

1.0 Introduction:

This report serves as a collection of our gathered individual perceptions concerning the experiences during SUSTAIN project. The purpose of this report is not only to serve as a reflection note for ourselves, but also to be a good indicator of recommendations and expectations for future “Sustainers”. Note that the report is an informal document which is directed towards the mentioned reasoning. The report is based on the diary we created while being in Ethiopia. There are some pictures added in the report, but as GDPR rules are strict we could only share a small portion. Both the authors are students at BI Norwegian Business School, Oslo and are conducting their MSc in Logistics, operations and supply chain management. The authors can be identified as Sahil Wadhawan, 22-years-old and Simen Cesar Kinserdal, 25-years-old.

We were introduced to the SUSTAIN project during a seminar regarding relevant thesis topics – and fell in love with the project. One of the ideas presented that day were to look into the mango value chain in either Tanzania or Ethiopia. We literally chose that topic, but as we started our literature review around the topic we developed our own scope. As a result, we ended up with looking at the post-harvest losses in the fresh produce supply chain, as a case study of Mangoes in Ethiopia.

As this research is formed as a case study, we decided that we would proceed with the research with an abductive research design. This would enable us to go back and forth between theory and reality. In addition, we had to set up our data collection in the same manner, thus we chose to gather primary data through semi-structured interviews. This leads us to the purpose of our visit to Ethiopia - data collection from different practitioners within the supply chain of fresh produce, more specifically Mango, in Ethiopia.

2.0 The SUSTAIN Project:

As mentioned earlier, we were introduced to the SUSTAIN-project during a thesis seminar in the beginning of 2019. During the next hour, we made it clear to Marianne Jahre, our SUSTAIN contact, that we were interested in taking part in the SUSTAIN -project. A couple of days later, we were called into a meeting with both Marianne and Caroline, together with another group

who had shown interest. After the meeting and some validation from the practitioners, we were selected to take part in the project – by going to Ethiopia for our data collection related to our master thesis.

The first step for us was to develop a proper research plan with complementary research design to further develop our research. To do so we had to conduct an extensive literature review. As a result, we ended up looking at the post-harvest losses in the fresh produce supply chain, as a case study of Mangoes in Ethiopia by using an abductive research design.

As time went by, the project launched and BI received six exchange students from Ethiopia. All the practitioners connected to the SUSTAIN project in Norway were invited to a gathering for some food and discussions. We met the students before the dinner and had some time together, we walked around in Oslo and got to know each other. The dinner was very successful, and we got to interact on a deeper level; both staff and students.

At this point, we were in dialogue with our connections in SUSTAIN to determine the best time to leave for our field trip to Ethiopia. Personally, we were ready to go at any time, but preferably as early as possible. As students, we had classes to attend and couldn't just go whenever – it had to be coordinated. In addition, Ethiopia was supposed to have an election in the spring, which could have led to instability within the country. Together with the SUSTAIN faculty, we decided to leave in the beginning of February 2020.

Before going in detail of our trip we just want to substantiate some important issues we feel are necessary to know before going to Africa for data collection. The most important recommendation we can give is that the students leaving for Africa need to be prepared to help and support each other. Also, make sure to manage your data collection in an efficient and adequate manner and organize it beforehand. In addition, when you are down there, be proactive and adapt to the culture – do not think that the person you are contacting will answer your email – stick to a good old phone call.

2.1 The trip to Ethiopia:

Early in the morning, dressed in “summer clothes”, we left our home in Oslo, cold and excited. We met at Oslo S before meeting the other group at the airport, which consisted of two girls. We flew to Frankfurt before we got on a plane directly to Addis Ababa. When we arrived, we were a bit confused on how to get to the hotel – Harmony Hotel. However, before leaving the airport there was a big room filled with “hotel stands”, where Harmony was also represented. They led us to a carpool where we were picked up by a driver and taken directly to the hotel. The hotel was nice, but as we have experienced – the food, in general, was not always very tasty, but eatable.

The next couple of days were spent contacting the different individuals/companies we had spoken with to determine when to meet etc. We had also gone sightseeing and to some restaurants in the city. During these first days, the other group started to feel the side-effects of the malaria pills and one of us had a serious food poisoning – only lasted for 24 hours.

We had no particular plan for the first days, but we stayed proactive and talked to our contacts which then guided us to several other sources of information. We, therefore, had many sources and people to talk to, but not until later. We planned the trip in a way where we were agile; only booked plane tickets from Oslo to Addis and from Addis to Oslo in addition to the hotel for some days in Addis. Thus, we were flexible when we were down there.

As part of the SUSTAIN project you have to visit the facilities of Jimma University in Ethiopia – where you are requested to interact with faculty, students and their facilities. In addition, the group we travelled with also had a great interest in visiting Jimma, as it can be argued to be Ethiopia’s “capital” for coffee – which was their field of interest. We left Addis to go to Jimma, both to interact with the university and to meet some of our contacts.

We travelled from Addis to Jimma in a small plane – felt safe – and landed at the smallest airport we have ever visited. Here there was also a pickup service arranged by the hotel in addition to a driver meeting us from Jimma university. Later that night our main contact from the university

met us, unscheduled, for dinner at the hotel. We had contacted the individual beforehand for some guidance and support in finding appropriate resources. The individual had confirmed that he had this under control, but during our dinner, we got the impression of this not being the exact case. Also, the individual seemed to be confused about what we actually wanted from him/her and the SUSTAIN project. However, after several random phone calls, he/she told us we would be picked up the next day at a certain time. However, it was not clear what the plan for tomorrow would be...

The next day we had breakfast and waited for our driver, he came after a while (Ethiopian time). We visited the business department of the university and spoke to the Dean before getting a tour around campus with two faculties. We got to visit:

- The dormitories: which reminded us about how the Norwegian army accommodates their soldiers; 4-8 beds in a room with some space for cabinets and personal belongings. Also, the buildings were divided such that the girls and boys did not live together. In addition, it seemed as if there were strict rules for noise, bedtime, and curfews.
- Their library: A big cement building with old and new books. They did not have any books written by the Norwegian authors “Arne & Finn Kinserdal” – we did try to use their electronic system.
- Classrooms: Size of the rooms are nice and they have a projector. A bit dark and they have simple seating – a wooden chair with a small table attached.
- The campus in general: Have beautiful surroundings of flowers and grass – feels safe and have outside cafeterias.

At the end of our tour, we were taken to the staff’s canteen and met some other people of the faculty – before being put into a classroom with approximately 30 students. Clearly, we and the staff had no idea of what was going to happen – as the staff thought we had prepared some sort of a session we wanted to do with their students. Both us and the other group were placed at the stage in front of all the 30 students and the staff left. It was an awkward situation – us sitting there not knowing what to do and the student just looking at us not understanding why they were there. One of the students even raised their hand and asked what they were doing there. The

other group was not ready due to the sudden session and did not interact a lot in the session. We felt the awkwardness but decided to give it a go – we presented our research and ended up by presenting our theoretical framework. We then made this into a session of discussion – what key aspects did they believe would fit into the framework (for more information about these categories see our thesis). The session turned out to be very good and we experienced that our theory seemed aligned with reality and we saw some examples of cultural and contextual differences. For instance, we had a whole dialogue around how Norway managed the monkeys in relation to fruit.

After the session, one of the students stayed to ask us some questions. During our conversation, we got to know that she knew the Ethiopian students that were in Norway and had heard about us. She showed us around and invited us to attend a class she was teaching. Some of the master students are actually teaching other bachelor students. Before going to her class, we discussed what she would be teaching in terms of curriculum. She was teaching marketing – the 4P`s, which also was in our curriculum at bachelor level. It was a nice experience, but the teaching is different from what we are used to. Our teaching is more interactive, whereas this was more like a monolog; the teacher stating facts and students writing them down. After her session, we exchanged contact information and left for the hotel.

The student/teacher: The student/teacher became our contact person during our stay in Jimma – WE CANNOT STRESS HOW IMPORTANT SHE WAS FOR OUR WELL-BEING AND OUR RESEARCH! The next day we were picked up by the driver and the student/teacher (which from now on was managing and interacting with our contact person from SUSTAIN at Jimma) – who took us to the university of agriculture where both groups got to meet experts within their research area. For us, this was a very useful session, which confirmed what we had already read about the wastage of mangoes in Ethiopia – in addition, they guided us in a direction which later led to the conclusion of our thesis. She also arranged a meeting and interview with ECX – which both groups had an interest in and is a part of our conclusion.

We spent the next days in Jimma with the student/teacher; she showed us around, took us to places, arranged a birthday party for one of the girls in the other group and took us to a small

(and closed) coffee farm. We also wanted to go visit a farm – named SEKA Farms to see some mango production – but because of its location, we had to cancel this meeting as the area was perceived as troubling. We also had the option of going to Asosa where most mango production happens – but decided to stay longer with the student/teacher and the other group as we had already scheduled a meeting with a farm outside Addis in a couple of days.

We did not see more to our contact at the university – the student/teacher was literally our new contact and did a great job! She also invited us home to take part in the traditional coffee ceremony and we got to see how “normal” students live outside of the campus, a nice ending of our trip to Jimma. The coffee ceremony in itself requires you to drink three cups of coffee, where they serve popcorn and use sugar on the popcorn and salt in the coffee.

When we came back to Addis, we were busy with several interviews and used our time efficiently and ate all the European food we could get hold of. We had also received a tip from one of our contacts to go visit a local fruit market, which we of course did. The trip was short and intense, as the market was crowded with people, and we were continuously approached by all the sellers, in a somewhat uncontrolled environment. It was therefore hard to interact with the different sellers, but we got an impression of how everything worked and saw great examples of how the wastage at this stage actually occurred. The next day we left for our main contact in Ethiopia, africaJUICE.



Shows how mango is transported - explains the losses at this stage

africaJUICE was one of the places we were looking forward to visiting during our trip to Ethiopia. It was around 150 km away from Addis Ababa and took 4 hours to drive so we had to hire a driver in order to go there. We had also talked to our contact and he decided to join us as he was also leaving for the farm at the same time as us. We talked to a driver and told him about our trip and also told him that we'll need a car that can go off-road as the roads might not be so good. He said that he had been there before and would get a suitable car. The next day, we left our hotel to go pick up our contact with africaJUICE. As soon as he saw our car, he said that the car would not be able to go the whole way because it was not suitable according to the condition of the roads. Thus, we had to make a new agreement with the driver where he would drive us halfway and then the contact's driver would take us to the farm. We negotiated a new price with him and gave him new instructions. On our way to Africa Juice, we conducted an interview with our contact regarding our thesis and other problems within the agricultural industry in Ethiopia. Finally, after a long four hours, we reached the farm, which was huge. We were taken to the guest house, shown our room and then asked to freshen up because we had to go for a walk around the farm. First, we met the employees who were responsible for performing various tasks at the farm and then headed on for a tour of a small section of the farm. We saw how they grew

passionfruit, mangoes, chillies, beans and maize among other crops. We got to understand the methods they used along with their desire to experiment with new techniques. It was fascinating to see how well organized the farm was and the people were also very well informed as they were able to answer all of our questions. After a long tour, we came back to the guest house, had dinner and talked about the history of africaJUICE and how it all started. The internet rarely worked, which was a blessing in disguise as interacting with each other was the only way to entertain ourselves and this helped us in answering a lot of our queries about africaJUICE and the agricultural industry in Ethiopia.



One of their mango trees



Sunset at the farm



Harvesting of passionfruit



A variety of mangoes called Tommy Atkins

The next day, we woke up early, had breakfast, and went for a tour of the factory with our contact. We were supposed to go to Upper Awash, which was another farm that mainly produced mangoes but because of problems with the car, we had no transportation to go there. However, after the tour, we managed to visit the other side of Africa Juice's farm which had a lot of mangoes. The drive from one end of the farm to the other took approximately 15-20 minutes. After exploring the mango production and the other side of the farm, we came back to the guest house, had lunch and left for another 4-hour journey back to Addis Ababa.



Handling at the factory



Harvesting of papaya



Handling of the harvested fruit

After that amazing trip to africaJUICE`s facilities, we came back to Addis and enjoyed our last night before we had our last meeting with AAA. Which is another collaborative organization

within the fresh produce industry. Then Simen left for lunch with a friend he knew from Uganda before all of us, including the girls, left for Norway.

3.0 Three events/issues which surprised us the most

- Access to contacts, people in Ethiopia

Before visiting Ethiopia, we had been given a contact from Jimma University that was supposed to provide us with relevant information and contacts in order to conduct our data collection and research. Prior to our trip, we had told our contact that we wanted to talk to some experts and students regarding post-harvest losses and visit a local farm during our stay in Jimma. We were successfully able to meet experts and students to discuss issues related to post-harvest losses of mangoes, however, we were not able to visit a local mango farm during our time in Jimma. We were lucky to have another farm to visit so we were not just dependant on this farm. However, the other contacts provided in Jimma were very relevant to our thesis and helped towards understanding the problem better and also put us in the direction of looking for a solution. Also, we were suddenly asked to present our thesis idea in front of 30 students from Jimma University who were currently doing their MBA and Masters in supply chain management. All of the students were in their second year and also in the process of writing their thesis. This session was created on the spot but turned out to be much more useful than we expected it to be as we discussed new ideas and problems around our thesis. Also, we met a girl who knew the exchange students at BI from Jimma University. She became a good friend of ours throughout the trip and even invited us for a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony. Thus, this impromptu session turned out to be very beneficial and insightful.

- Response time was too long, things done at the last minute.

In Ethiopia, we encountered a lot of situations where things were done at the last minute without any preparation or information in advance. For example, the session we had with the MBA and Master students at Jimma University. This was very different from Norway where we are used to following a schedule and having information about various events in advance. Because of this, it became a little difficult to plan things for the future, so we had to take everything one step at a time and as it came along. But for us, it also helped us in becoming more agile and flexible which is not something we have to do regularly in Norway. Also, the response time by the

contacts in Ethiopia was longer than expected when contacted via email. We were anticipating to receive responses in 1 day but they came after a couple of days. However, once we had a local sim card and started calling, it was easier to coordinate with our contacts. The problem with emails was mainly because of unstable and slow internet connection. The connection in Addis Ababa, the capital, was okay. However, in Jimma, we did not have a high-speed internet connection and the Wi-Fi at the hotel was usually offline. Thus, this situation taught us to become flexible, agile and also prepared us to tackle any situation. Overall, it was a great learning experience to witness the differences in culture and adapt to those differences in a short amount of time. We think that it was because of these situations that we had to go out of our comfort zone in order to make sure that the trip did not go to waste and we had relevant data to work with for our thesis.

- The situation of the student/teacher:

She was actually in the group of potential candidates to go to Norway, but as she had a wedding at the interview day, she was not considered any further. We feel that this was a great loss for the whole SUSTAIN project – she would definitely be a student that would have succeeded in Norway. She has the knowledge in terms of school and curriculum to succeed along with the personal characteristics to integrate and help other students feel at home. In addition, she has the highest English level of all of the Ethiopian students we have met! We feel that this is a direct loss for the SUSTAIN project and propose that BI arranges something so that she gets the opportunity for an internship at BI or something equivalent. One of the things we noticed was that she worked as a teacher, but had no practical experience – we, therefore, suggest that this could be a good solution.

The individual also had an exam the same week we were in Jimma, but she chose to spend her time with us. She accompanied us wherever possible and studied at night – she also arranged everything; drivers, spoke to people and translated for us. We did not see more to our contact at SUSTAIN – she was literally our new contact and did a great job! She was not paid by the university for taking care of us which we find a bit confusing after all those hours. Furthermore, she also invited us home to take part in the traditional coffee ceremony and we got to see how “normal” students live outside of the campus. A nice ending of our trip to Jimma.

4.0 What recommendations do you have for other students doing the same?

- Be prepared for the food, side effects of malaria pills

The students visiting Ethiopia or Tanzania should be prepared for the difference in food and non-availability of other products that we are used to in Norway. Avoid having uncooked or partially cooked meat as that mainly causes problems. So, it would be a good idea to carry food that can be eaten without the need for a kitchen. For example, they can take protein bars. They should also keep in mind that the malaria pills can have side effects which may last for the entire course of the pills.

- Try to call your contacts instead of sending them emails.

It is also recommended to ask for the mobile phone numbers of your contacts in these countries. Communicating with your contacts via email will most likely not be efficient or successful. It is always better to call as that is easier and faster for both the students and the contacts. The internet connection in Ethiopia was not so stable because of which it was difficult for us to regularly read our emails and it was the same with our contacts.

5.0 What can your own institution learn from your experience?

I think it is very important for BI to send someone who has already experienced how it is to stay in a developing country or who understands and would be comfortable with the different situations they may encounter in these countries. It can be very overwhelming for some people to visit such countries for the first time which could cause a problem with data collection and their research. Luckily, all four of us were able to adapt to the different situations in Ethiopia, but it is important to carefully select students visiting such countries in the future to ensure the project runs successfully.

Also, it should be advised to the students that it is better if they can find some contacts on their own while they are in Norway so that they have someone to meet while on their trip. Leaving everything for the last minute can cause panic and ultimately lead to not meeting anyone useful for the research. Thus, the students should be proactive in looking for contacts before their trip to ensure that they will collect some data irrespective of the contacts provided in Jimma.

6.0 How do you plan to share this experience at your home university?

We feel that it is very important to share our knowledge and experiences with the students and faculty who are associated with the SUSTAIN project and would be visiting Ethiopia or Tanzania. Before visiting Ethiopia, we had a presentation in front of students from the year below us to explain the concept and idea behind our thesis. And after returning from Ethiopia, we had another presentation with the same students for effective knowledge sharing regarding our visit to Ethiopia. The presentation talked about our project, our experiences from the trip and some personal considerations before visiting such a country. The students are free to send us an email if they have any questions or would like to know more about the SUSTAIN project. Other than the presentation, we also have this report which can be shared with relevant individuals and groups to help them with their queries.

7.0 Conclusion:

We have had an amazing trip to Ethiopia through the SUSTAIN project! We experienced cultural differences, communication problems and learned how to truly take responsibility for our own research and each other. We met some extraordinary people, gained first-hand experience and knowledge on the topic of interest; post-harvest losses in the Ethiopian fresh produce supply chain. We would recommend everyone who has a desire to challenge themselves through managing culture, communication, food and people in a new manner to go through the same. Always be proactive, organized, communicate with each other and show respect to the individuals you travel with – not all of them are familiar with the same conditions as you.

Lastly, to whom it may concern - we are more than happy to receive inquiries concerning our trip and would love to share more of our experience if requested. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

S & S

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