

Change the world, start with a coffee

Would you pay more for your coffee if you knew exactly where it came from and how it got to you?

An increasing number of Western millennial consumers would, and it's benefitting everyone from the farmers who grow the beans to the artisan cafés that sell the coffee around the world.

At The Attendant café in London, customers are happy to pay up to 18% more for their coffee, if it means that the farmers are getting a fairer price for their beans. One of them explains: "I like to know that it's ethically sourced because you just feel better about drinking it."

The café tries to make customers aware of where the beans that make their cappuccinos and lattes come from, as well as the impact they are having by choosing to buy them. The Attendant develops relationships with individual farmers through green coffee traders so that they can carefully select beans from individual farms. Technology helps ensure the beans can be tracked all the way from the farm to the cup.

"It is important that the farmer gets a fair price for the coffee they sell," says logistic manager Eric.

"Consumers also need to know where their food comes from".

One of their coffees comes from a particular farm in Uganda, a country not known for its coffee, but Ryan de Oliveria, the café's co-founder, has managed to find a farmer who is growing really good beans there. He tells all his bar staff about the provenance of the coffee, so they can then tell customers. "For example, there was a lot of warfare in Uganda and we explain the impact we are trying to make with those farmers to stabilise their communities."

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) estimates that the export price for coffee, most of which goes to the farmer, is just \$1.45 for about 450 g. The price doubles to \$2.89 when the beans are produced to the standards required for fair-trade and sustainability certification. However, farmers do even better when they sell to artisan cafés. Because consumers are prepared to pay more for their coffee in these places, the export price can climb to \$5.14!

But it isn't just the farmers who are benefitting. The growing demand for ethical coffee has helped The Attendant expand to three branches, as well as sell coffee wholesale and by subscription.

"People want to know that they are doing good and they don't want to buy something from a supply chain that is corrupt," says Ryan.

(source: The BBC)

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