffee and will rarely discuss possible economic issues within the country that need to be included in the discussion of Starbucks' efforts in the countries. Finally, the responses to the survey show a clear lack of effort of Starbucks to educate their clientele on the work they are trying to carry out in their attempts to utilize fair trade coffee and create a more sustainable product. With all of this, I argue that a connection can be made between perpetuation of neocolonialism and the lack of substance behind efforts made by Starbucks to keep customers knowledgeable about the goals of fair trade movements within the global coffee community.

REFERENCES

- "A Journey Back in Time." 1912 Pike. <https://1912pike.com/a-journey-back-in-time/>. Accessed April 18, 2018.
- Aftermath of Colonialism*, Edited by Nancy L Hoepli. New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1973.
- Argenti, Paul A. "Collaborating with Activists: How Starbucks Works with NGOs." *California Management Review* 47, no. 1 (2004): 91-116.

- Brown, Keith R. "How to Appear Altruistic." In *Buying Into Fair Trade: Culture, Morality, and Consumption*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.
- Chamley, Santori. "The Price of African Coffee." *New African* 526, (2016):30-36.
- Darian, Jean C., Louis Tucci, Cynthia M. Newman, and Lindsay Taylor. "An Analysis of Consumer Motivations for Purchasing Fair Trade Coffee." *Journal of International Consumer Marketing* 27, no. 4 (2015): 318-327.
- Dicum, Gregory. "Colony in a Cup." *Gastronomica* 3, no. 2 (2003): 71-77.
- "Ethical Sourcing: Coffee." Starbucks. <https://www.starbucks.com/responsibility/sourcing/coffee>. accessed March 3, 2018.
- "Farm to Cup." 1912 Pike. <https://1912pike.com/column/farm-to-cup/>. accessed March 6, 2018.
- Flandreau, Michelle. "Starbucks Reserve Nicaragua Maracaturra: Big Beans, Big Flavor." 1912 Pike. <https://1912pike.com/starbucks-reserve-nicaragua-maracaturra/>. accessed April 12, 2018.
- _____. "Why clean water is so important for coffee communities." 1912 Pike. <https://1912pike.com/starbucks-reserve-clean-water-project/>. accessed April 23, 2018.
- Low, Will and Eileen Davenport. "Mainstreaming fair trade: adoption, assimilation, appropriation." *Journal of Strategic Marketing* 14, no. 4 (2006): 315-328.
- McDonald, Michelle Craig and Steven Topik. "Americanizing Coffee." In *Food and Globalization: Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World*, edited by Alexander Nützenadel and Frank Trentmann, 109-127. New York, Berg, 2008.
- McNabb, David. *Research Methods for Political Science*. New York: M.E. Sharpre, 2010.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "Photography at the heart of darkness." In *Colonialism and the Object*, edited by Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Neilson, Jeffery and Bill Pritchard. "Green Coffee? The Contradictions of Global Sustainability Initiatives from an Indian Perspective." *Development Policy Review* 25, no. 3 (2007): 311-331.
- Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. New York: International Publishers, 1965.
- Obermiller, Carl, Chauncey Burke, Erin Talbott, and Gareth P. Green. "'Taste Great of More Fulfilling': The Effect of Brand Reputation on Consumer Social Responsibility Advertising for Fair Trade Coffee." *Corporate Reputation Review* 12, no. 2 (2009): 159-176.
- "Places." 1912 Pike. <https://1912pike.com/column/places/>. accessed March 6, 2018.
- "Starbucks Coffee Masters Share Passion for Coffee." Starbucks Newsroom.

<https://news.starbucks.com/news/starbucks-coffee-masters-share-passion-for-coffee>.
accessed April 26, 2018.

- Trentmann, Frank. "Before Fair Trade: Empire, Free Trade, and the Moral Economies of Food in the Modern World." In *Food and Globalization: Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World*, edited by Alexander Nützenadel and Frank Trentmann, 253-276. New York, Berg, 2008.
- Van Den Bersselaar. "Who belongs to the 'star people'? Negotiating beer and gin advertisements in West Africa, 1949-75." *The Journal of Africa History* 52, no. 3 (2011): 385-408.
- Witkowski, Terrence H. "Fair Trade Marketing: An Alternative System for Globalization and Development." *Journal of Marketing* 13, no. 4 (2005): 22-33.