

# Coffee Buying and Sustainability in Cafés in Helsinki

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<p>There are not many things done repeatedly day after day, but drinking coffee is one of them. Coffee is one of the most popular beverages in the world and essential part of daily life to many. Cafés are visited for different reasons, whether to work or socialise, but often a cup of coffee is enjoyed on side. Cafés aim to ensure good coffee for their customers. Though, farming that brewed cup of coffee requires a significant amount of resources. Environmental sustainability is perhaps one of the most pressing issues in the modern world. Increase in environmental efforts on the commercial stage leads people to expect cafés too to take sustainability seriously.</p> <p>This thesis focuses on the final phase of the value chain of coffee, consumption, with a focus on the coffee buying process of cafés. The purpose of this thesis is to find out what factors have an effect on the decisions cafés in Helsinki make about the coffee they buy. In this thesis, coffee buying is viewed as the action of cafés buying coffee from a roastery. The thesis examines the decisions made by the person in charge of buying coffee in a café and is limited to cafés located in the capital city of Finland. The objective is to determine the main factors that influence the buying of coffee in cafés located in Helsinki, and the research question and investigative questions are created based on this objective. The investigative questions aim to find out the criteria set for the bought coffee, the thoughts on the future of coffee and the sustainable operations in and outside of coffee buying in the selected cafés.</p> <p>Two major topics, coffee and sustainability, are addressed in the literature review. The theory helps to describe the key concerns related to the cultivation and purchase of coffee. This thesis uses the qualitative approach of data collection, in the form of semi-structured interviews. In total of five interviews were conducted during April 2020. Together with literature review, the interviews with the selected cafés prove that coffee buying should be done with sustainability in mind.</p> <p>The interview findings show that importance of good coffee and sustainable actions as part of business are evident. The views on sustainability and actions taken differ between cafés. The cafés all find it important to buy coffee that tastes good and is of good quality. The findings reveal that all cafés buy their coffee from a roastery and trust the roastery to offer them best possible coffee. Though, the research showed that the taste is not the only important thing to keep in mind. Availability of coffee at the time the coffee is bought is also considered important. Also, for every coffee purchase the cafés make, they cast a vote for environmental sustainability, for labour conditions and global justice. The research made it relatively clear that the majority of Finnish consumers are not too interested in the quality, taste, origin or sustainability of coffee. These four factors mentioned, however, greatly influence the decisions related to coffee buying in cafés.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Café, Coffee Buying, Coffee, Sustainability, Corporate Sustainability	

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# 1 Introduction

Coffee, a favourite drink to so many of us. Not only is it popular as a beverage, but many books and articles have been written about it, and it has also been a topic of investigation and research to many. As we start a new decade, coffee culture still remains as strong as ever with coffee chains opening new coffee houses around the world. While the trends within coffee change depending on years and times, coffee still maintains its position in the hearts of many.

Coffee is deeply rooted in the Finnish culture, it being a key element of the Finnish lifestyle. As Finns drink more coffee per capita than any other nation, café culture plays an important role in Finnish society. Helsinki, the capital of Finland, hosts many interesting cafés and has a vibrant café scene, as there are around 40 cafés in total in the capital city alone. We drink coffee to a great extent, but do we know anything about what is in our cup? (Discovering Finland s.a.)

The purpose of this thesis is to find out what factors have an effect on the decisions cafés make about the coffee they buy. The thesis objective was to determine the main factors that influence the buying of coffee in cafés. The study is limited to cafés located in Helsinki. The research question was formulated to answer the main purpose of this thesis and is based on the objective. The research question is “What factors affect the coffee buying in cafés in Helsinki?”. In other words, this thesis examines the decisions made by the person in charge of buying coffee in a café. Further investigative questions provide answers to the main research question and therefore were formulated with the main research question in mind. The investigate questions are “What criteria is set for the bought coffee in cafés at the moment?”, “How cafés see the future of coffee?” and “How cafés consider sustainability in operations both in and outside of coffee buying?”. These topics are examined through a research by interviewing the managers responsible for the coffee buying in cafés in Helsinki. The results of this study offer a comprehensive view into the decision making of why a certain coffee is served, and what actions are made to run a responsible business. This thesis is a qualitative research on the decision-making related to the process of buying coffee, and whether the current issues with climate change have an effect on it. This thesis touches on corporate sustainability in order to gain a better understanding of how much sustainable actions matter in and outside of coffee buying. To better understand the sustainability of coffee, the literature review goes roughly through the cultivation of coffee and the journey from the coffee crops to the consumers.

The thesis has been divided into six chapters, including this introduction chapter. The second and third chapter form the literature review. For the reader to gain understanding of coffee as a plant and a consumer good, the second chapter present coffee as a crop and as a product, its discovery and history, and the journey from the plantations to the consumers' cup. Coffee buying is also covered in the second chapter. As climate change is a common concern and has the possibility to play a major role in coffee production and affect the quality of coffee, the third chapter covers that under sustainability. Corporate responsibility is elaborated in the third chapter as overall sustainability in all business has become highly important to companies in the recent years. The fourth chapter is about the presentation of how this research was conducted and what was used as a research method. The fifth chapter includes the data analysis and the results. The conclusion made from the results can be found in the sixth chapter. The sixth chapter concludes the key findings as well as includes the evaluation of validity and reliability of the thesis. Additionally, the author's brief evaluation of the process of thesis writing and her own learnings are included in the last chapter. The thesis ends with recommendations for further studies.

The main result expected to come out of this thesis is a carefully elaborated overview on the factors related to coffee buying in cafés in Helsinki. This research benefits the industry, as mainly all coffee related theses are about marketing strategies for setting up coffee shops and case studies for potential market shares for different coffee brands. Gained knowledge, from both interviews and read literature, gives a better understanding on something that is very current and of fairly little previous research.

## 2 Coffee

Coffee is one of the most valuable commodity produced by nature (Kingston 2015, 9). Increased coffee consumption and the number of coffee shops opening recently represent merely the latest evidence of the long-term desire for coffee. The role of coffee has majorly shaped the world we know today. Throughout its history, coffee has led countries to war, accelerated their colonial ambitions, generalised the use of slave trade and labour, and started economic relations between countries that still today influence the global economy. (Tucker 2017, 4.)

No one is exactly sure how coffee was originally discovered, but the discovery of the plant took place in Ethiopia in the 16th century, from where it was then brought to Arabia. Later, in the 17th century, coffee found its way to Western Europe, where it quickly replaced alcohol as a cheaper beverage. The coffee consumption has gradually grown due to the globalisation of consumer culture, increased appreciation for high-quality coffee as well as people's eagerness to seek for an energising drink while working, studying and socialising. Now, in the 21st century, coffee is the most popular drink after water. (Tucker 2017, 3; Amamo 2014, 109.)

Finding coffee as well as its road to the Arabian Peninsula remain a mere guesswork. Coffee as a beverage is said to be developed when people tried to get caffeine into a safe form for consumption. The earliest evidence of coffee cultivation has been found in Yemen, and it dates back to the 15th century. Coffee was introduced to the Islamic world with Sufi monks, who drank coffee to help them stay awake while praying at night. The reason why coffee obtained an important role in Arabia is because it fitted well into the Islamic culture, as Muslims were not able to enjoy intoxicating refreshments like alcohol. Cafés, or back then *kaveh kaneses*, became centres of Arabic culture and acted as places for socialising, education and general enjoyment. With time, coffee spread with pilgrims to other parts of the world. Venetian merchants introduced coffee to Europeans in 1615. In Europe, coffee was used to cure alcoholism, gout and smallpox, and thus gained popularity. With colonisation, the control of one power over a dependent area or people, coffee cultivation spread to the Far East and Latin America in the 18th century (Blakemore 2019). (Kingston 2015, 7; Leppänen & Salomaa 2018, 14-15, Tucker 2017, 37.)

The composition of a raw coffee bean is quite complex. Coffee is a mixture of variety of compounds including caffeine and antioxidants. More than half of a raw coffee bean is carbohydrates, mostly long fibre cellulose with a small amount of short-chain carbohydrates such as sugar. Of its dry weight, the weight without any extra fluid, over 10

percent is proteins and around 15 percent is fat. This means that a coffee bean contains mostly energy and organic compounds. Only one to two percent of coffee beans is actually caffeine. Roasting the bean complicates the composition even more, as its size, colour and shape change. (Nieminen & Puustinen 2014, 169.)

The composition of coffee suits the human body and brain. The human body has a similar mixture of caffeine in terms of molecular structure. The structure controls a part of the nervous system. This active compound is called adenosine, and it is a chemical the human brain produces when fatigued. Adenosine reduces the activity of the nervous system, while caffeine blocks the action of adenosine and thus provides additional energy. When we feel tired, adenosine adheres to the corresponding receptors in our brains which leads to the nerve cells to slow down. For our nerve cells, caffeine looks similar to adenosine. Caffeine is able to bind to an adenosine receptor, caused by the nerve cells mistaking it for adenosine. Meanwhile adenosine would slow down the cell's activity, caffeine speeds it up. Caffeine makes blood vessels in the brain constrict, because adenosine is not there to open them up. This causes neuron firing which leads to the brain releasing adrenaline into the bloodstream. Caffeine affects in the body around four to six hours. (Kingston 2015, 7 & 34; Sethi 2015, 137; HowStuffWorks 2000.)

Coffee is an important, widely consumed beverage, and a major source of caffeine for many (Bamia & Cornelis 2019, 1). Caffeine in coffee has been found to have many positive health effects. It is believed to increase, among other things, metabolism and muscle strength, and reduce the risk of developing heart disease, cancer and diabetes. A possibility to develop an addiction to caffeine has been a topic of research, however the studies show that it cannot activate the pleasure centre of the brain and therefore does not addict. Although caffeine itself is not addictive, drinking more than five cups of coffee a day can still cause a slight addiction. This is because when a person drinks coffee every day to a great extent, their brain becomes accustomed to the effect of caffeine and develops a dependence. Sudden stop to coffee consumption then causes mild withdrawal symptoms such as fatigue and a feeling of anxiety. Even though coffee does not have high nutrient value, it provides some substances that would otherwise be consumed in very little amounts from our diet. For example, coffee is a good source of both Vitamin B2 and B5. (Kingston 2015, 35; Nieminen & Puustinen 2014, 39.)

## **2.1 From Plantation to Cup**

Coffee is a difficult and risky crop to grow, as it takes years for the plant to start growing coffee beans. Coffee producers have to make great time and resource investments for several years with having no return. In case of a notable delay between planting and the

first harvest, the farmer's income flow is constrained as well as has an effect on the variability in the global coffee supply and market. It also leads to consequences for the social and environmental sustainability of coffee. (Tucker 2017, 83.)

### **2.1.1 The Coffee Belt**

It is not possible to grow coffee everywhere. All coffee grows in the equatorial area, in an area called the Coffee Belt. Conditions in the area are favourable, as the temperature remains constantly at 20 degrees Celsius, the volcanic soil is fertile, and the amount of sunshine is proportional to the rain. International Coffee Organisation lists the following Coffee Belt countries at the forefront of coffee production: Brazil, Vietnam, Columbia, Indonesia and Ethiopia, the biggest of them being Brazil. In the 19th century it became the world's largest coffee producer, and until this day, no one has overtaken its position (Tucker 2017, 60). (Leppänen & Salomaa 2018, 16.)

Today, cafés and consumers can easily select preferred coffees from several options offered by the numerous coffee producing countries and the many different areas within them. However, coffee cultivated in different parts of the world can have very similar aromas, so it is important to remember that the handling and roasting of the beans also affects the taste of the end product. Every year, coffee buyers, such as coffee roasters, taste coffees from different areas and select the best. (Kingston 2015, 14.)

### **2.1.2 Coffee Production**

When talking about production, it is often referred to the action of turning raw materials into finished goods, but production can also refer to the producing process (Lexico s.a.). From the moment the seeds are planted, it takes around three to five years for a coffee plant to start producing coffee beans. In the beginning, during the first six months, the seedlings require moist soil and shady environment to start growing. Usually this first step of the planting is done in a seed bed or nursery where farmers have more control over the plant and the right growing conditions. Planting straight on the fields can easily cause seedling loss. (Tucker 2017, 83-84).

To secure the growing of the plant, it is important to make sure it gets enough of water, has a nutrient rich soil, right temperature and is not exposed to too much sun light. Coffee plants need to be manually weeded from time to time, and this is where chemicals often play a role as they prevent the new weeds from growing around the coffee plants. While coffee is growing, the farmers are required to frequently check on possible signs of disease and fertilize the soil to prevent soil erosion and keep it nutrient rich. Only if the soil

is naturally rich in minerals, no fertilizers are needed to grow coffee. (Tucker 2017, 84-85; Huhtonen 2015, 12.)

Coffee plant is a tree that produces berries. These berries are called coffee cherries, and the coffee beans are found inside these cherries. The closer to the sea level the coffee plant grows, the more berries it produces. However, the best berries usually grow high, and the better the quality and the flavour of the berries, the more the farmers are paid. Thus, in coffee production, quantity does not always replace quality. Harvesting the crops is one of the most challenging stages of growing coffee, because coffee berries, even the ones growing in the same tree, ripen at very different times. This results in the mixing of the raw berries with the ripe ones, that later affects the taste of coffee. Coffee is often picked by hand or with machinery. In places like Colombia, Central America and Africa where coffee trees often locate on steep mountains, hand-picking is usual. Mechanical picking method is used in places like Brazil, where trees locate on plain, open areas. Mechanical picking is only possible on shallow and flat areas. As previously mentioned, Brazil is the leading producer, with around 40% with the entire world's coffee production, followed by Vietnam. (Paulig s.a.; Huhtonen 2015, 9-12; Cheng & Henry 2019, 2.)

The journey starts when coffee beans are harvested. After that they are pulped and washed. There are three main types for coffee processing: natural (the dry method), washed (the wet method) and honey (fully washed). Coffee processing means the treatment that is made for coffee after it has been picked. In the natural process the cherries are washed, then dried in the sun. The washed, wet, process is a process, where the cherry is pulped from the coffee beans with a machine that removes the outer layer of the cherry's skin. After this the bean's pulp is removed by fermenting it in a barrel. Fermenting as a term is a little misleading as it refers to rinsing raw beans by soaking them in water. The washed process highlights the true character of the beans and the flavours end up very clear. This is why this processing method is most commonly used. In the honey process, the beans are washed by fermenting, but pulp is left, which adds sweet notes to the end product. After washing, the beans are let to dry and then husked. Roasting is the final step before grinding and brewing the beans. The roasting time of coffee beans depends. For darker roast the beans are roasted longer whereas for lighter roast the roasting time is shorter. (Huhtonen 2015, 13; Tucker 2015, 106; Cheng & Henry 2019, 1.)

## **2.2 Coffee Bean and Its Varieties**

As mentioned, coffee is actually a berry growing in a tree. It takes around two to three years for one tree to grow to the size of being able to produce crop. A coffee plant starts

from the planting of a raw bean that over time grows into a tall tree. The average productiveness of one tree is around 30 years, and after that the tree continues to live but produces only little to no berries. Like already mentioned, the plant requires just the right environment to grow. However, that is not the only challenge faced by a coffee plant, as some of its biggest enemies during growth are plant diseases such as the borer and the leaf fungus. In some coffee-growing countries, animals such as monkeys and squirrels, are drawn to the ripe coffee berries. Drought, damp and rot also play a part in affecting and injuring the plant. In some places shade trees are a must in order to protect the plant from extreme heat. The coffee plant can grow on different areas close to the equator, but the soil affects greatly the coffee beans. Tropical climate with enough warmth and humidity is the most ideal seedbed. The location of growth defines the growth rate and the quantity of berries produced but also the aromas found in the coffee beans. The plant gets the water and nutrition from the soil but needs the right temperature and amount of sunshine as well. Other factors that affect the taste of coffee include what variety it is, the vertical location of it, the climate where it grows and develops, the soil, and how close it grows to the equator. Picking time plays a part as well, because if the picked beans are green, they are still raw and coffee made from green beans does not toast or brew properly. As raw, the berries are light green in colour, and when they ripen, the colour turns, depending on the variety, either red, orange or yellow. (Huhtonen 2015, 9-12; Thurber 2010, 4-5).

Coffee belongs to the *Rubiaceae* family of flowering plants. There are over 500 genera in this family, from which *Coffea* is one of (Kingston 2015, 16). Different coffee varieties all belong to the *Coffea* genus, the most know varieties being *Coffea Arabica* and *Coffea Robusta* (Huhtonen 2015, 10). Around 62.2% of the world's current coffee production is focused on different Arabica varieties and the rest on the Robusta variety of the *Coffea Canephora* family. Most coffee is produced from these two varieties as only they are of commercial importance. Yet, there are in total of 60 different varieties and in total of 125 species in the *Coffea* genus. Typica, a sub-variety belonging to the Arabica family, was the only known coffee variety at first. Already in the 17th century it was exported to India and Ceylon by the Arabs. Later, the use of different Arabica sub-varieties has become more important. (Paulig 2018; Cheng & Henry 2019, 1; Sethi 2015, 149; Nieminen & Puustinen 2014, 102, Kingston 2015, 16.)

The main reason most cultivation is focused on Arabica is because of its taste and the variety of flavours it provides. The taste of Robusta is often described as rubbery and having a grain-like overtone with strong flavours of wood, especially oak, and tobacco. These flavours do not sound too pleasing when compared to fruity, soft and light flavour of

Arabica, that is rich in berries, with even hints of chocolate and spiciness found in some varieties. The best quality coffees are always made from Arabica, but it is dominating the coffee market even on the supermarket level. Most coffee sold here in Finland is also made from Arabica. Different sub-varieties of Arabica include for instance Geisha and Bourbon, as well as Mundo Novo and Catuaí. These two, Mundo Novo and Catuaí, are the most resilient and productive Arabica sub-varieties, and are cultivated by 90 percent of all Brazilian coffee farmers (Leppänen & Salomaa 2018, 192). Arabica has in total of around 60 sub-varieties, many of them originating from the crossbreeding of so-called original, old varieties. Robusta is higher in caffeine which makes the taste more bitter. Only good quality Robusta beans are used in espresso blends where they suit well due to the high caffeine content. Robusta is also often mixed in “bulk coffees” and coffee blends, mainly because of the beans’ cheap price and strong flavour. For instance, Robusta is mixed with Arabica to make espresso blends, Robusta making the blend stronger and Arabica creating a better cup quality. (Sethi 2015, 149; Huhtonen 2015, 10.)

The trickiest thing with Arabica plant is that it is not easy to grow and maintain. Whereas Robusta has a better resistance against plant diseases and pests, Arabica is lacking on that. Robusta can do well in hot temperatures and adapts to changes in climate. This means that it can handle full sunshine without it affecting the growing and producing of the plant. Arabica is pickier and only enjoys occasional hot and humid swings, as it prefers temperatures between 15 and 24 degrees Celsius. Arabica also grows slower and its size remains smaller to Robusta. (Huhtonen 2015, 10; Blackout Coffee Co. 2018a; Blackout Coffee Co. 2018b, Paulig s.a.; Cheng & Henry 2019, 1.)

Arabica has remained genetically almost unchanged over the times because it is a self-pollinating plant. The original Arabica still produces the best aromas, and the most interesting coffee varieties are the end products of crossbreeding the original Arabica coffee. These varieties have not been altered much due to the breeding of coffee. Unfortunately, cultivation of the old Arabica is difficult as yields are often low and at times entire crops can be lost due to disease or drought. Coffee is generally cultivated in the poorest countries in the world, where this is too much of a risk for many coffee farmers. More refined coffee trees, though easier to grow and maintain, produce duller-flavoured coffee. These are the more “mass-produced bulk coffees”, that can be found on the shelves of many supermarkets. Most hybrids seen in the agriculture today are engineered by strategic crossbreeding and designed to have specific traits (Sethi 2015, 149). (Nieminen & Puustinen 2014, 102-104.)

However, it is important to understand that even within one type of coffee, differences in growth conditions and processing methods easily result in different flavours in coffee. Like specific region's wine has its unique characteristics, a popular coffee bean variety can be of a completely different nature depending on where it is grown. Kona is a good example of this. It is a sub-variety of Arabica growing in Kona, Hawaii. The unique environment of the place gives the beans interesting characteristics, full bodied flavour and a pleasing aroma. (Kingston 2015, 16.)

### **2.3 Coffee Consumption in Finland**

Millions of people consume coffee every day. But what coffee means to people differs. In some places coffee has integrated to the national identity whereas in other places coffee is overlooked and disfavoured. (Tucker 2017, 59.)

Because of the caffeine in coffee affecting our moods positively and engaging our brain activity, it is repeatedly consumed by many. Consumption is a psychological but also a social phenomenon. The consumption itself and the manner of consumption are culturally determined: nations learn to drink coffee and think it is 'the right thing to do', because they are implicitly oriented to assume so, as the ways of living are passed from one generation to another. Products like coffee become parts of a culture, because they have a purpose of use, place of use, time of use and manner of use. Coffee is a social drink that offers an opportunity to come together around the table and create bonds. (Verma 2013, 157-158, 162-163.)

According to statistics published yearly, Finns are always on top as the population with the highest consumption of coffee in the world, at 10 kilograms per person. Most of the coffee consumed in Finland, around 70 percent, is consumed at home or at work, and only 30 percent is consumed in cafés or restaurants. Coffee is usually brewed with a filter coffee machine, and espressos and cappuccinos are still quite new for Finns. Finland has always had a preference for lighter roasts, unlike many other countries, but also darker roasts have found their ways into Finnish coffee tables recently. There have not been dramatic changes recently in terms of value growth and retail volume. However, one trend that has appeared in Finland is the development of speciality coffee in food and beverage industry but also in retail. Speciality coffee as a term does not stand for Italian coffee beverages like cappuccino and latte, but means coffee grown in a special and ideal environment that differs itself from other coffee due to its rich flavour (Leppänen & Salomaa 2018, 50). (Nieminen & Puustinen 2015, 16, 26-27; Korhonen 2018.)

Coffee is an important export product for many developing countries that cultivate the coffee that is consumed in Finland. Here, coffee provides jobs for thousands. Import and manufacture, like coffee roasteries, employ a few thousand people, but majority are employed by cafés, that employ tens of thousands of full-time and part-time employees. Even though these numbers may sound great, 70 percent of all coffee is sold at grocery stores to private households. The remaining 30 percent is bought by institutional kitchens, cafés and restaurants. The share of speciality shops and online stores is so small that it is less than one percent. The value of coffee sales in Finland in 2012 was over 350 million euros. The domestic coffee business is dominated by a Finnish company Paulig, a leading Northern European coffee and food company, that roasts two thirds of all coffee consumed in Finland. (Nieminen & Puustinen 2015, 28.)

## **2.4 Coffee Buying**

In this thesis, coffee buying is viewed as the action of cafés buying coffee from a roastery. Previously in this thesis, the topic of coffee production was addressed. In recent years, more and more products have been marketed as sustainable and responsible. This has led to increased concerns of consumption of products, and caused people to mind more about what they are buying. Coffee bought to Finland travels a long journey from the countries near the equator. In the following is an example of the journey coffee travels to end up in a café. (Cole 2011, 1.)

As already discussed in 2.1.2. Coffee Production, when the coffee beans are ripe they are picked either by machine or hand. After that, the collected beans are taken from the lots to a coffee farm where they are sorted so that as little as possible unripe berries get mixed with the ripe ones. This is followed by cleaning and drying, after which the beans are sorted and deposited into sacks and carried into trucks. At the same time, on the other side of the world, an importer registers a request with exporters around the world. The truck, to which the beans were loaded, drives to a port from where the beans are transferred into a cargo ship. The beans then travel days and after that arrive to a destination where they are shuttled to warehouses for storing. From these warehouses, roasteries then receive the coffee and roast it and then bag the roasted coffee. A manager of a café places an order by calling a roastery, and gets the roasted coffee delivered. In the café, barista grinds the roasted beans and makes a cup of coffee for their customer. (Cole 2011, 1-4.)

The coffee bought to the cafés and later drank by the customers tells a story of labour, exchange and travel over land and sea. It is much more than just a story of origin. When cafés buy coffee, they buy a certain image of a producer. Not only that, but every coffee

purchase the cafés make, casts a vote for environmental sustainability, labour conditions and global justice. (Cole 2011, 5-6.)

It is important to be aware of the contradictions associated with coffee consumption and look at it from a broader perspective. In Finland, people drink a lot of cheap coffee, but only a handful of Finns really understand what the price actually reveals about coffee. On the other hand, the coffee craving of Finns is a good thing because it provides jobs in the Coffee Belt, but at the same time the workers in the area remain poor. Every coffee buyer is responsible for their own values and what they find important, but it is worth preparing for the higher price of coffee in the future. (Nieminen & Puustinen 2014, 265-266.)

### 3 Sustainability

Recently, the global climate has changed dramatically, and is estimated to keep changing in the future. As the mean temperature keeps rising every year, coffee plants are in danger. The plant is very sensitive to the climate and several studies demonstrate the likely negative impact of climate change to coffee plantations. Climate change increases plant diseases and pests, but also affects the lives of the coffee farmers. Central and South America, the main areas producing coffee, suffer from droughts and hurricanes while Nicaragua experiences substantial climate change as the maize and bean yields stagnate. Nicaragua's coffee plantations are the second most exposed to progressive climate change after El Salvador. (Läderach, Raminéz-Villegas, Navarro-Racines, Zelaya, Martínez-Valle & Jarvis 2016, 48-49.)

The world might be changing, but the coffee cravings remain. Coffee production requires a lot of natural resources; clean water and air, fertile soil and minerals. Its transportation from the countries near the equator is not exactly environmentally friendly. Concerns of impacts on the environment have risen greatly in the recent years, and the importance of being sustainable is mentioned often everywhere. But what exactly does it mean to be 'sustainable'? (Tucker 2017, 96.)

The planet is undergoing radical environmental and social changes. Our consumption patterns are questioned as we face severe loss of the world's biodiversity and depletion of resources. The current levels of consumption are too much for the environment. They are unsustainable, inequitable and not all on the planet even have access to them. Understanding sustainability is crucial as our planet is in a dangerous situation both environmentally and socially. It is important to develop a new understanding of our purpose on the Earth and a new set of values that are in favour of our planet. (Islam 2018, vii.)

In the last 200 years, coffee has become a global commodity, and through that time the coffee plantations have emerged on the planet. During this time, there has been an alarming rise of deforestation, partly due to coffee plantations being created by cutting down existing forests. Chemical use in coffee cultivation has increased as more farmers have switched from coffee growing in shade towards sun-grown coffee. As previously mentioned, Arabica is exceedingly picky of its growing environment and therefore requires chemicals to grow in the sun, as it does not have the same tolerance towards heat as Robusta. However, it is not only chemicals that are the issue, but plantations that are exposed to full sun also experience higher incidence of soil erosion and suffer from certain

diseases and pests. Farmers who use chemicals must choose which chemicals they use, how much and when they use them. Even though using chemicals may help achieve high productivity in the short term, it is not sustainable in the long term. Soils are eventually depleted of organic material, beneficial microorganisms, earthworms and mycorrhizae that help maintain soil fertility. Chemical use can also help create so-called 'super bugs' that become more resilient to pesticides. Shade grown coffee remains more sustainable to sun-grown coffee as it reduces the quantity of chemical inputs needed. (Tucker 2017, 97-100.)

Climate change is making coffee production harder every day as the areas where coffee can grow get smaller every day. Climate change boosts the appearance of plant diseases and makes the areas so dry that it is hard to sustain the growing. Coffee farmers around the world face droughts, hurricanes, heat waves, cold snaps and unusual rainfall patterns. These cause destructions on agricultural production. Uncertainty of climate has always been a part of farming, however on the recent years the climate has become more uncertain as climate change causes these uncertainties more frequently. Predictions and climate change models estimate the temperatures to rise by 1.8-4.0 degrees Celcius in the twenty-first century. This is especially crucial for Arabica, that enjoys the temperatures of 18.0 to 21.0 degrees Celcius, and rise in temperature will reduce harvests and the quality of the coffee. Due to the rising temperatures, many places are becoming too warm for the farming of Arabica. Some scientists predict a global decline in the future for the total land viable for the growing of coffee. (Tucker 2017, 101-102.)

Climate change raises new concerns for coffee's general sustainability as a product. Researchers are trying to find out if certain management practices, like organic farming and agroforestry systems, help reduce the impacts of climate change. The issue with coffee is not only its cultivation but also its processing. The dry method is more sustainable with the cost of quality. Many consumers prefer coffee processed with the wet method, because they like the flavour of washed coffee beans better. Many do not seek for sustainably processed coffee because they simply do not know anything of its environmental impact. The processing to be done in a way that it reduces waste is only required by a few certification programs, like Rainforest Alliance, which is more elaborated under 3.2. Certifications Found in Coffee Products. (Tucker 2017, 102, 109.)

However, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Agroforestry systems, like alley cropping and planting trees in pasture, that are commonly used to produce coffee in the tropics, provide great environmental benefits like biodiversity, water storage, carbon accumulation and erosion control (Organic Research Centre s.a.). As coffee plants grow slowly and take

long before they start producing coffee beans, it is hard for farmers to make decisions based on the current climate change matters. The decisions taken today may take years before they have actual effect. Yet, urgent actions need to be taken to address the issues of climate change. (Läderach et. 2016, 48.)

Beyond environmental sustainability, coffee draws attention as it is related to issues for social sustainability. Most coffee is produced in poor countries by smallholders who barely make a living out of coffee farming and therefore cannot provide many common things that are taken for granted in the coffee consuming countries. These include medical care, making enough money to afford education for children and buying staple foods. If farmers cannot meet their needs, there is a possibility for them to withdraw from coffee farming. Coffee farmers are not the only concern, but also the working conditions of the coffee pickers should be considered. The pickers are paid around seven dollars for every 100 kilo of coffee cherries (Huhtonen 2015, 13). Social sustainability includes way more than just how much money the farmers make. At the moment, many coffee farmers barely know what happens to their product. The price of coffee on the market is currently fixed, and the idea of coffee is very product-oriented. By promoting the co-operation between the buyer of the end-user country and the farmer would give farmers better changes of getting better price for their product, which would lead to increase in motivation for their occupation. This is why it is important to take into account all aspects of coffee; environmental, economic and social. (Tucker 2017, 110; Leppänen & Salomaa 2018, 190.)

This chapter covers the different certifications related with coffee, such as organic and Fairtrade. The first subchapter is about corporate sustainability, which is an important concept to understand better this thesis' research topic, as many businesses including the cafés in Finland need to consider sustainability in their everyday actions.

### **3.1 Corporate Sustainability**

Managerial interest in corporate sustainability has increased remarkably in the past decade. The growing interest in corporate sustainability can be linked to the increased significance of global issues like climate change and a common perception that corporations need to provide solutions to these problems. Now, many businesses and corporations are under the pressure of addressing the issue of sustainability. This means that improving sustainable performance is required while financial performance improvement is simultaneously demanded. (Asif, Searcy, Zutshi, & Ahmad 2011, 354; Meuer, Koelbel & Hoffmann 2019, 1, 3.)

Corporate sustainability is led from the stakeholder theory that understands corporations' obligations to shareholders but also to other groups such as employees, customers and suppliers (Freeman 1984, 8). When meeting the demands of, for instance, suppliers, continued supply of resources is maintained. This means all related to corporate sustainability must have a focus on the requirements of stakeholders. (Asif et. 2011, 345.)

Corporate sustainability is divided into three primary pillars: economic, environmental and social. These three components help corporations to be sustainable in a way that is beneficial for their sustainable growth, efficiency and stakeholder value. The environmental pillar gets a lot of attention nowadays. It includes company's strategies on reducing their overall effect on the environment, and involves actions such as reducing the carbon emissions or water usage. The companies have realised that the positive impact on the planet comes with a positive financial impact on their business. Most certainly using less resources reduces the general costs of the company. (Epstein, Buhovac & Yuthas 2010 42; Beattie 2019.)

For a company to be sustainable, it should be supported and approved by its employees and stakeholders, but also by the community it operates in. The social pillar includes factors like treating your employees fairly and giving them opportunities to learn and develop, and being a good member to the community and neighbouring businesses. Being good to the community also includes a more global aspect, for instance, not getting involved in child labour, and paying fairly for those the company operates with. Addressing social issues like employee well-being have appeared to be more important for many companies when compared to actions focusing on environmental issues (Burch 2018, 1). (Beattie 2019.)

It is important for a company to be profitable in order to be sustainable, but profit cannot overrun the two other pillars. The economic pillar focuses on the company's risk management and the balance between profit and ethics. Instead of focusing on the possible short-term benefits in the change of a supply chain, things should be viewed with a focus on the possible potential risks that might damage the company's overall reputation. The economic pillar includes refusing to engage in illegal practices and not accepting political contributions in exchange for favourable treatment. According to Burch (2018, 1), community reputation motivates companies more on the progress on sustainability, increased profits coming as a second. (Beattie 2019.)

A company that implements sustainable practices in their operations generally gets both tangible and intangible benefits. These benefits then translate into economic

developments. The company becomes more appealing to work at and is also more attractive to investors. In addition to this, the company shows better levels of reputation and high levels of product quality, innovation and social and environmental ethics. (Bird, Hall, Momentè & Reggiani 2007, 189-206; Lee, Singal & Kang. 2013, 2-10; Linnenleucke & Griffiths 2010, 357-366; Searcy & Elkhawas 2012, 79-92; Mackenzie 2007, 935-943, Allouche & Laroche 2005, 8-41; Ghosh, Buckler, Skibniewski, Negahban & Kwak 2014, 1-3)

### **3.2 Certifications Found in Coffee Products**

There is a big difference between certified and non-certified coffee. Certifications are a guarantee that the coffee we buy is produced with certain requirements. The well-being of farmers and workers, and the environment are taken into account in production and working conditions, though this varies a little between certificates. In non-certified coffee, there is no guarantee that the consumer will know for sure whether pesticides or methods that are harmful for the environment were not used, or if the workers were treated unequally. According to a non-governmental organisation Finnwatch (s.a.), in 2018 coffee roasters purchased over 45 million kilograms more certified coffee than in 2016. Recently, the popularity of organic and Fairtrade coffees has grown in Finland which has led to a greater availability of certified coffee. Certified coffee is still sold less here than in Sweden and Denmark (Nieminen & Puustinen 2014, 266). However, no certificate tells the whole truth. The development of social responsibility through certified systems in coffee production is a slow process. (Oy Slurp Ab s.a.; Löfbergs s.a.)

There has been a lot of debate about the actual fairness and sustainability of the certifications. Although buying certified products has been claimed to guarantee the fair treatment of farmers among other things, certifications make many doubt if the actions taken really are what is commonly being told. All certifications have their own emphases, which is good to keep in mind. It is important to understand that responsibility is not limited only to one factor, like social or environmental responsibility, even though those two seem to be the emphasis of many certificates. Economic and cultural responsibility are also parts of sustainable production. If a product is lacking a certification, it does not automatically tell that it was unsustainably made and disrespected the rights of the producers. Certifications are very expensive, and many farmers with smaller crops cannot afford them. It might be, that if one was very keen on find sustainable and fair coffee, it would be worth getting to know the manufacturer behind the coffee, and the principles they have set for sourcing and production. In the following sub-chapters, this thesis takes a look on three relevant and popular certifications associated with coffee.

### 3.2.1 Organic

Generally speaking, organic labelling means that the product has been produced or has been intended to produce the most natural way possible. This can mean that the use of synthetic substances and chemical fertilisers is limited, but not entirely excluded. Because there is not enough fertile soil for every coffee farmer, the soil is often fertilized either chemically or naturally. Farmers who cultivate organically can do it on purpose or passively. In coffee farming, organic farmers apply few to no chemical inputs. However, many coffee farmers are poor smallholders, and cannot afford the use of chemicals in their farming. They are 'passive organic' as they have no other choice but to farm organically. These passive organic farmers usually put very little investment and labour into their coffee and often obtain low yields. Many farmers need to apply organic fertilizers that they sometimes compose themselves, and use to maintain plant health, avoid disease and boost yields. As an example of this, some coffee farmers use the flesh from coffee cherries to fertilize the soil. (Tucker 2017, 98-99; Huhtonen 2015, 12, Nieminen & Puustinen 2014, 114.)

Organic coffee production has proved to be more sustainable than in the beginning of this chapter briefly mentioned sun-grown coffee. Annual lower numbers in productivity are compensated by the coffee trees' extended life and decrease in soil erosion. Instead, soil remains more fertile, which then contributes to long-term productivity and sustainability. Positively, more farmers have expressed interest in organic farming methods because of the rise in price of chemical inputs and the possibility of a higher selling price of organic coffee. (Tucker 2017, 100.)

Organic means different things in different places in the world because countries have their own regulations for organic labelling. The organic label accepted by European Union can be considered quite good. It guarantees that products under the label are grown more naturally than the non-certified products with already high EU standards. However, in some cases, the EU certification accepts the use of synthetic substances and also allows products with less than five percent of genetically modified content to have an organic certificate. The Finnish food with an organic label can be considered generally pure. In addition to that, many of the foods produced in Finland meet the international organic certification criteria even without being certified. The organic certificate in imported coffee products does not yet guarantee the same level of organic that is understood in Finland as organic production. In the United States, the USDA Organic label is easier to obtain for a product compared to Finnish or EU certifications. To have an organic label in the Finnish

market, the product must meet the requirements for organic in Finland. (Nieminen & Puustinen 2014, 114.)

Certificates, such as Organic, do not automatically stand for quality. Coffee can be of high quality and quality can mean everything to the coffee farmer, even if the coffee was not certified. Coffee can also be organic even without certificates, as certifications are often expensive and farmers do not want to invest in them. However, this makes it difficult for the consumer to be sure of what is organic and what is not. (Leppänen & Salomaa 2018, 97.)

### **3.2.2 Fairtrade**

The Fairtrade system has been created to improve the international trade position of developing countries' small farmers and farm workers at bigger farms. It is there for farmers and workers to enable that they have more control over their lives and a possibility to invest in their future. The label guarantees that the product's production is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. It changes the trade by ensuring better prices and decent working conditions for farmers and workers in the developing countries, as over 1.7 million farmers and workers are part of the system. In terms of coffee, all Fairtrade coffee comes from smallholders. (Nieminen & Puustinen 2014, 115; Fairtrade International s.a.a)

The Fairtrade label originates from the Dutch 'Max Havelaar' label that was founded back in 1988 in The Netherlands. Many similar Fairtrade organisations were established in the western countries in the 1990s, but in 2000s they were united under a single set of criteria that is now known as Fairtrade. Now it acts as a leader in the global movement to make trade fair by encompassing 1,599 producer organisations across 75 different countries. By choosing Fairtrade products, people are given the possibility to create change in their everyday actions. Fairtrade takes care of decent working conditions and it works to ban all discrimination and forced labour or child labour. It gives its farmers the possibility to plan more for the future with certainty of security, as it aims to cover the average costs of producing crops sustainably. (Nieminen & Puustinen 2014, 115; Fairtrade International s.a.b.)

Coffee is the most known Fairtrade product. One of the key factors that sets Fairtrade apart from other certifications is the so-called 'guaranteed price' that protects the coffee farmers from the financial risk of fluctuations in the world's market prices (Finnwatch 2019). There are over one hundred Fairtrade certified coffees in Finland: beans, ground coffee, light and dark roast, espresso and even instant coffee. (Fairtrade Finland s.a.a).

### **3.2.3 Rainforest Alliance and UTZ Certified**

The Rainforest Alliance fights against deforestation and climate change as it tries to solve urgent environmental issues. In addition to that, it aims to build economic opportunities and ensure better working conditions. The product-oriented, non-profit organisation originates from the United States, and has worked over 30 years on producing sustainable goods and services. Rainforest Alliance connects farmers, forest communities, companies and consumers together in creating a balance in the world between people and nature (Rainforest-Alliance.org s.a.a). (Rainforest-Alliance.org s.a.b)

Like Rainforest Alliance, UTZ stands for healthy working conditions and creating opportunities to farmers through better income, but also takes better care and protects the environment. UTZ certified products include coffee, cocoa, tea and hazelnuts. All UTZ coffee is produced to the UTZ standard that is guided by fairness and transparency. Every UTZ certified product is grown following their Code of Conduct, which sets guidelines on farming methods and working conditions. All products under UTZ certificate follow their Chain of Custody after leaving the farms. This chain follows the journey of products and ensures that the end products originate from an UTZ certified source. (UTZ Certified s.a.a; UTZ Certified s.a.b)

In the beginning of 2018, Rainforest Alliance merged with UTZ due to the similarity in both organisations' work and an aim to have a greater impact. Even though these two merged, new standard that will go by the name Rainforest Alliance has not yet been released, but is said to be released sometime in 2020. (Rainforest Alliance for business 2020.)

## **4 Qualitative Interviews in Selected Cafés**

In this chapter, the research method and the process of conducting the interviews are presented in detail. First, the chapter goes through the problem statement. After that the method of qualitative research as well as semi-structured interview are explained, as this chapter makes an illustration of semi-structured interviews conducted with five cafés located in Helsinki. The research method was selected based on the thesis subject. The research questions and the theory behind why this specific approach was chosen as the most suitable method for this thesis is discussed in this chapter. The structure of the interview question and therefore the results of the research are supported by the theoretical knowledge reviewed in the previous chapters.

The process of writing a thesis consists of different stages. These stages help the author to proceed in a controlled manner. To avoid missing any stages it is important to go through the process systematically. This thesis was carried out by following the thesis process of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. (Hakala 2004, 16-18.)

### **4.1 Problem Statement and Objective**

Drawing on the literature review and a small scale empirical research, this thesis seeks to explore the coffee buying in cafés in Helsinki. It offers a framework that helps to understand the factors that are involved when selecting the coffee used in the cafés. The thesis objective was to determine the main factors that influence the buying of coffee in cafés located in Helsinki, and the research question and investigative questions were created based on this objective. The research question is defined as “What factors affect the coffee buying in cafés in Helsinki?”. Further investigative questions were derived from the research question, and hereby provide answers to the main research question. The investigate questions are “What criteria is set for the bought coffee in cafés at the moment?”, “How cafés see the future of coffee?” and “How cafés consider sustainability in operations both in and outside of coffee buying?”. The aim of the research was to gather comprehensive data on used coffee and sustainability related to coffee as well as other business activities.

### **4.2 Qualitative Research and Its Justification**

Research methods are used to collect data. The data is applied as a basis for interpretation, observation, prediction and explanation (Manion, Morrison and Cohen 2007, 47). Despite being used to collect data, methods are also used to solve a problem. However, in order to use a method, information is needed. The information must be

identified by telling what is needed, what are the sources of the gathered information and how the information will be obtained. It is also important to explain how the data is processed to solve the problem of the research. (Kananen 2017, 16.)

Research is carried out either qualitatively or quantitatively. Qualitative methods are great for the research of a specific type of data. Qualitative research methodology suits, when the researcher knows fairly little about the field of study and aims to ascertain prominent issues. Qualitative research does not contain numerical data. It is carried out by analysing a small-scale data set as a whole and identifying themes and patterns in the data. In qualitative research, the researcher produces a solution or understanding of the problem that is being studied. The research, however, does not undertake practical work to eliminate the problem. (Jamshed 2014, 87; Kananen 2017, 16.)

This research was carried out by using a qualitative research method, and the data is gathered by semi-structured interviews. The research method, qualitative interviews with a semi-structured format, was chosen, because it allowed to collect open-ended data and explore the research topic through a dialogue with the interviewed professionals, and discover their thoughts, feelings and beliefs. (DeJonckheere & Vaughn 2019, 1.)

The research style determines the sample size to some extent. In qualitative research the sample size is likely to be fairly small. The probability of the sample size can be determined by the research practicing prudence and ensuring that the taken sample represents the features of a greater number of population. (Manion, Morrison and Cohen 2007, 102.)

In purposive sampling, researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample. Purposive sampling is often used to contact and have access to those with in-depth information and knowledge about the research topic. In this research, the people interviewed were picked on their professional role in the selected cafés. The aim was to select different types of cafés with varying values to gain a more general perspective of how different cafés view coffee buying. In purposive sampling, there is very little benefit in seeking random samples as these might not be able to comment on the matters of the research well enough. This is why, for this research, the ones being responsible for the coffee buying were contacted. The selection of café is elaborated more in depth under sub-chapter 4.3 Participants. (Manion, Morrison & Cohen 2007, 115.)

To gather data for the research, semi-structured interviews were used. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher asks a selection of open-ended questions from the responder.

The aim is to gain specified and contextual data. This interview technique lets the responders explain their views on the examined topic spontaneously while offering reasoned contextual knowledge. (Piercy 2004, 1.)

When semi-structure interviews are used as a method, the interview questions are planned before the interview. This can be seen as a benefit of this method, as beforehand-prepared questions can guarantee better gathering of data and results, especially in the cases where the researcher does not have much previous knowledge of interviewing. Often, the interviewees are provided with the prepared questions before the interview, which gives them an opportunity to get ready better for the interview. Though the questions are prepared before the actual interview takes place, during the interview there is room for potential unstructured follow-up questions and profound discussion. By selecting semi-structured interviews, the researcher has more control over the course of the conversation and the chance to use the same interview structure multiple times. (Fylan 2005, 66-70.)

Interviews were chosen over questionnaires, because they give an opportunity to collect non-verbal data unlike questionnaires, where questions and often answer options are defined by the researcher behind the questionnaire. In questionnaires, there is a risk that the participants understand the questions asked differently and thus give very different answers. Whereas, when conducting a live interview, the interviewee can ask clarification if they do not understand something. Live interviews also give the interviewer a possibility for follow-up questions to evoke a more comprehensive response. This leads to a better understanding of the topic as well as more detailed data.

### **4.3 Participants**

This subchapter aims to present the representatives of different cafés that were interviewed for this thesis. Emails and Facebook messages requesting interviews were sent to in total of 20 cafés. The data collection took place during April 2020.

The choice of the interviewees was greatly determined by the availability and willingness to partake in the research. The set criteria for the interviewees was that they had to work in a café in Helsinki, and be responsible for the buying of coffee used in the café. The selected participants were found by web search. The author did not want to interview café chains, as often cafés part of a big chain cannot decide on the products themselves but product-related decisions are handled by the company and implemented to all cafés in a chain. All adequate participants were contacted through email with a written cover letter. In the cases where the contact email address could not be found, the cafés were

contacted with the same cover letter directly from a contact request found on their website or by messaging them via their Facebook page. In the cover letter, the author explained shortly the research topic and type, and asked the cafés about their willingness to participate in an interview. In spring 2020, when the interviews took place, most cafés had closed their doors for customers. This was due to the restrictions set by the government in March 2020 due to a global pandemic (COVID-19). So, instead of visiting the cafés, the author contacted the cafés via internet.

The aim was to get close to ten interview contacts, but like mentioned, many cafés closing their doors and laying off the workers due to the global pandemic spreading resulted in very few responses to the sent cover letter. The author sent in total of 20 interview invitations, from which around 40 percent contacted the author back (figure 1). Three had to turn down the invitation to be part of the thesis, so in total of five interviews were conducted. The five interviewed all work in Helsinki, from which four work in cafés and one works in sourcing and product development. The ones interviewed all work on management level, varying from restaurant managers or café managers to an assistant manager or an owner managing the café.

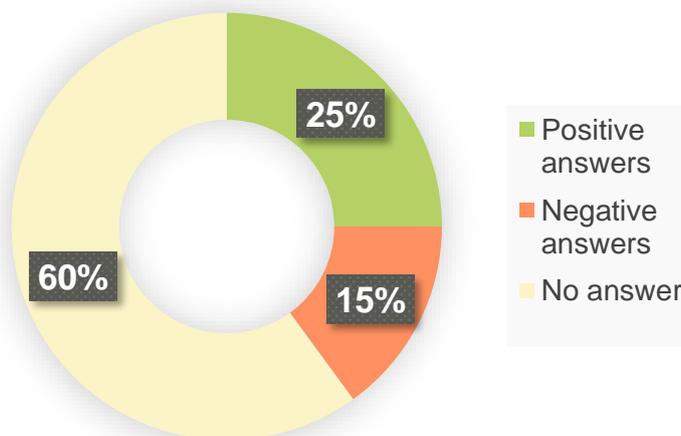


Figure 1. Interview invitation response percentages visualised.

#### 4.4 Interview Questions

The interview questions were formulated based on the research and investigative questions and sorted into the themes found in the literature review. The interview questions are listed in appendix 1. There is a total of 13 questions, and they can be separated into four themes. First question focuses on the job title of the person

responsible of coffee buying to find out who is the one responsible of the selection of used coffee, and if there is any variability between interviewed cafés. The second question maps out the style of the café to gain a better perspective of the customer base and the products sold, as the style can be expected to affect the business' values and thus all business activities. Like in the beginning of the thesis mentioned, there is a great variety of different cafés in Helsinki. Therefore, the aim was to conduct interviews with cafés, that slightly differentiate from one another, to gain a broader perspective and to see, if the thoughts on coffee and sustainability vary depending on the style of the café. The questions one and two can be themed under "Café style" to gain an understanding of the interviewed café.

The following three questions, questions three, four and five, are about the buying of coffee. Question three seeks to discover reasons behind used coffee and which factors affect the buying of coffee currently. The fourth question aims to find out if there have been any recent changes to processes and if these have affected the buying. The fifth question is about what coffee is used and if the origin of it is known. The origin is related to both the roastery and the used coffee's country of origin. This question is there to gain understanding whether the origin is known and is considered important.

The sixth and seventh question are about the varieties used. These questions were formulated to gain understanding if the variety has any weight when deciding on the bought coffee and whether cafés mainly use Arabica, as might be expected from the sub-chapter 2.2 Coffee Bean in the literature review. The question seven was to gain an understanding of why the selected variety and its possible sub-varieties are used. This already guides the discussion towards coffee's sustainability.

The final theme in the interview questions is sustainability and future. The eighth question examines whether any certificates are found in the bought and used coffee, and if not, why that is. Through this, it is examined whether café managers trust certificates, how common certificates actually are, why they may not be found, and whether coffee can be sustainable and responsibly produced even if certificates are lacking. Through this question, the interviewer is already able to outline slightly the interviewees' views on sustainability and awaken their thoughts for the following questions. The ninth question seeks to clarify the interviewees' thoughts on the sustainability of coffee production, while the tenth question relates to the future of coffee. These questions are directly related to the investigative questions of the thesis. Changes in the environment and thus the future of coffee are directly related to coffee production and its responsibility, because, as the

Sustainability chapter in the literature review presented, coffee requires very specific growing conditions and is very sensitive to any changes in the climate.

The last three questions, questions 11, 12 and 13, examine sustainability from a slightly different perspective. The 11th question relates to the customers, as it seeks to find out if customers ask questions about the origin or sustainability of the coffee and if they do, then how often does this happen. This is important for the research, as it is good to know if customers influence the decisions related to coffee buying or sustainable thinking. The last two questions focus on corporate sustainability. The 12th question is about actions related to running a sustainable business, and is asked to map out if sustainability is considered important in the overall business. This question paves the way to the final question, which deepens the understanding of the café's sustainability by asking what they require from their stakeholders.

#### **4.5 Data Collection**

When collecting data, it is important to first identify the data needed to be collected. When the data needs are identified, data collection methods are selected. Data collection methods include analyses of written sources of information, such as books and scholarly journals, questionnaires and interviews. (Conway 2006, 1-2.)

The stages of the qualitative research process can be divided as follows. First, the researcher collects information about the research problem, for instance through an interview. The material is then transcribed. The purpose of transcribing is to bring all the data formats into one common format, usually being a text format. After this the material is coded. In this step, the text is reviewed based on the research problem and question, and the author searches for entities related to the research topic. The coding is then followed by the classification of the material. The material is classified by the research problem as the filter. (Kananen 2017, 131-132.)

The interview progresses within one topic area, in this case within the research question, deeper one question at a time (Kananen 2017, 108). The interview is based on chosen themes that will be discussed in the interview. The author created the interview questions based on the literature review, with the aim to answer the research question and the investigative questions. The main themes of this thesis were addressed in the literature review, and along with the problem statement and objective, utilized when planning the interview questions and coding the transcribed interviews. The questions and therefore the results of the interview are based on the theoretical part of the thesis. The themes

were divided into four: the style of interviewed café, factors affecting the buying of coffee, bean varieties used and sustainability and future (figure 2).

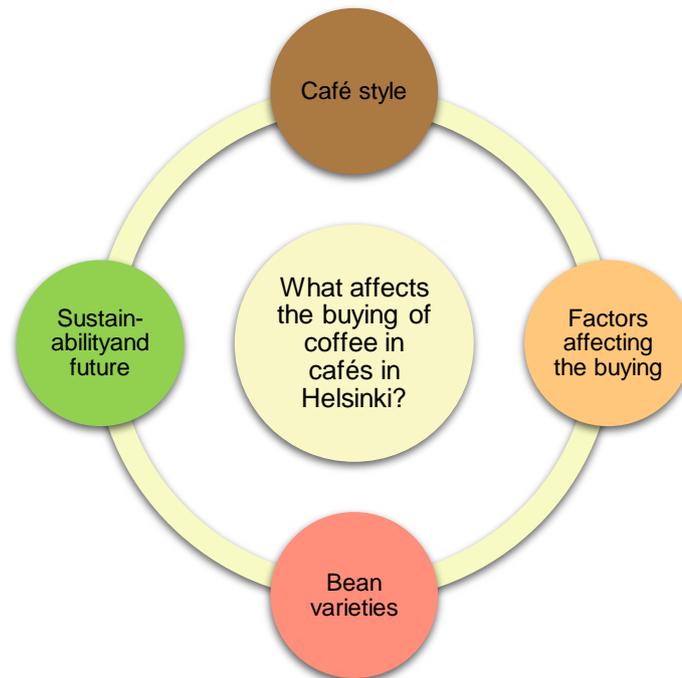


Figure 2. Interview themes based on the research and investigative questions and main themes presented in the literature review.

All interviews were done during times of isolation because of the global pandemic, and for that reason none of them were conducted face to face but online on a virtual platform or via phone call. The Finnish government took action on slowing down the spreading of the virus outbreak, and as a measure forced restaurants and cafés to close their doors in March 2020. It was also the government's recommendation to avoid all social contact, which led to not being able to conduct face to face interviews. Conducting an online interview requires both, the interviewer and the interviewees, to have an internet connection, technical equipment and some expertise (Kananen 2017, 115). Three of the interviews were done using Microsoft Teams as a video call platform while two were done via a phone call. The duration of most interviews fell between 30 and 45 minutes, with the exception of one being close to two hours. Even though no interview was done face to face with the interviewees, open dialogue was assured by calling instead of interview questions answered via email. All interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewee, and the recorded audio was transformed into text after each interview. Five interviews resulted in 78 pages of written text. The text was then read through and colour-coded, each colour representing a theme found in the interview questions. In coding, the collected data is combined in a way that texts with the same meaning or common factor are combined with the same code (Kananen 2017, 137).

## **4.6 Data Analysis**

The author chose to use a qualitative content analysis in the form of transcribing the held interviews and comparing the collected data provided by interviewees per question. No online tools were used to aid the transcribing process. Although many interesting points emerged during the interviews, coding was used to find the ones that answer the research questions within the framework of a qualitative research. The interviews resulted in total of around four hours of transcribed recording (three hours, 58 minutes), and a total of 78 pages of transcribed written text.

Once the transcribing was done and the material was coded to match the themes that emerged from the research questions, the author began to analyse and compare the answers between participants. The points emerging from the collected data were first listed in a table (appendix 2) which made it easier to start writing results into the thesis. The table gives a clear overview of the data found by conducting interviews.

The methodology consisted of three major parts. The first one was the creation of interview questions, and the second one the transcribing of the interviews. The third part consisted of the creation of the table, that summarises the results and acts a tool to better analyse the responses of the participants.

## 5 Research Results

All interviewees participating in this research were Finnish, and all five interviews were conducted in Finnish language. The identities of interviewees remain anonymous throughout the thesis. This chapter presents the findings of the research. Each sub-chapter is based on the themes presented in figure 2.

### 5.1 Interviewed Cafés

Interviewees were asked to tell something about the café they work at, in order to gain perspective, whether the style of the café affects any decisions related to coffee buying, or the views on sustainability. By providing this information the aim is also to offer a short description of the participants included in the research. The research also looked at whether there is any variety between different types of cafés on who is responsible for the buying of coffee. The identity of the cafés is coded in this sub-chapter as Café A, Café B, Café C, Café D and Café E to keep the interviewees anonymous.

Café A is a very traditional café in the heart of Helsinki. The savoury and sweet delicacies are also traditional, fitting to people's image of an old, traditional café located on a busy street. The interviewee works as a café manager, though she was hired for the position less than a year ago and hence all processes related to coffee buying were made by the previous manager. Café B's interviewee works as a shift manager in a hip café in a trendy district of the city. The atmosphere is airy, and they sell both breakfast and lunch along with coffee. Their products include sandwiches, pastries and salads. The shift manager says the café is very easy going and open for everyone, and their customer base is rather wide. Café C is a seaside café with a large seasonal variation, according to the interviewed restaurant manager. They locate near Helsinki's cultural attractions, which, along with the location by the sea, has an effect on their customer base, attracting for instance tourists. Like Café B, they also sell lunch and for example salads. In addition to that, they have the license to sell alcohol, so the customer base varies greatly from people visiting for a cup of coffee, to people who sit by the seaside and enjoy a glass of wine. The author interviewed the product development and sourcing manager of Café D, who told the café considers fighting climate change as their number one priority for all operations, and university students as their main clientele. Sustainability and running a responsible business show in everything they do, and they have strict requirements for all products they use and all suppliers they work with, which the author will get more to in the following sub-chapters. Café E was not exactly a café in its traditional meaning, but a coffee bar. Their focus is truly in coffee as they focus on selling only speciality coffee. The owner of the café, who the author interviewed, told that speciality coffee means that the coffee

exceeds a certain quality rating, quality ranking to the top five percent in all coffee produced in the world. They do sell pastries and brunch sets, but the interviewee stated how most focus is in the coffees they serve and sell for their customers. The owner is also a shareholder in a roastery in Helsinki, which has a great effect on the coffee they use.

## **5.2 Factors Affecting Coffee Buying**

Among the interviewees, quality and taste had the greatest effect on what coffee is bought to the café. Four cafés stating the taste to be the most important, but three mentioned quality right away when they were asked about the buying of coffee and the factors that influence it. Availability as an affecting factor was also mentioned three times, though one interviewee went into more detail about it. She said that in the coffee-producing countries, the harvest season is on different times in different places, and this greatly affects the coffee on the market and from which country coffee can be purchased at the given time. All interviewees were asked if they knew where the coffee was cultivated, and all of them knew that quite well. However, none of the interviewees mentioned the origin of the beans as a criterion for the coffee buying. Brazil was the most frequent answer, emerging in three interviews, but beans origin also from other South American countries like Columbia, which was mentioned in two interviews. One interviewee mentioned only a region in Brazil, but other interviewees told they use beans from a variety of locations, including India, South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya and Rwanda. Four cafés supply from Finnish roasteries and one supplies from a Swedish roastery. This is because the Swedish roastery had met the criteria of their needs, and the café was satisfied with this roastery's coffee. The interviewee also told that they do not supply from the roastery directly, but from a wholesaler, who sells the Swedish roastery's coffee. Four of the interviewees have selected to use a small roastery. One of these four supplies from both small and large roasteries, supplying their filter coffee from a large roastery and espresso blend from a small. According to the manager of that café, the large roastery has been the supplier of coffee for them since they opened, so they have had cooperation for a long time. Differentiation from others was mentioned in two interviews when talking about the selection of a used small roastery. The interviewees believe that if they offer something what others do not, in this case coffee from a specific roastery other cafés close-by do not, that makes them more unique and differentiates them a little from their competitors.

The ecology of the coffee affects the choice for two interviewees. One interviewee finds ecology personally important, and said the roastery they bought their coffee from uses renewable energy sources, biogas and solar energy. Another interviewee told sustainability to be deeply rooted in their core values, and therefore finds ecology important. They recently tendered their coffee to find a more sustainable option.

Because running a café is a business, price, or better to say quality-price ratio was also mentioned. Two interviewees mentioned they had made a good deal with a roastery whose coffee met other criteria related to the buying of coffee. One interviewee told that they sell and serve coffee from visiting roasteries in their café in addition to their own coffees. However, all the visiting roasteries had to be operating in Europe, because the postage for shipping coffee would otherwise be so expensive that the price of one cup of coffee would rise too high.

All interviewees seem to listen to their customers when it comes to the coffee they serve. Four interviewees told they serve dark roast coffee which they had switched to either longer time ago or very recently. All interviewees pointed out that Finns' coffee taste has changed, and nowadays they ask for a darker roast more frequently than previously. Though one interviewee finds roasting not too desirable, as too much roasting only masks the flavours found in the coffee. She said she actively follows the world's coffee trends, and pointed out dark roast to be a transient trend elsewhere in Europe, where people have now begun to favour lighter roasts. According to her, Finns are often late in coffee trends when compared to the rest of Europe.

It can be concluded from the responses that the interviewees trust the roastery to offer them good and suitable coffee. One interviewee mentioned the roastery making them their own customised coffee blends, whereas others mainly selected a top-selling blend the roastery had recommended for them. This applies to both filter coffee and espresso blends. The interviewee with the share in the local roastery selected herself the café's coffees already at the roastery, and made her decisions based on what she preferred trusting her expertise and knowledge.

When the interviewees were asked about recent changes related to the processes in coffee buying, only two of the cafés interviewed had made major changes within the past two years. They both had changed the coffee supplier, but the reason behind the change varied. One interviewee told that the café was under renovation in 2019, which resulted in a change in almost everything. The listed company operating behind the café had tendered their coffee, and as a result the café had to choose a roastery within a particular food and beverage company's roastery selection. The author was not originally aware, that a listed company was operating behind this specific café. Another interviewee told that they changed their coffee about a year and a half ago. The reason for the change was to find a coffee that better matched their values and vision. Like the listed company previously mentioned, they also tendered the coffees and their suppliers. After finding a

few suitable ones, they blind taste tested the coffees with the customers to find one that also their customers would approve. The winner of the taste test was selected for use in the café.

Other interviewees mentioned some smaller changes regarding the recent processes related to coffee buying. One interviewee had got new filter coffee and espresso blend earlier this year as a result of the recommendation given by the roastery on those specific coffees. One interviewee told that they have had plans to change the filter coffee they use, because they would like to find one that is roasted by a small roastery, unlike their current one. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the global pandemic, COVID-19, and strict restrictions set by the government had put a temporary stop to these plans. The interviewee also highlighted the importance of listening to customers in every process related to coffee, which contributes to slowing down all coffee-related decision-making.

### **5.3 Varieties used**

As already made relatively clear in the literature review, Arabica is used in the majority of coffee consumed globally. This was visible also in the responses, as all interviewees told the coffees they use have Arabica and therefore were in line with the found literature. Only one interviewee went into more detail about the cultivars, naming the ones found in their café's coffees. The interviewee listed their coffees having Cumbia, Bourbon, Mundo Novo and Catuaí. Cumbia and Bourbon are sub-varieties of Arabica, whereas Mundo Novo and Catuaí being hybrids of sub-varieties. When asked about the sub-varieties, one interviewee said the variety does not really matter, as long as a certain quality classification is met. Based on the interviews, the reasons for using Arabica can be said to be quality and taste that Robusta does not deliver. However, one interviewee told that the espresso blend they use has both Robusta and Arabica. She finds the espresso needing some Robusta to bring more flavour and character to coffee. Something that arose during two interviews regarding the varieties and sub-varieties was having varying coffees in the selection along with the main coffee. One interviewee told that the roastery, whose coffee they use, had proposed that they could include seasonally changing coffee, made from different beans and originating from different areas, in their selection. The interviewee does not feel that an ever-changing coffee adds much value to their selection, at least if their currently used coffee was to be replaced. She says the customers enjoy the current one, but does not completely deny the possibility of having another coffee in the selection with the current one in the future. However, she has not thought about it much.

Two interviews revealed the cafés having two coffee grinders. With several café spaces being compact, especially in Helsinki, these two interviewees say there would be no more

space for more than one to two grinders in most premises. Having one or two grinders, though, prevents from including more coffee in the cafés' selection, because one grinder can only be used for one coffee blend at a time to keep the grinder clean and to avoid mixing different coffees and their flavours together. If a café only has one grinder, it is usually filled with the main coffee. Of course, there are other opportunities to offer coffee, like pre-ground portion packs, but four interviewees grind the beans themselves to provide the freshest coffee possible.

#### **5.4 The Sustainability and Future of Coffee**

Sustainability has been emphasised greatly in recent years. The interviewees were asked their thoughts on coffee and its sustainability, certifications and how they view the future of coffee. One interviewee had looked into a research made by a Finnish food and beverage company that stated up to 30% of the environmental impact of coffee coming from the processes involved in the making of coffee itself. He believes that large roasteries should address coffee cultivation techniques, among other things, by developing them, which would help make coffee more responsible. Another interviewee is in line with this, saying that large roasteries and coffee buyers have more resources and capital than small operators, and therefore they could engage farmers in development cooperation. She, along with another interviewee, feels that it would be important to educate farmers in more sustainable farming techniques. One interviewee believes the world to be moving towards more sustainable in many activities, including coffee production, mostly because of the increase in information available and within easier accessibility than previously.

However, it is not only the farmers or large roasteries who need to make a change, but also everyone who consumes coffee should think about its future and sustainability. Two interviewees find people to play a great role in this. One interviewee thinks the perceptions on coffee should change, and coffee should not be treated as a cheap consumer good. Instead, people should understand that coffee costs money and learn to pay for it, so that everyone can continue to enjoy it in the future as well. He says that if only the cheapest coffee is bought, farmers are not properly compensated for their work. Another interviewee tells about a trend in the field of the speciality coffees, where the coffee providers even tell what has been paid to the farmer, and the interviewee says this can also be ascertained from their coffees. However, she notes that production costs vary greatly from country to country, which makes her suspect that not everyone would be able to relate the countries' production costs to wages.

Based on the interviews, it can be concluded that the interviewees trust the roastery to be sustainable and to ensure that the coffee is produced responsibly. They expect the

roasteries to know, how the coffee farmers are treated. When interviewees were asked about the sustainability of coffee, the first responses in three of the interviews focused only on the end user. Though, one interviewee says that whoever buys and roasts the coffee should be responsible, as the end user does not often know all the processes. She points out that the end user of coffee does not, at least yet, have a responsibility to know exactly where the coffee comes from. One interviewee thinks that the sustainability is of great importance, and therefore certificates should be found in them. Two interviewees revealed their desire to have certified coffee in the future, currently only one interviewee has certified coffee in their selection. Interviewees were asked if they trust certifications, and three interviews showed that they do. One interviewee says she frequently visits events organised by Fairtrade while another interviewee said she has read a lot about Fairtrade and finds the organisation trustworthy based on that. However, she questioned other certificates, partly because many are very old, but also because regulations in different countries are very different from each other. Another interviewee wants to believe that all certificates are reliable, especially in Finland.

The research also sought to find out if customers ask questions about coffee, its production or origin, and if they do, what kind of questions those are. All interviewees stated that customers ask questions about coffee very seldom, if ever. Two interviewees said they have a responsibility report of the roastery and/or coffee displayed at the café, and wondered if this affects the customers not asking questions. On the other hand, one interviewee pointed out that outside of Finland, in other European countries, such reports are often seen in many cafés and people still ask more than here. In three interviews, it was discussed how “coffee is usually just coffee” for Finns, and something not to be more interested in, even if it is consumed on a daily basis. Two interviewees said that only real coffee enthusiasts are interested in where the coffee has come from and who has produced it. However, they have hopes that others will too become interested in what is in their coffee cup. This is why one café has adopted a practice of telling the customer, when they are buying coffee, what bean (or beans) it is made of and where it was cultivated, in hopes to arouse the customer’s interest and through this spread the information about coffee.

When interviewees were asked about the future of coffee, everyone had a similar idea. No one had a clear picture of what would happen to the coffee, but all interviewees are concerned about climate change and its effects on coffee. The interviewees assume that the quality of coffee might change, and one interviewee considers it possible that the coffee plant might even be modified in order to make it more resilient to the changes in climate. Change in quality was the most common conjecture regarding the future of

coffee, as it was mentioned by three interviewees. Two interviewees also predict that the quantity of coffee will decrease.

## **5.5 Sustainability in Actions Outside of Coffee Buying**

This chapter discusses interviewees' thoughts on sustainability in actions outside of coffee. The responses give answers to the last two questions of the interview, in which the participants were asked how sustainability is considered in other actions outside of coffee buying and whether or not they demand something from their stakeholders. All interviewees find it important to work with domestic producers, and four interviewees favoured small local producers in the products sold in the café. One interviewee said the café wants to avoid long logistics chains, which is why they seek to use producers located near the café. Another interviewee says there are strict criteria set for partners in their procurement, and the products must be certified or else they cannot be included in the selection.

All interviews revealed the willingness of the interviewees to act sustainably, although the ways of acting varied depending on the values and business activities of the café as a whole. Of course, similarities were also found, such as the importance of waste sorting and recycling, that was highlighted in each interview. Interviewees were given the freedom to tell about their ways of acting sustainably, rather than asking about each small act separately. The use of take-away packaging was brought up in the interviews, and three interviewees told the café uses biodegradable alternatives. One interviewee said they are part of a COMPENSATE model, which is found by an organisation with the same name. The idea of the model is that, in addition to their lunch purchase, the customer can pay a compensation fee, which is paid directly to the organisation that then plants trees with the money. The same interviewee also told vegan food to be an important ongoing development for them, and they invest a lot in it. There was discussion about vegan food with other interviewees as well. Four interviewees said they have a selection of vegan and vegetarian options in the cafés. Oat milk is also used in the cafés. One interviewee even asks their customers with each coffee order whether they want their espresso-based coffee made with oat milk or cow's milk.

Social pillar is one of the primary pillars in corporate sustainability. Three interviews revealed that the interviewees are happy to offer job opportunities for students and young people for summers or alongside studies. One interviewee told about the opportunities for young workers to advance from a busser all the way to a shift manager. Another interviewee says that the café he works at strives to employ as many people as possible, and one of their goals is to bring the know-how of mentally disabled people to the world,

and told they have one mentally disabled currently in paid employment. In addition to this, they also strive to provide employment for those performing civil service. The importance to maintain a workplace where employees feel well and valued came up in two interviews. This is reflected in one café in such a way that their employees are not sent home during quiet moments, which is very common in the restaurant industry in Finland, but instead the agreed working hours are respected.

## 6 Conclusion

This chapter aims to summarise all the work done in the thesis by concluding the found main points of the interviews as well as including the assessment of reliability and validity. The conclusion also includes some recommendations for further studies. In addition, the chapter goes through the author's own learning process.

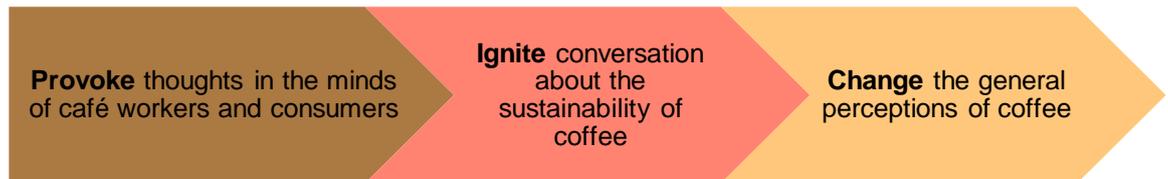


Figure 3. The possible way of the thesis benefiting the industry.

Figure 3 presents a possible way of this thesis benefiting the industry. By publishing this thesis the author wishes to provoke thoughts in the minds of café workers and consumers. The points that came up in the interviews are interesting to everyone working with coffee or in the hospitality industry here in Finland. By presenting her thesis findings the author hopes to ignite conversation about the sustainability of coffee. In order to change general perceptions of coffee, awareness needs to be increased.

### 6.1 Key Findings

The thesis aims to answer the main research question, “What factors affect the buying of coffee in Helsinki?”, by answering to three investigative questions (IQ) first. By interviewing the professionals on the field, the author reached the answers to each investigative question.

The first IQ is what criteria is set for bought coffee in cafés at the moment. Characteristics of coffee were the first ones to be mentioned, and taste, quality and availability were the most frequent answers, of which taste was mentioned the most. Interviewees emphasised the taste a lot, however did not define the taste in any way, for example by telling what they wanted the coffee to taste like. Interviewees also said that roasteries recommend them coffees that then end up in their selection. A conclusion that cafés trust the roastery to recommend them good tasting and good quality coffee could possibly be drawn from this. Criteria is set to some extent, but cafés have a full trust in the coffee roasteries.

Arabica is used in all interviewed cafés, because of its better flavour and quality. This was also evident in the literature review, and so the responses of the interviewees are in line with what was mentioned in literature about Arabica. Only one interviewee buys coffee blend that includes Robusta, and the reason was the same as Sethi (2015, 149) had written in his book: using Robusta gives a stronger flavour to espresso. To the author's surprise, the origin of beans did not seem to matter. However, the origin of the roastery seemed to play a great part. There was not much interest in the origin of the coffee beans, although interviewees mentioned the taste as an important factor. Of the places of origin, Brazil was mentioned the most, and this was in line with the literature found by the author. According to Korhonen (2018), and already presented in the literature review, Finns have always had a prefer for lighter roasts but have moved towards darker roasts recently. This was also something that came up in the interviews, as the interviewees told they had changed to slightly darker roasts recently or a little while ago. Based on this, it can be said that cafés follow the coffee trends to some extent.

The second IQ is how cafés see the future of coffee. When asked about the future of coffee, the interviewees had slight variation in their answers. None were sure what will happen in the future, and the answers were based on the interviewees' own guesses drawn from their personal views and some previous research they had done on the topic. Three out of five interviewed believe in the change in quality but no one predicts the coffee plants to go extinct due to climate change. However, from the research findings, it can be concluded that the interviewees emphasise the importance of education on both farmers and end-users of coffee. The climate change is seen as a threat for coffee production, but just acknowledging that is not enough and views on coffee as a consumer good should change. The discussions with two of the interviewees revealed that the price of coffee has been completely distorted by consumers in Finland. It became relatively clear how many people enjoy coffee because of the habit rooted in the Finnish culture as well as its energising properties, and not so much because of its taste or quality (Leppänen & Salomaa 2018, 176-177). Because most Finns see coffee as "only coffee", they do not think about its future. The interviewed cafés find this an issue, and they wish a change to the Finns' perceptions. Though so far very little work has been done to arouse interest. Only one of the interviewed cafés has already done concrete work to arouse customers' interest in coffee. When customers buy coffee from them, they try to tell the customer what coffee they are getting and where it comes from. This is a great way to encourage customers to ask more about coffee, as in two interviewees it came up that customers perhaps feel too shy to ask anything coffee related due to their lack of knowledge on the subject. The interviewee hopes to increase Finns' interest in coffee, so she perceives educating customers as a major target for development in their business.

The third IQ is how cafés consider sustainability in operations both in and outside of coffee buying. The importance of sustainability was evident in all five interviews. The research results showed the similarity of cafés in Helsinki trusting the coffee roastery to offer them responsible coffee. The responses given by the interviewees about the sustainability of bought coffee focus on the fact that the roastery, from which the cafés buy their coffee, operates sustainably and knows, for example, how coffee farmers are treated. There was no discussion about possible tracking of the sustainability of roasteries' operations, which probably would have been brought up if it was happening, so it can be said that the cafés have complete trust in the coffee roasteries and their practices. A common thought might be, that whoever buys the coffee from the farms, should be responsible, and the end user does not really have to know about all the processes the coffee goes through. The interviews reveal that even though sustainability is considered important, certifications are not. At least yet, they do not play an important role to many, as only one of the five interviewed finds them a necessity in the products they use. Even though one might think, based on the literature review, the reliability of the certifications was not commonly questioned among participants. This might be due to the little knowledge about them in general, as one interviewee did not know, why their coffee does not have certifications, and had to contact the roastery to ask about it. In addition, it takes a lot of research to get familiar with all the certificates, and what specific certificates would be the most suitable for the café in question. Though in other interviews, the expensive cost and special arrangements of getting certifications were considered a reason for the lack of them. But like previously mentioned, being sustainable can be said to be important for all interviewees. To quote one interviewee, it would be foolish for a café not to think about the sustainability of the whole business but only focus sustainability thinking on the coffee served in the café. Although only one interviewee mentioned this word for word, the same thought was present in all interviews. Being sustainable is part of every cafés operations, and it is currently done by recycling, using biodegradable take-away packaging, offering meatless options and favouring local suppliers, to mention a few. To the author's surprise, when asked about sustainable actions outside of coffee buying, the interviewees did not mention anything about the social pillar at first. After being familiarised with the social side of sustainability by a more in-depth follow-up question and introduction to the topic by the author, it can be said that the interviewees find the social pillar of sustainability important. Not only do they care about their coffee being responsibly farmed, but they want the represented café to be an enjoyable place to work at and they want the café workers to be treated fairly. However, the answers to the question about the social pillar seemed limited, perhaps because of the lack of previous knowledge on this topic.

By examining and analysing the results, it can be stated that cafés want to buy good quality, responsibly produced coffee. Even though the majority of Finnish consumers, i.e. the customers of the cafés, are not too interested in the quality, taste, origin or sustainability of coffee, these factors influence the decisions regarding the buying of coffee for the cafés. The cafés do not favour coffee from certain regions or countries, but the overall availability of coffee beans plays a role in the decision making. This is because the roasteries the cafés use get their coffee beans from areas with most beans at a given moment and therefore the origin of the beans varies around the year. Based on the research, it can be said that although the origin of the coffee beans is not of great importance, the origin of the roastery matters. Mainly domestic small roasters are favoured in the purchase of coffee, and four out of five interviewees want to buy coffee from a small Finnish roastery. Because running a café is a business, undeniably the price of bought coffee also affects the decision-making. Great amount of coffee would have to be sold in order for it to be considered the main product of a café, and thus the cafés have to consider the quality-price ratio to make profit. The most important key findings are represented below in figure 4.

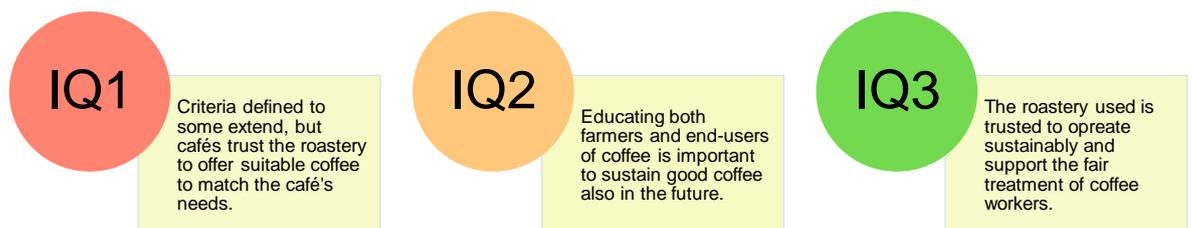


Figure 4. A recap of the key findings.

Lastly, one interesting remark can be made from the interviews. From the responses given by the interviewees, it can be concluded that the smaller the café is, the more freedom in decision making related to coffee the employees are given. At the chain level, the chain determines from which company the coffee is purchased to the café. In contrast to this, in small cafés the owner is often present in all operations and decision-making is more local.

## 6.2 Reliability and Validity

This chapter assesses on both reliability and validity of the research. When writing the literature review of the thesis, the author aimed to select reliable sources by utilising the

database of the Haaga-Helia library. The sources are reliable as they consist of printed material, e-books, journals and researches from credible authors.

Qualitative research and interviews as a data collection method were a good choice for conducting the research. However, with only five interviews, the reliability of the research results cannot be fully guaranteed. All interviews were also conducted either online using a communication platform Microsoft Teams or via a phone call. In a traditional interview the interviewer is able to observe aspects of body language better. For instance, the interviewer is able to see if some questions make the interviewee more reserved. This is most likely not visible in an online interview, which makes a remote interview less genuine. Though, in case of a purely technical interview, there is a possibility that the interviewer takes a more natural approach to the interviewee because they are not present and both can stay in the comfort of their own home. (Kananen 2017, 115.)

For the research question of this thesis, the quantitative research method would have most likely also been valid. Though the information gathered would probably have been different to some extent, with free discussion completely left out. When asking about the sustainable actions outside of coffee buying for instance, how many responders would have understood the author's wishes to find out about the actions regarding all three pillars of corporate sustainability.

The research was conducted during an unfortunate global crisis with a globally spread pandemic of COVID-19. Due to this, in mid-March 2020, the Finnish government advised all Food & Beverage businesses to close their doors from March 28 until the end of May. The research was moderately on hold for a month, as it was difficult to get contact with the preferred target group. The author sent in total of 20 interview invitations, from which around 40 percent contacted the author back. Of the replies, some had to decline the invitation, as the rapidly changing and unexpected situation with COVID-19 was considered their main focus at the time. Had it been possible to anticipate the pandemic and its caused restrictions on restaurant operations, the interviews would have been conducted earlier. There is a great likelihood that by contacting cafés earlier, more cafés would have been able to partake in the research. Different types of cafés were interviewed for this thesis, which increases the reliability, as not only a certain part of the population was selected. However, there could have been more differences between interviewees and their responses if a larger number had accepted the sent interview invitation. As the thesis did not have a client, the author was able to choose the interviewees freely on a large scale. On the other hand, perhaps a client could have brought one clear perspective to the theory part of the thesis.

During the time the interviews were organised, most café workers had already been laid off due to the cafés closing. The interviewees had not visited their workplace for a while, which the author found to have an effect on the accuracy of the responses. For example, when asking about bean varieties and certificates found in cafés' coffees, in some of the interviews the interviewees were merely guessing what was found in the coffees instead of remembering correctly.

The validity of the interviews is increased by recording them. On the other hand, the author never pre-tested the interview questions before organising the first interview, so there was no definite information about its functionality. It can be inferred that own values and interests of the interviewees greatly influenced their answers to the interview questions, which might decrease validity. If the interviewee was an avid coffee enthusiast in their past-time, their views on coffee most likely differentiate compared to an interviewee who knows only a little about coffee.

Overall, the research can be said to be valid, as the data emerged in the interviews and throughout the work answer the research question. To answer to the research question in one sentence, it can be concluded from the research findings that cafés want to buy good quality, responsibly produced coffee with a good quality-price ratio. The findings also give answers to the three investigative questions. The main factors that influence the buying of coffee in cafés have been defined.

### **6.3 Reflection on Own Learning**

This thesis served as a great learning tool for the author. The thesis process improved the author's research skills. Writing in English the author found challenging at times, yet process of writing a thesis in English has brought the author satisfaction. The author believes she can benefit from this in the future. The topic is of great interest for the author, and that helped to maintain the motivation to conduct the research.

The biggest challenge in the beginning was to make delimitations to the research; to narrow down the thesis topic and to come up with a research question. This the author found extremely challenging, although she knew what she wanted to include in the research already back in the summer of 2019. During the thesis writing process, the biggest obstacle turned out to be something that the author was not able to predict when deciding to write the thesis in spring 2020. The situation with COVID-19 had a huge impact on a global scale, that resulted on highly influencing the ability of the author to pursue the research, as it greatly affected on the Food and Beverage industry.

The author learned a lot about the real meaning of coffee for Finns. It was interesting to exchange thoughts with the interviewees about how people do not really think about coffee at all, even though its importance in the Finnish way of life is much emphasised. The author hopes that in the future Finns will wake up to issues related to coffee production and become more interested about it.

To conclude, it can whole-heartedly be said that conducting this research was a very rewarding process. The author feels like she learned a lot about a topic that she has an interest in, and feels like she has got a lot of important knowledge that can be benefitted from in the future. The author is eager to follow what is going to happen to coffee in the near future as more research is made and more actions are taken due to climate change. It will be interesting to see if the future predictions about coffee mentioned in this thesis turn out to be correct.

#### **6.4 Further Research and Development**

The role of the pandemic of COVID-19 on restraining the research cannot be addressed enough. The sample taken remained smaller than desired. Unfortunately, some cafés the author emailed had to turn down the invitation to partake in the research due to the restrictions and worry the pandemic caused, even though they wrote in their email replies how the research topic sounded interesting. The author believes that during a more ordinary time she could have gotten more interviews which would have then led to a greater sample. Perhaps after the pandemic is over and the business returns to a more normal state, this research could be continued by interviewing more cafés. This would give an opportunity to gain more comprehensive research findings and see more difference in the answers to the interview questions.

The research revealed a surprising role of customers being rather impassive to coffee. This is in contrast to the mind-set most of us Finns have about our nation being the top consumer in coffee. We are said to be the nation that drinks coffee the most in the world, yet we actually know very little about it. The author feels it would be interesting to conduct a survey or a handful of interviews with customers of some cafés to learn what they think about coffee as a product. It would be fascinating to know how many of them know about things directly affecting the price of coffee, such as the journey coffee goes through before it ends in their cup, the different flavour possibilities of coffee and the processing method of coffee beans. It could be interesting to map out, for instance, how much customers are willing to pay for a cup of coffee. This type of research could possibly have the opportunity to encourage Finns to think about their views on coffee more, as well as the price they

currently pay for it. The future will show whether coffee will ever evoke similar feelings wine evokes, but the research showed that great amount of awareness about coffee needs to be spread before that can happen.

However, while writing the last chapter of this thesis, the author feels that further research should be conducted rather with coffee roasteries in Finland than by interviewing more cafés. It came up in many interviews how the managers working in cafés trust roasters to offer them not only good but also sustainable coffee. This made the author realise that coffee roasteries have a much greater role than first anticipated. By interviewing roasters, who buy coffee directly from the farms, more information and opinions about the actual conditions of coffee farmers, but also the environment, in which the coffee is cultivated, would most likely be provided. Roasters also more likely have their own views and believes on the future of coffee, certifications and the origin of bought coffee beans. These might differ from managers working at cafés, and thus provide new insights to the topic.

The ideas for further research and suggestions for development listed above display well the learning curve of the author. When beginning the thesis writing process, the author was not aware of the coffee roasteries' role on the used coffee in cafés in Helsinki. Instead the author thought that customers would have a great effect on the selection of coffee at cafés, which later, when proceeding with the research, turned out to be incorrect.

Even though this thesis does not have a client that could directly benefit from the research results, valuable information was collected. The author, and everyone who familiarises themselves with the research, can learn something about the findings. After presenting the research findings to professors of Haaga-Helia, they offered their support for the author to write an article about the research results on a magazine in the hospitality field. The author finds this a great way to spread awareness about the topic and spark everyone working in the hospitality field to rethink about coffee as a consumer good. Therefore, the author is looking forward to this opportunity offered by the professors.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Interview questions

Interview questions are translated into English to match the language of the thesis, though questions were sent to interviewees in Finnish as all interviews were conducted in Finnish.

1. What is your professional title?
2. Could you describe the café where you work at in a few words?
3. What factors influence coffee buying at the moment?
4. Have there been any changes in the processes involved in buying coffee in the short term? If yes, what kind?
5. Where do you currently buy your coffee? Do you know its origin?
6. What coffee(s) do you currently use? (Varieties?)
7. Why do you use these varieties?
8. What certificates can be found in the coffee(s) you use?
9. What do you think about the sustainability of coffee production and the impact on, for instance, the environment and farmers?
10. What do you think about the future of coffee? Do you believe the quantity of coffee will decrease?
11. What kind of questions do your customers ask about the origin and sustainability of coffee? How often?
12. Do you consider sustainability in your other activities? (Corporate sustainability; employees, customers, the environment, the company?)
13. What do you require from your stakeholders?

## Appendix 2. Research results summarised

<b>Café</b>	Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional café</li> <li>• Trendy café</li> <li>• Café-restaurant</li> <li>• Coffee bar</li> </ul>
<b>Coffee buying</b>	Affecting factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality</li> <li>• Taste</li> <li>• Roast level</li> <li>• Availability</li> <li>• Ecology</li> <li>• Value for money</li> <li>• Competitive tendering</li> <li>• Owner's decisions</li> <li>• Feedback from customers</li> <li>• Financial reasons</li> <li>• Versatility</li> <li>• Uniqueness, differentiation</li> <li>• The size of the roastery</li> <li>• Long-term cooperation</li> </ul>
	Recent processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire for new coffee with certifications</li> <li>• Plans to change the used coffee to more sustainable</li> <li>• Part of overall business to have visiting coffee roasteries' coffees in selection</li> <li>• The harvest season affecting what is on the market</li> </ul>
	Coffee origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish roasteries</li> <li>• Roasteries within EU</li> <li>• Countries varying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Brazil</li> <li>○ South Africa</li> <li>○ India</li> <li>○ Ethiopia</li> <li>○ Costa Rica</li> <li>○ Kenya</li> <li>○ Ruanda</li> <li>○ Columbia</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Bean varieties</b>	Used varieties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robusta (in espresso blends)</li> <li>• Arabica and its sub-varieties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cumbia</li> <li>○ Bourbon</li> <li>○ Mundo Novo</li> <li>○ Catuaí</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flavour</li> <li>• Quality</li> </ul>

<b>Sustainability and future</b>	Found certifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> <li>• Organic</li> <li>• Fairtrade</li> </ul>
	Sustainable production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequality in the employees' conditions</li> <li>• Coffee should not be treated as a cheap consumer product</li> <li>• 30% of the environmental impact of coffee comes from manufacturing-related processes</li> <li>• Training farmers and improving farming techniques is the key to a more sustainable production</li> </ul>
	Future of coffee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffee will change (flavour, quality)</li> <li>• Varieties will adapt to climate</li> <li>• Decrease in the quantity of coffee</li> <li>• Modulation of the coffee plants</li> </ul>
	Customers' interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roast level, interest in darker roasts</li> <li>• Questions focused on the roastery</li> <li>• No frequent questions about coffee production or its sustainability</li> </ul>
	Corporate sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste reduction</li> <li>• Waste separation systems</li> <li>• Local products</li> <li>• Supporting small businesses</li> <li>• Avoidance of massive logistic chains</li> <li>• Eco-friendly detergents</li> <li>• Aim to increase customers knowledge and interest about coffee</li> <li>• Hiring of students and non-Finnish</li> <li>• Opportunities in career advancement</li> <li>• Environmentally conscious employees</li> <li>• Commitment to promised working hours</li> <li>• Increase in vegan and vegetarian food offers</li> <li>• Abandonment of beef</li> <li>• Sustainable seafood</li> <li>• Use of oat milk over almond or soy</li> </ul>
	Requirements for stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar values</li> <li>• Transparency</li> </ul>