Being Ethical Consumer Makes for Kinder World

Ethical consumption, choosing products that are environmentally friendly or made by justly rewarded workers, is one of the ways to protect the environment and help people suffering from low wages and poor working conditions.

Today, there are numerous environmental issues, such as global warming and the labor conditions of low-wage earners, such as cotton farmers. Cotton requires numerous pesticides to grow without becoming damaged by harmful insects. Yet these pesticides reportedly cause the deaths of about 20,000 farmers a year. One way to help address this problem is to buy T-shirts that have been made under proper work conditions. This is an example of ethical consumption.

To spread the idea of ethical consumption, members of the school festival committee of Ochanomizu University Senior High School incorporated this mindset into running the school festival. They asked that all groups participating in the school festival ensure that the activities took ethical consumption into consideration. Moreover, to show customers at the festival the concrete contents of the ethical consumption each group did, logos were displayed at the venue.

One of the activities was selling organic tea bags, called “Ochako’s tea,” at a school festival in 2017. A special package of tea bags was made through collaboration between Shimodozono, a long-established tea company, and “the Ochas,” a cooking club authorized by Ochanomizu University. This tea is not an ordinary tea; it is an organic tea that was grown without using chemicals. As a result, 900 sets of Ochako’s tea were sold and the proceeds were donated to the “Manaberkikin” system, which supports teenagers living in disaster areas.

Another activity was selling gelato in collaboration with Ricca, a gelato company in Nagano. This company uses fresh fruit produced in Nagano and milk made with animal welfare taken into consideration. By using these ethical ingredients, we can prevent cows from being milked under harsh conditions.

All of these are examples of ethical consumption, which can help address problems the world is facing now. You may think that changing the world is difficult. But there are many ways of doing so, and even high school students can get involved. If you are not one already, why not consider becoming an ethical consumer?

By Ayaka Matsuo, Kanon Yoshimoto, Sae Tatsuno, Yuzuki Kondo, Yuki Momose
Protecting Japanese Food Culture: Eel

As a result of excessive fishing, eel catches have been decreasing every year. Owing to this, the traditional Japanese food culture “Doyo-no Ushini,” commonly known as a day to eat eel in Japan, is facing a crisis of survival.

The responsibility of excess fishing lies not only with people who fish, but also with consumers. Therefore sustainable seafood (caught or farmed in ways that consider the long-term vitality of harvested species and the well-being of the oceans) was proposed by a group of students from Ochanomizu University Senior High School.

By adopting such an activity and thinking about sustainable seafood, changes can be expected in consumer attitudes, in turn contributing to eco-friendly consumption, which eventually helps address the problem.

Although sustainable seafood has been suggested as one of the solutions to this problem, there are many difficulties in putting this method into practice.

One of the challenges is how to raise awareness of sustainable seafood. In a school survey, students asked 356 Japanese whether they are aware of sustainable seafood or not, with 80% answering “No.” This means that 4 out of 5 people are not aware of sustainable seafood.

To overcome this challenge, students have made leaflets, promotion videos and a website. As a result, awareness of an eel crisis and sustainable seafood has increased. Their thinking is that if more people know about sustainable seafood, more people will make eco-friendly choices when shopping.

Many consumers think that they cannot have a great impact or that they have no choice when sustainable seafood is not on sale. But your choice is very important, as it reflects your message to society. Consumers should thus take sustainability into consideration for the future!

Greater awareness of and interest in sustainable seafood leads to the industry being more aware as well. In this way, more and more parts of society will take eco-friendly actions.

By Aki Hoshino, Nao Nagasawa, Nodoka Yamauchi, Rika Yokota

Codes Help Visitors Ride the Rails

Tokyo is well-known for its dense network of subway lines that are intricately connected. Today, with the influx of foreign visitors to Japan, the train is becoming more indispensable as a means of transportation. To facilitate navigation for foreign tourists traveling within the capital, railway companies have introduced a so-called signature system. For example, one form of this system is “station numbering.” Tokyo Metro, a rapid transit system in Tokyo, uses specific colors to represent each line and has created easy-to-understand signs with letters and a number indicating the line and station, respectively. For example, in Image 1 to the right, the letter M and the red color stand for the Marunouchi Line, since its paintwork is red. Eight (08) is the number designated for Shinjuku Station.

Also, East Japan Railway (JR East) uses a three-letter coding system for hub stations where many lines stop. As seen in Image 1, Shinjuku Station on the Yamanote Line can be described using three different codes: three letters, a line code, and a station number. In this case, the three-letter code “SKJ” stands for Shinjuku Station, line code JY for the JR Yamanote Line, represented by its green color, and station number seventeen (17) for Shinjuku Station. Other hub stations include AKF for Akihabara Station, UEN for

Image 1: Example of station numbering

Ueno Station and TYO for Tokyo Station.

Such signature systems with numbers, letters and colors are displayed in eye-catching places. By utilizing information technology, people traveling on trains can more easily understand how and where to go. This should make access using rail transport easier, regardless of language barriers.

By Ayano Oki, Karen Hama-moto, Soyoko Yoon, Urara Nagumo, Yukari Fuku
SOCIETY

Be Aware of Unseen Risks in Era of SNS!

Twitter, Instagram, Facebook—people around the world use various social networking services that make it possible to interact with a large number of other users. These services are convenient, but at the same time there are some risks in being online. Let’s try to understand them so that we can use SNS safely.

Some people post images taken at their home or self-portrait pictures on SNS. Such behavior could, however, put their personal information at risk of being leaked online. Once the images are posted, they can spread across the world and be saved and misused by anyone.

Smartphones and tablets have a function of recording the location a photo is taken at. As a result, your address could be identified from an image, whether it is a photo of a dish you cooked or a pet. To prevent such risk, the location information function should be turned off.

Have you ever met a friend you made online in real life? You may meet someone with the same interests and deepen the friendship through SNS. You can also go to events together, and talk about common interests. However, the character, sex, or age of friends on SNS may be fake. There are more risks than one can imagine meeting people from SNS in real life. Someone on the other side of the screen cannot always be trustworthy.

There are even more issues with SNS: obsessive use of such services can cause people to lose sight of who they are and should always take their surroundings into consideration.

Becoming involved with many people over the Internet is a double-edged sword. Users must pay attention to the actions they take on the Internet. Use SNS wisely and have a good SNS life!

Gender Issues Jam Up Women-only Trains

Groping is a serious social issue in Japan. Surprisingly, many travel books written in foreign countries refer to “chikan” on Japanese trains. In fact, according to a survey conducted with 232 students of Ochanomizu University Senior High School, more than one-third of the students has been groped (Figure 1). To prevent groping, women-only train cars have been introduced in Japan. More than 80 train routes offer such carriages.

Some people think that men are prohibited from riding in a women-only train. However, it is not a problem in the eye of the law. Such a misunderstanding sometimes causes trouble between women and men. In February 2018, women accused three men who rode in a women-only train on the Tokyo Metro Chiyoda Line of groping. Based on those cases, it seems the issue involves only combatting groping. Can it really be so?

These days, women-only trains are often associated with gender issues. Gender is not the sex-biological characteristics of female and male, but rather refers to social and cultural definitions of women and men. Moreover, it includes the theory of “SOGI,” which stands for “Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” and is deeply related to LGBT.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted at the U.N. summit in 2015. Gender equality is one of the goals. Such an initiative will improve unfair standpoints regarding women and sexual minorities.

Based on the above, there are three main problems with women-only trains from a gender perspective.

Firstly, women-only trains force gender identities on everyone, even a *cisgender* identity of being a woman.

Secondly, women-only trains hardly accomplish the primary purpose. Such trains tend to be used as a psychological shelter for victims of groping. However, transgender people, who have concerns about their own sex, cannot use the train because they feel that their gender is being denied or that they are being forced to be a different gender from their real one.

Thirdly, women-only trains discriminate based on being male or female. On the one hand, women are deprived of freedom of behavior and feel that they are confined to a women-only train. On the other hand, men may have the unpleasant feeling of being treated as possible gropers.

It is the threat of groping that we should really eliminate. These problems must now be regarded as issues of the entire society.

* Cisgender: A person whose gender identity matches their birth sex

By Akira Kudo, Ayumi Ogawa, Miyu Hattori, Rin Nakano, Rio Fujinami, Yuki Ogata

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Figure 2: Women-only train

Provided by JR East
Sasukenenable: The Spirit of Fukushima

Seven years have passed since the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami struck Fukushima Prefecture. Yet, reconstruction is still ongoing. Students of Ochanomizu University Senior High School visited the prefecture to gather information about the current condition of reconstruction from people engaged in such activities.

All of the people were working on such activities as shelter management, handling of nuclear accidents, restoration of agriculture, and so on. Those involved with reconstruction told students what they feel is important and must be passed on to future generations.

Amano Hiroyuki, the manager of the largest shelter in Fukushima Prefecture, called “Fukushima Palette,” emphasized, “It is significant to supply daily necessities. It is necessary for people to keep this in mind when engaged in reconstruction activities. Always remember, victims are not miserable people.”

By Kasumi Shioda, Kotoko Yabe, Misuzu Akashi, Miu Kavada, Yuki Fukui

Message from Himeyuri to Future Generations

Ochanomizu University Senior High School participated in peace learning about Okinawa as part of a school trip to the island in April 2018.

First, the students went to Himeyuri Peace Memorial Museum and Okinawa Peace Memorial Museum. At the Himeyuri site, they visited a memorial service monument and the Tower of Himeyuri, where Himeyuri students had been laid to rest. The students were shocked by the sad situation whereby girls around the same age who had many hopes and dreams were forced to escape, leaving their classmates behind.

The Okinawa Peace Memorial Museum had models and photographs through which the students could understand wartime in Okinawa.

Later, the students visited a natural cave called Itokazu Abuchiragama. This cave is located in the south of the main island of Okinawa. During the Battle of Okinawa, it was used as a shelter trench. As the battlefield went south, this so-called gama served as a military hospital. When the students entered, it was too dark to see anything without a flashlight. Himeyuri schoolgirls ran about to help with the treatment of injured soldiers and discarding dead bodies or excrement. After the war, the evacuees and the soldiers spared by the offensive of the U.S. army went to the gama.

The students realized the tragedy of the war and the importance of peace by seeing the scars of war in Okinawa through this school trip. We must not forget the tragedies of war even when living in a modern society.

By Kumika Endo, Moena Danzuka, Sawako Shinogi, Shono Sakai, Yuika Yasui