
Sustaining the Specialty Coffe in Morocco: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract: *Morocco's long gastronomy history creates it unique for tourists who visit the country from time to time. In addition, developing specialty coffee in the Middle East requires Morocco to follow the third-wave coffee culture. Therefore, in sustaining specialty coffee in Morocco, the community, especially youth, participates in cultivating this third-wave culture, apart from following global economic trends and developing communities in coffee knowledge from farm to cup. The author's visit to Morocco to explore the uniqueness of specialty coffee and discover its new coffee cultures in the region for the last four years. This report is qualitatively based on observations from visits and interviews with Hajar Jeddou, one of the coffee professionals in Morocco.*

INTRODUCTION

Specialty Coffee has become a boom in several countries on various continents, where it is not only a daily consumption to meet the needs of caffeine in activities but has also become a trend. This trend is followed by most of the world's coffee community, whether members of the world coffee association or coffee connoisseurs. From its development, coffee originated from the daily consumption of Arabs, which became the basis for the development of coffee from time to time. Until now, it has become a daily need for Arabs in the Middle East in general, so it is stated that its development will always be sustainable for the economy, and they continue to strive to develop this sustainability in making coffee sustainable not only for the current generation but also for generations after. This is evidenced by the development of coffee production from farms in the Faifa region in Jazan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where the development of green coffee will help in the world's coffee needs, which is indicated by the challenge of the shortage of coffee needs in 2030 (Maspul, 2022).

Apart from that, Morocco is one of the modernised Arab mixed-race nations with a unique culture in North Africa that also has its own identity in enjoying coffee. Where until now is still entrenched in drinking coffee in the traditional way called "*nous-nous*". Therefore, with the development of specialty coffee, which is currently blooming around the world, especially with an extensive global market in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) but differently developed in Morocco, which has a cultural climate itself in enjoying coffee with a unique style to date. The development of Morocco in the history of Islamic culture has absorbed through European culture in enjoying its coffee. It is due to the emergence of colonialism in the late eighteenth century from European countries neighbouring Morocco, such as Portugal, Spain and France. Its uniqueness in

enjoying coffee is still a typical tradition of modern Moorish itself.

This paper wants to discuss the culture of drinking coffee, which is currently a preserved tradition of the Moroccan people, and the specialty coffee culture, which has become a highly developed tradition worldwide. But at the same time, Morocco still has challenges that limit the culture of drinking coffee with acculturation which is still maintained in a "Moorish style" style in the presentation of coffee called "*nous-nous*"; it is still held with all its uniqueness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Morocco and its Gastronomy

Morocco borders Algeria to the east and southeast, Western Sahara to the south, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, and the Mediterranean Sea to the north. It is the only African country with coastal exposure to the Atlantic and Mediterranean oceans. Its area, excluding the territory of Western Sahara, which Morocco controls, is slightly larger than the US state of California. Two small Spanish enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla, are situated on the country's northern coast. Morocco is composed mainly of Arabs and Imazighen, an admixture of the two. Sizable numbers of Imazighen live primarily in the country's mountainous regions, extended refuge areas where they can preserve their language and culture (Britannica, n.d.).

Moroccan cuisine is influenced by Morocco's interactions and exchanges with other cultures and nations over the centuries. Moroccan cuisine is usually a mix of Arabic, Berber, Andalusian, and Mediterranean cuisines, with slight European (French and Spanish) and sub-Saharan influences. Morocco has 37 million people who have long been known in their culture for enjoying coffee. Where generations before Islam entered this country, coffee was one of the old cultures of the Arabs themselves. In addition, Moroccan agricultural production includes oranges, tomatoes, potatoes, olives, and olive oil. High-quality agrarian products are usually exported to Europe. Morocco produces enough food for domestic consumption except for grains, sugar, coffee and tea. More than 40% of Morocco's consumption of grains and flour is imported from the United States and France (El Hafid *et al.*, 2018).

Besides coffee, tea is a crucial part of Moroccan society; the most popular drink is Moroccan mint tea, locally called *atay*. Traditionally, making good mint tea in Morocco is considered an art form, and drinking it with friends and family is often a daily tradition. The pouring technique is as crucial as the quality of the tea itself; Moroccan tea pots have long, curved pouring spouts, allowing the tea to be poured evenly into tiny glasses from a height. For the best taste, glasses are filled in two stages. The Moroccans traditionally like tea with bubbles, holding the teapot high above the glasses while pouring. Finally, the tea is accompanied by stiff sugar cones or lumps. Morocco has abundant oranges and tangerines, so fresh orange juice is easily freshly squeezed and cheap (Oktay & Sadıkoğlu, 2018; Philippon, 2018).

2. *Café Noir* and *Nous-nous* Coffee

As is well known, Morocco does not have the coffee culture many Middle Eastern countries have, so tea is the de facto Moroccan drink. Coffee is rarely a breakfast drink, although it's common to see men drinking espresso starting mid-morning. Here enjoying coffee means pulling up a chair in the cafe and sitting for a while. Moreover, they will never see a Moroccan standing at a bar drinking coffee, nor will they walk around with a cup of coffee in their hands, as is common in the everyday life of Moroccans. On the other hand, which is generally, commercial coffee like Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts is a daily consumption for those who like western-style brews and can be found in Marrakech, where they provide giant cups of coffee in their signature sizes (*grande*

and *venti*) and can carry colossal cups for drinking as takeaway drinks.

One of the uniqueness of modern Moorish, which until now is still maintained in providing coffee with a preserved tradition. Colonialism made the presentation of this coffee identical to the expression in the 18th century at that time, colonialism became the cause of new acculturation in enjoying coffee, likewise with their new generation who only know how to enjoy coffee traditionally apart from specialty coffee which has become famous for enjoying coffee in a late way in appreciating the taste from farm to cup. There are two basic types of coffee that you can order in most traditional cafes; *cafe noir* or *nous-nous*. *Cafe noir* is basically a tiny cup of espresso and is usually called by men who want a coffee with a super dark taste. *Nous-nous* translates to half and half; it's half milk and half espresso and is usually ordered by women. Moroccan coffee shop culture is a man's realm. Visitors often comment on seeing shops across the country full of men sitting and chatting over coffee or tea. *Nous-nous* is primarily found in Morocco, in north-western Africa. The coffee originates from southern Arabia, now modern-day Yemen; the coffee culture isn't as prominent in Morocco as in other Arabian countries or Italy; either to drink an espresso or a small portion of a hot and robust caffeinated beverage (Rasa, 2016; Hajar, 2015).

It's translated directly *nous* means half. So *nous-nous* is half and half; two parts together. The coffee drink is half espresso and half milk, usually frozen or steamed. In commonly local cafes or restaurants, you will usually only find cappuccino or latte on the menu, but ask for *nous-nous*, and you will be happy to be served this local specialty drink. Moroccan *nous-nous* coffee is relatively easy to make at home, where all you need is a method of preparing espresso and steaming or flavouring the milk. Be it a Nespresso machine, an Italian mocha pot, or a paper filter with grain coffee. As for milk, you can use the handheld milk frother, sometimes even available in those \$1 shops or one of those little milk frothing machines. Since *nous-nous* is usually served in a glass, first add milk to the glass and hand foaming. If not, set it up in the machine and add the foamed milk to the glass. Add another half of the black coffee to ensure the two levels are still mostly separated, with coffee on the bottom and light and airy milk on the top, and generally can be enjoyed *nous-nous* while still hot and somewhere in the open area (Rasa, 2016; Hajar, 2015).

3. Specialty Coffee in Morocco

Apart from Arabic Coffee served from generation to generation in Arab nations, it has influenced several countries with strong historical ties to the Arabs in their development, such as Turkey and several neighbouring countries. In this case, making Arabic coffee traditionally is one of the cultural things that is preserved and has been enjoyed from time to time. In addition, UNESCO has made it a protected culture as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Arab states. In addition, Arabs make it a unique culture to welcome guests, especially at home, and this is the culture of generosity the Arabs have been passed down from generation to generation as the identity of Arabs everywhere. What distinguishes them is how the roasting technique in the presentation makes it different from one region to another (Maspul, 2022a).

Besides traditional Arabic coffee, the national drink of Morocco is gunpowder green tea brewed with fresh mint, and espresso is very popular; Arabic coffee is also widely consumed, especially on formal occasions. It is often made to conduct a business deal and welcome someone into one's home for the first time and is frequently served at weddings and on important occasions. Morocco itself has uniqueness in serving coffee where it enters into the acculturation of European serving in the eighteenth century in enjoying coffee. With a roasting process that went into the darker category and served in an old-Italian style, mix it with half of the coffee juice and milk as well as served in a cortado cup, half of the coffee essence and half of the milk. So here it is called *nous-nous*. However, with the development of specialty coffee in the world, will this culture of

drinking coffee be sustainable in Morocco?

Middle East Countries where gastronomy is one of the government's efforts to invite foreign tourists to visit the country, such as Kuwait, UAE and Saudi Arabia. With the abundance of coffee provided as one of the coffee needs in Morocco, there is a conflict in maintaining the culture of drinking coffee traditionally in Morocco, which is unique and one of the gastronomic magnets in Morocco. In addition, with the development of specialty coffee in the world, it should become one of the additional magnets in making foreign tourists the reason for visiting Morocco. In this case, it is not only the government assisting the development in the development of specialty coffee in the Middle East countries but also a strong community in developing sustainability cycles in specialty coffee with the existence of a barista roaster competition and how to make coffee sustainability maintained from farm to cup (Maspul, 2022c).

Likewise, with the brew ratio, in developing the taste of the cup taster in creating the like so that it becomes deeper to understand the type of single origin, as well as processing and others. Likewise, in the introduction of single-origins, processing to how in science to roasting coffee to get the right taste that consumers can desire according to the local taste. In this case, only two specialty coffees have developed in Morocco, % Arabica in Casablanca Marrakech and Bloom coffee roasters in Marrakech (Maspul, 2022d).

Meanwhile, % Arabica is a Japanese coffeehouse chain based in Kyoto, Japan. Since launching its first store in 2014 in Kyoto, Japan, % Arabica has developed an international network of licensed stores. As published at the World Coffee Portal, the boutique café group currently operates 118 stores across 17 countries; % Arabica has also attained investment from Hong Kong-based Pacific Alliance Investment (PAG), which has interests in Australia's The Cheesecake Shop and Craveable Brands, as well as China's Nayuki's Tea. PAG acquired Japanese restaurant group Gyro Holdings in November 2021. Bloomberg report, Lucky Ace International, formed in 2016, was valued at approximately \$900m in its last funding round (World Coffee Portal, 2022).



Fig. 1, % Arabica Casablanca, the primary branch in Morocco since 2018 (source: the author)

METHOD

In connection with the paper, the author presents information from several online pieces of literature, plus the author's visit on 21 – 24 June to Casablanca and 2 – 5 July 2022 to Marrakech, where the economic development of these two cities is the most developed region in Morocco. In presenting this data, the author has given some literature on coffee consumption in Morocco and Casablanca in particular, plus interviews with cafe managers, roasters and baristas who are more in-depth in following the development of specialty coffee in Morocco from the start. In this case, to more deeply trace the history of specialty coffee development, the author conducted an in-depth interview with Hajar Jeddou as % Arabica's Assistant Executive in Morocco, understanding more clearly the result and consequences of specialty coffee in Morocco in general.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In explaining specialty coffee, it was previously understood that the development of specialty coffee in Morocco in the last four years was a bit late. This is because specialty coffee is still not sustainable from the three bottom legs of sustainability; economic society and the environment. Economically, the people of Morocco are not equal in GDP to the GCC countries in the Middle East, where costs are not strong enough here. Likewise, with social, where Morocco people still enjoy coffee in an old-Italian style and the presentation of *nous-nous*, which has become part of the daily Moroccan society. So here, it takes a long time to shift the behaviour of the Moroccan people to better appreciate the taste of coffee as the global specialty coffee community appreciates the taste through its taster cup; likewise, with the environment where the supply chain still has limitations in bringing in global single-origins. In addition, it requires special skills in roasting coffee by keeping the science rather than the taste. In general, only coffee shops and roasteries are known in Marrakech and Casablanca; % Arabica and Bloom coffee roasters, and the rest are modern commercial coffee shops from the US; Starbucks, McDonald's and Dunkin' Donuts.

As for specialty coffee and traditional coffee, which are spread in several cities in Morocco, Hajar explained here that specialty coffee in Morocco has broad potential in making specialty coffee progress in the market, but it takes time. Like % Arabica in the last four years, 2018. And % Arabica is the first specialty coffee to open in Morocco in colouring the type of coffee served in the local market; this looks unique since traditional coffee in Morocco has a robust market and specialises in the Arabica type market. As single-origins are provided, generally, what is served is a blend of Arabica and Robusta as one of the serving combinations of caffeine, following the semi-traditional commercial coffee. Likewise, the roasting concept is unique and has significant differences; not only that, but the presentation is very different. So here is needed in serving specialty coffee, which requires personalised with a machine matching the single-origins roasted. And here makes % Arabica a strong point in making it different from the face of specialty coffee in Morocco.

It takes quite a long time to explain specialty coffee to introduce a relatively new type of presentation in the local market. In general, consumers who come to % Arabica are based on curiosity from the current global trend, especially from youngsters from consumers who start appreciating coffee by drinking coffee and its quality, not only from the brand of specialty coffee itself; understanding from Arabica single-origins, how the coffee is roasted, and the brew ratio in the presentation itself.

Likewise, the development of specialty coffee itself has a very potential market in Morocco,

where here Hajar explains that after Covid-19, many youths have shifted their behaviour in enjoying coffee. Likewise, with the role of social media in making this trend flourish, and the number of young people appreciates coffee as a final product that needs to be sustainable in its development, especially with specialty coffee, where taste is one of the strong points that distinguishes it either from commercial or traditional coffee. And also, the challenges in Morocco are in terms of the supply chain where providing green coffee and importing it from outside is related to customs, as explained by Hajar which is the supply chain which is the main challenge in the circle coffee value chain. Furthermore, it returns feedback from consumers so that specialty coffee will always be a trend, especially in Morocco with the use of social media in how to present specialty coffee from farm to cup as well as processing and what taste will be obtained from the single origins served.

To maintain the quality of specialty coffee itself so that it is always consistent, sustainable training is needed here, which is given to employees who work in % Arabica team members on how to roast and process coffee so that it is delicious to serve as a final product sold in Casablanca and Marrakech. The goal of % Arabica itself is to appreciate coffee not only because of the trend but also because of the value that exists through the coffee value chain. Because generally, something that is not sustainable in its development will not be resilient to future generations.

Sustaining Specialty Coffee in Morocco

In discovering specialty coffee products in demand in the Moroccan people who have a lengthy background with traditional coffee, here it takes a strong effort from the local specialty coffee community to make coffee sustainable from their knowledge to skills that are introduced more plunging into the traditional society. In addition, by experimentation through social media, coffee can make more sustainable in its role to be known further from the process to its presentation. It can be seen how specialty coffee is booming in Asia with the growth of Instagram and TikTok and other social media mediation such as YouTube to teach the coffee community the right skills. In addition, participating in global competitions in specialty coffee championships can stimulate the local coffee community and the government to make coffee a business option that can be developed more deeply in Morocco. In summarising how sustaining specialty coffee has just started in the last four years in Morocco, the following steps are needed here:

a. Taking the Lead with the Experimental Marketing

Trying new things certainly requires hard work to provide something that will benefit consumers in the future. In this case, specialty coffee can be seen; its development in the world is swift, making it the leading choice in enjoying caffeine with a high taste. This can also be maintained by establishing a training centre in developing specialty coffee itself, such as the uniqueness of roasting, brewing and barista skills which, of course, differ from traditional and commercial coffee. Also, local competitions introduce specialty coffee with the identity of the final product produced by specialty coffee roasters and baristas (Dibb, 2017; Maspul, 2022b).

b. Providing value to the Coffee Community

Providing value to the coffee community is not only by providing training but also in how to maintain knowledge and skills of specialty coffee itself. With coffee academies in several cities in the Middle East, it can be used as a centre, for example, in Morocco, to instil sustainability in the coffee community. Especially with the sustainability program from the Specialty Coffee Association can make coffee sustainable with the same idea but through different generations. In this case, as is well known, coffee farmers can prioritise their sustainability development in the global coffee community and in Morocco (Ferreira *et al.*, 2021; Maspul, 2022b).

c. Building a Loyal Coffee Community

Building the loyalty of the coffee community, of course, is not only done alone but with the local community with the same vision and mission in sustaining specialty coffee. This can be strengthened through programs from the Coffee Quality Institute and Specialty Coffee Association, for example, by building the Morocco chapter of SCA, sustaining a community with continued loyalty from each individual in the local community. Of course, through a community recognised by global organisations, global marketing for the local SCA chapter itself will strengthen loyalty and be sustainable in the future (Maspul, 2022b).

d. **Maintaining the Core Relevance for the Long-term Community**

Maintaining the core of specialty coffee, of course, requires strengthening the positioning of the community itself. So the strong community that has joined with the loyalty of a strong belief in maintaining specialty coffee itself, of course, will make specialty coffee not only strong in its relevance in the local coffee community but will also become a superior magnet in attracting the global coffee community in helping to sustain specialty coffee in Morocco. Not only that, the Morocco brand itself, which has long been known in international tourism, will be strengthened with new things through specialty coffee in Morocco on a worldwide level, and people will make Morocco, like specialty coffee in the Middle East, generally a robust trend rather than specialty coffee itself though not as a coffee-producing country (Maspul, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Morocco with the idealism of traditional coffee such as *nous-nous* and *café noir*, which is a form of acculturation of coffee from the entry of European colonialism which became a form of progress in enjoying coffee at that time after traditional Arabic coffee as the identity of the Arabs themselves in their generosity. Seeing the existence of specialty coffee in Morocco, it takes time to make it lively and sustainable in the future where an appreciation of drinking coffee. As a coffee booming global market, making the coffee's authentic taste and third-wave culture is relevant. It will grow deeper by seeking authenticity rather than the coffee itself, which will drive a lot of coffee to be more valued not only as a daily consumption but also with how to make a foundation from the sustainability of farm to cup can be explored by the local coffee community in Morocco.

Training and introducing specialty coffee in Morocco can make that dream come true and enable Morocco's coffee society to follow the world coffee market. The coffee community can realise this by assisting the local government to the private sector in processing coffee through its value chain in Morocco. As another form of introducing coffee to the local community itself and not only coffee to be enjoyed by young people as trend bearers through the abundance of social media on the same topic, the coffee community can also strengthen the foundation of specialty coffee knowledge through research and development in finding the uniqueness of the best coffee available, at the moment. It takes a long time, but with the hectic global trend, it is undoubtedly appropriate for foreign investment to make it easier, not only for % Arabica and Bloom coffee roasters but opening up other global and local opportunities through the coffee value chain where the uniqueness of Morocco is one of the strategic countries that provides potential in this development.

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