

KAPE ISLA: A COUNTRY BRAND

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Trademarked with the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) in the Philippines almost 20 years ago, KAPE ISLA was envisioned by the non-profit Philippine Coffee Board, Inc.(PCBI) as a country brand to promote all coffees coming from the islands.

Over the years KAPE ISLA (as used by the PCBI) conducted tasting events, trade fairs, and all kinds of promotional activities for Philippine coffee. The consumer response has been great. The demand outweighs production, so much so that the goal of the country's roadmap is to produce more coffee. Though imports are plenty from neighbors like Vietnam and Indonesia, most of these imports go to the instant or soluble coffee market. The specialty sector, buoyed by the millennials' penchant for hand-poured, graded, and rated coffees from origins, has increased the demand for better quality coffee.

Traceability and a shorter supply chain developed as young café owners and new micro-roasters started to look for the route back to the coffee producer. Everybody but everybody now wants to buy from the farmer at origin. This has caused an increased value for the farmer whilst making coffee prices go beyond world market commodity or C prices. And there is a booming local market for roast and ground coffee, and for coffees with a story.

The efforts of the PCBI have seen fruit in the increasing demand for local coffee. Various consumer insights point to nationalism as the main driver for the preference for "Philippine" coffee, so much so that there are stories of cheaper imports (but of comparable quality) being passed off as Philippine beans.

The support from international expert bodies like Coffee Quality Institute (CQI) in conducting classes for farmers and processors, has given rise to a quality language now being used all over the country. More coffee producers are taking time to process their harvest for specialty markets. Every farmer worth his or her salt wants a share of the specialty coffee buyer. Add to this, an annual competition starting with Kape Pilipino in 2017 handled by the PCBI and then adopted by the Dept of Trade and Industry (DTI) to become the Philippine Coffee Quality Competition(PCQC) in 2018 onwards.

And it all began with traceability. Knowing your farmer. Labeling his or her harvest with a name made the producer responsible for the process until it reached the customer. The micro-roaster then attached the story, the label, and the implied guaranty onto the package of roasted coffee. Everyone in the value chain is happy. The premiums are spread over the supply chain equitably as farmers got better prices for doing their job.

KAPE ISLA may not yet be the brand everyone uses but its concept definitely got adopted by every farmer and processor up the value chain. KAPE ISLA remains to be an inspiration for every

consumer to look for a seal, a story, and a verifiable narrative. KAPE ISLA has given birth to KAPE PILIPINO, no longer the competition, but a growing group of coffee aficionados who will taste and grade every coffee origin from the Philippines.