

For the Promotion of Fair Trade

1. Reason and Purpose of the Research

Nowadays, a number of corporations and countries around the world have adopted fair trade as a trading system. Fair trade, which was originally started to reduce the North-South divide, is a trading system that enables producers to trade their products on a long-term basis at prices that satisfy them. Although fair trade is becoming popular across the globe, it has not been widely applied in Japan. Based on the goal of promoting fair trade in Japan in order to create an equal world, I and my fellow high school students have decided to research “What can high school students do to increase awareness of fair trade among “consumers” who are directly involved in trade?”

2. Method of Research

First, an on-street questionnaire survey was given to 100 people at Hankyu Railway Toyonaka Station to find out the current level of public awareness of fair trade. The questions asked in the survey were as follows: (1) Gender; (2) Age; (3) How well do you know about fair trade?; (4) How did you first learn about fair trade?; (5) Have you ever purchased any fair-trade products?; (6) What is your impression of fair trade?

Next, we listened to Professor Seiji Utsumi from Kyoto Women’s University, who specializes in international cooperation in education and also has experience serving as the president of the International Society of Volunteer Studies in Japan. The questionnaire survey results were discussed, summarized and shown to Professor Utsumi. In response, the professor gave a wide range of advice concerning the causes of low fair-trade awareness in Japan, the measures we can take to promote fair trade as well as other topics.

Furthermore, we listened to Professor Kenichi Abe from the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, who was introduced to us by Professor Utsumi. Professor Abe set his eyes on the value of high quality coffee produced in East Timor and introduced and diffused East Timor coffee as a fair-trade product in Japan. Professor Abe explained the current state and problems of fair trade and the ideal form of fair trade and expressed his view on fair trade. It was an interesting talk. As we mentioned our intention of getting involved in the promotion of fair trade, Professor Utsumi kindly gave us a chance to design a package label for coffee produced in East Timor and traded by an organization known as Peace Winds Japan and also the opportunity to sell the products on our own.

3. Research Outline

1) What is fair trade?

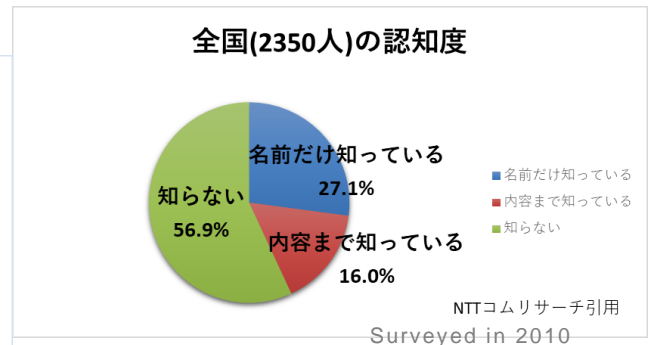
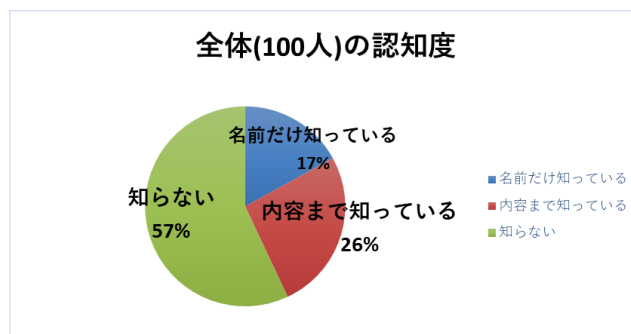
Fair trade is a movement that was started with the goal of transforming the present global trading system into an alternative form of trade that can reduce the North-South divide. The present global trading system is sometimes unfair to socially and economically disadvantaged people in developing countries, which results in an accelerated level of poverty in these countries... Fair trade is a system to improve the livelihood and support the independence of vulnerable producers and workers in developing countries by continuously purchasing materials and

products from developing countries at reasonable prices.

2) Awareness of fair trade

The results of the on-street questionnaire survey given to 100 people at Hankyu Railway Toyonaka Station (from 3PM to 4PM on September 1st and from 4PM to 5PM on September 2nd, 2017) are as follows:

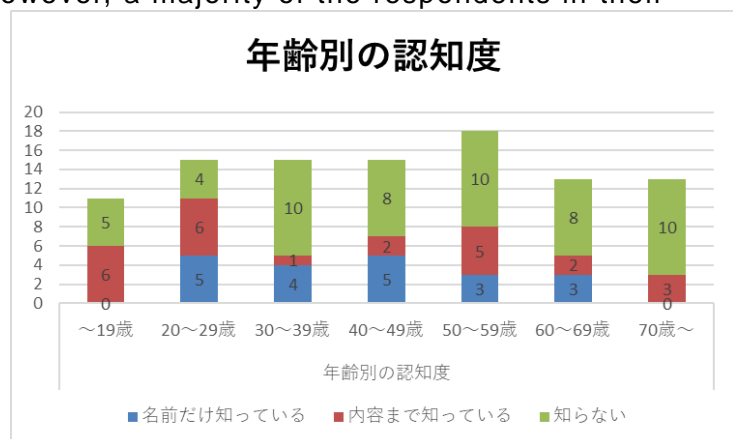
① Overall awareness (100 people)



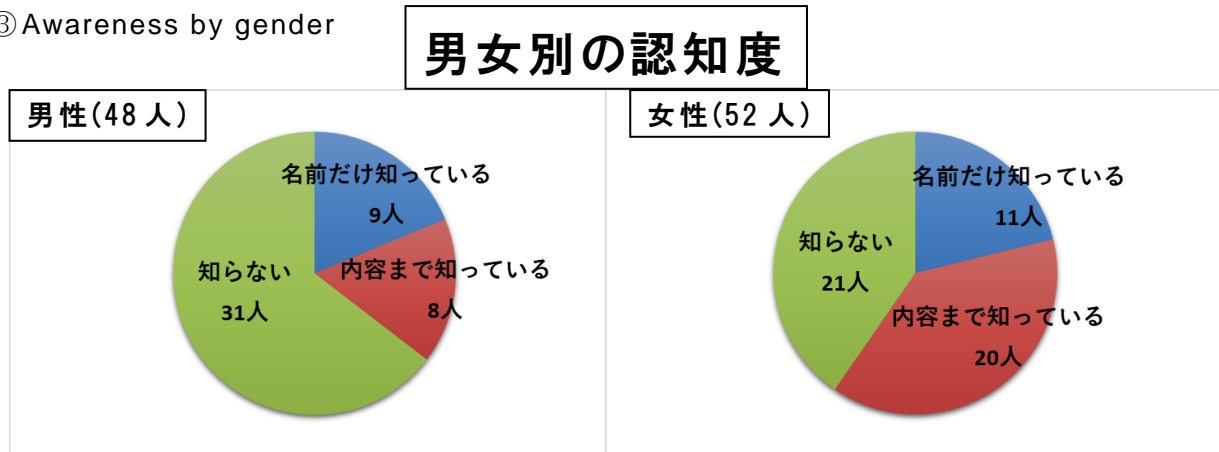
The left figure above shows the overall awareness from the 100 people surveyed at Hankyu Railway Toyonaka Station. As we expected, more than half of the respondents answered, “I do not know.” The figure above to the right illustrates the awareness among 2350 people surveyed across Japan (Source: A survey conducted by NTT Com Research in 2010), showing a similar trend to the results of our survey. It was accordingly found that the awareness among the 100 people at Hankyu Railway Toyonaka Station was almost the same level as that among people across Japan.

② Awareness by age group

The figure to the right illustrates awareness by age group. The results indicate that those who responded “I do not know” accounted for more than half of the respondents in many age groups; however, a majority of the respondents in their 10s and 20s knew about fair trade. It has been accordingly found that fair trade awareness is higher among younger generations. The reason behind this is supposedly that students have opportunities to learn about fair trade in their project research or during integrated study periods at school. The survey results indicate the possibility of promoting fair trade effectively by introducing fair trade through education.

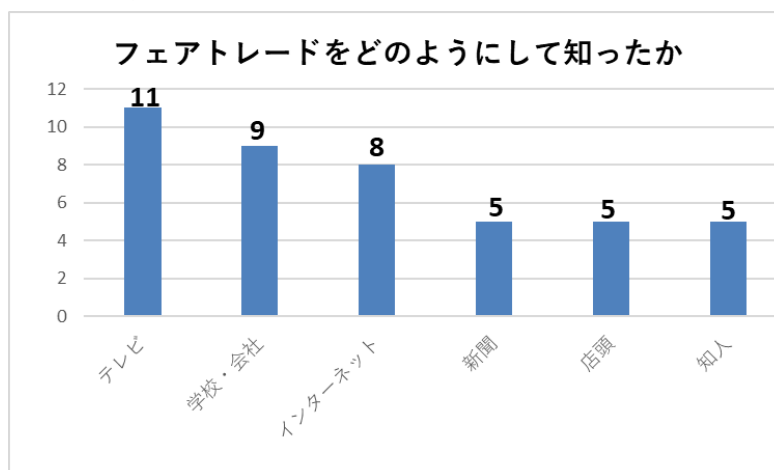


③ Awareness by gender



The figures above show fair trade awareness by gender. It has been found that the number of people who responded “I know about fair trade” was higher for women than for men. This is supposedly because women in general have more chances to get involved in consumer activities through shopping at supermarkets and other stores compared with men. In this context, it is believed to be effective to implement fair trade promotion activities targeting consumers at supermarkets and other commercial facilities.

④ How did you first learn about fair trade?



The figure above shows the answers to the question “How did you first learn about fair trade?” that was asked to the respondents who responded that they knew about fair trade. The survey results show that many people have learned about fair trade through media such as TV, the Internet and newspapers. It has been thus clarified that the media also has influence on fair trade awareness.

⑤ Examples of fair-trade products purchased

Those who responded that they had purchased fair-trade products were asked to specify the fair-trade products they purchased. The most frequent answer was coffee, which was purchased mostly through Peace Winds Japan and Starbucks Coffee. In addition to coffee, chocolate, musical instruments, tote bags and Indonesian-made soap were purchased. Thus, it has been found that several types of general merchandise besides foodstuff were also often purchased.

⑥ Impression of fair trade

According to many respondents, they have an impression that fair trade is “appropriate,” as “fair-trade products are traded at right prices,” and “profits are appropriately returned to the producing countries” and that fair trade is “justifiable” because “fair trade is an ideal trade form showing how trade should be, wherein the independence of producers is respected.” Meanwhile, some respondents answered “I understand the advantages of fair trade, but fair-trade products seem to be more expensive (than free-trade products)” pointing out the higher prices of fair-trade products compared to other products which is one of the challenges fair trade faces. It has thus been found that it is necessary to promote fair trade while explaining the need to purchase fair-trade products or basically, why consumers should choose fair-trade products over various other products.

3) A talk by Professor Seiji Utsumi from Kyoto Women’s University

Professor Utsumi talked mainly about East Timor fair trade coffee traded by Peace Winds Japan. Although East Timor coffee is of a high quality and can be competitive on the global market, it had not become popular due to inappropriate practices when it comes to harvesting and peeling coffee berries. Given this situation, Peace Winds Japan provides support in the following three areas: (1) the improvement of coffee quality; (2) the formation of the coffee producers’ association; (3) the development of infrastructure to support the independence of producers. As a result, high-quality coffee beans comparable to Blue Mountain coffee beans are now produced in East Timor.

Professor Utsumi also expressed his view on challenges that fair trade faces. The challenges include how to help producers to become independent, and how we can change the consumer attitude. The principle of fair trade is to assist producers to be independent by having them voluntarily act and produce fair-trade products on their own, instead of having them rely continuously on support from volunteers.

Consumers should not purchase products only to satisfy their needs. It is important for us as consumers to understand the passion and effort of the producers and establish a relationship with producers beyond borders.

When it comes to fair trade, our focus tends to be on “substances.” However, the stories behind each producer’s passion is far more important than the substances. After the talk by Professor Utsumi, our intention to simply promote fair trade was fully solidified and we now want to promote the essence of fair trade in an appropriate manner.

4) A talk by Professor Kenichi Abe from the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature

We were provided with a chance to listen to Professor Kenichi Abe, who was introduced to us by Professor Utsumi. According to Professor Abe, trade should be equally beneficial for both producers and consumers but the common trading practices conducted currently are unfair because consumers are considered more important than producers. The professor emphasized the importance of “knowing the producer and knowing the consumer” in order to change the current trade practices.

In this context, we asked Professor Abe if there was any way to promote fair-trade products by taking advantage of seasonal events. The professor proposed us to design a package label for coffee from East Timor, matching the theme of

Valentine's Day, and sell it.

5) Creation and selling of collaboration products

Professor Utsumi introduced us to Peace Winds Japan, a specified nonprofit organization (approved NPO), and allowed us to design a package label for fair-trade coffee produced in East Timor and sell the products. Peace Winds Japan is a specified nonprofit organization that provides emergency humanitarian assistance in the event of conflict or natural disaster.

The package label we designed is shown at the right. The producer's "story" is illustrated as coffee berries being picked by the hand of producer and processed into a cup of coffee, and "knowing the producer and knowing the consumer" is expressed by a drawing of both East Timor and Japan. A drawing on each product package alone has an effect of drawing attention of consumers who come across the product and letting consumers understand the background of coffee production at a glance.

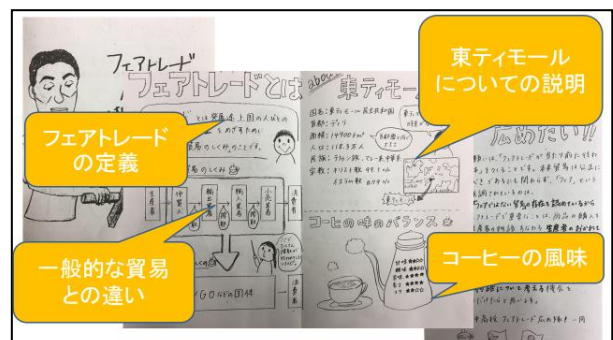
We also prepared leaflets as shown to the right to be placed right next to the products at stores. Each leaflet includes information such as the definition of fair trade, differences between fair trade and conventional trade, a brief description of East Timor and the coffee flavor.

Leaflets were placed with the products for the purpose of letting consumers who showed interest in the coffee know about fair trade through the products. In order to sell collaboration products, 120 drip coffee packs were purchased at a price of 70 yen per piece from Peace Winds Japan and were sold at a fixed price of 90 yen at three shops in the city of Toyonaka on a commission basis.

20 of the drip coffee packs were consigned to Furusato Hiroba, a food shop that offers safe and secure food, another 20 of them were consigned to Café Jurin and 60 of them were consigned to Fantasy Market, which sells organic vegetables and local specialties from Nose. The products enjoyed brisk sales at all the shops and additional products were consigned to some shops because they sold out. Profits from the sales were put together and donated to the appropriate organizations in the future.

This activity has probably contributed to the provision of an additional option not only for consumers but also for retail shops to purchase fair-trade products.

Toyonaka High School Original Coffee Package



4. Research Outcomes and Future Challenges

We not only studied materials related to fair trade but also conducted an on-street questionnaire survey to listen to consumers, talked with two professors and finally were involved in the sales of fair-trade products. Through these experiences, we have started questioning why fairness is so emphasized in trade, despite the fact that trade is supposed to be fair in the first place. This is because we accept the existence of unfair trade practices. It is believed that telling the stories of the producers to the consumers is one of the ideas of what we can do to transform Japan into a country where fair trade is practiced as a matter of course. We can reduce the distance between producers and consumers by telling the stories of the producers or explaining the actual conditions faced by producers to the consumers. Consumers will be able to better understand the producers' situations if they learn about the process of production, producers' living conditions and the local environments.

Our activities have not come to an end. The sales of the collaboration products will be further promoted. Based on the sales results, we will find an effective way of selling fair-trade products which will be summarized as a method for promoting fair trade and proposed to younger students, making our research the first step towards fair trade promotion. As our promotion activities were small in scale, we are considering that our future challenge will be proposing a method of introducing fair trade to organizations capable of promoting fair trade in a broader area, such as Toyonaka City and Osaka Prefecture.

5. Reference

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