To: Erika Paterson

From: Ayazhan Makhambetova, Former Employee of Costa Coffee Kazakhstan

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Subject: *Proposal for Determining the Feasibility of Replacing Paper Cups*

**Introduction:**

Costa Coffee is a British multinational coffeehouse company, founded in 1971. It quickly became popular across UK and Europe and recently got acquired by The Coca-Cola Company. Currently, it is the second largest coffee platform in the world, with stores in 31 countries.

I have worked at Costa Coffee Kazakhstan during my high school years as a barista. The main produce of the store at the time of my work was: hot and cold drinks, snacks and pastries. Primary delivery source for drinks, unsurprisingly, were and still are – paper cups. By general assumption paper cups are eco-friendly and recyclable, but in most of the cases they are actually not.

**Statement of Problem:**

The practice of using the paper cups to serve hot drinks creates a huge environmental and health issues, that society does not actually know about.

First, let’s focus on the environmental impact. Sixteen billion coffee cups are used each year by people around the world. It is hard to imagine how many trees, that are essential for a lot of species o survive, it takes to produce that amount of paper cups. Cutting down the forests results in the decreased air quality and increased levels of pollution. Furthermore, after the single cup being produced, there is no good way for it to go back into soil. Against the popular opinion, paper cups cannot be recycled. Most of the paper cups are coated with a thin layer of plastic, to ensure the ability to keep the hot liquid inside. This makes them unsuitable for recycling and creates a problem for the environment.

The health problems also occur because of the use of paper cups mixed with the plastic layer. Plastic layer leaks chemicals when it comes into contact with hot liquids. One of the chemicals that might be inside, Bisphenol A(BPA), could cause the breast cancer.

Therefore, use of paper cups is unsustainable, environmentally unfriendly and dangerous to human’s health.

**Proposed Solution:**

Paper cups create problem because they are designed to the single-use. One way to approach this problem is hard-plastic reusable cups. From my experience in Canada, I have noticed a lot of companies supporting this initiative, by selling the reusable cups (e.g. Starbucks) or by allowing customers to bring their own cups (Bring Your Own Mug initiative is very popular at UBC).

Another solution to the problem is use of biodegradable plastic cups. This type of cups is made from bioplastic that can break down into compost. Biodegradable plastic cups are probably a more expensive than regular paper cups, however it is worth the change. Besides from being eco-friendly, it is also a good marketing point, due to the growing awareness of the environmental issues among people.

The two possible substitutes for plastic cups are not the only options, but I will stick to them for the purpose of this report.

**Scope:**

To discover the feasibility of replacing the conventional paper cups by biodegradable plastic cups, I plan to investigate the following areas:

1. Does the practice fit with Post-Soviet consumer culture?
2. Does the practice fit with the corporate culture well enough?
3. What will be the cost of upkeep of the practice?
4. How does the practice positively differentiate itself from other coffee houses?
5. How to diminish environmental challenges the biodegradable plastic may impose?

**Methods:**

The majority of the data will be collected in a survey and personal interviews amongst my previous coworkers, current customers, and managers. Data will be also collected via Internet sources for estimated costs of substitute solutions.

Secondary sources will include online forums and articles about other companies’ experiences in such switch and overall people’s attitudes towards the problem.

**My Qualifications:**

I have worked as a barista in the Costa Coffee franchise in Kazakhstan for 8 months and I’ve noticed the number of problems during that time. Some of them come from the overall people’s culture and attitudes towards recycling and environmentally friendly materials in Kazakhstan; some of them come from the company’s logistic decisions. After coming to Canada, and witnessing the differences, I have learned a lot about the ways of preventing the issues I have listed above. As a mindful individual, I want businesses in my home country to adopt the better practices and be more environmentally aware.

**Conclusion:**

The issue coming from the paper cups is quite urgent for Kazakhstani environment. The awareness of the harm brought by paper cups needs to be increased without big financial or company-image losses. By investigating the five areas mentioned above, I could figure out the feasibility of replacing paper cups with a more eco-friendly material.