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Guarantee mechanisms used in the specialty coffee trading: the transaction efficiency from the retail distribution segment view.

Mecanismos de garantia presentes na comercialização de cafés especiais: a eficiência da transação pelo olhar do segmento de distribuição varejista.

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Resumo
O estudo teve como foco o mercado varejista de cafés especiais em uma cidade localizada no norte do Paraná. Com base na estrutura da Economia dos Custos de Mensuração, o objetivo foi compreender como os mecanismos de garantia utilizados no segmento de distribuição garantem os direitos de propriedade e contribuem para a eficiência nas transações envolvendo cafés especiais. O problema decorre da falta de informação e da alta variabilidade associada aos cafés especiais, fatores que podem dificultar a sua comercialização no mercado interno. Para obter os resultados, foram realizadas entrevistas em cafeterias locais, considerando o varejista como comprador e vendedor dentro do segmento de distribuição. Como principal conclusão, observou-se que a eficiência dos mecanismos de garantia nesse tipo de comercialização varia significativamente dependendo do tipo de transação, seja ela envolvendo fornecedores, cafeterias ou consumidores. Na relação entre cafeterias e seus fornecedores, esses mecanismos são considerados eficientes, pois fornecem informações essenciais e promovem custos de transação mais baixos. Por outro lado, no caso dos consumidores, ainda existem incertezas em relação à eficiência da transação, já que os mecanismos de garantia oferecem informações limitadas durante a distribuição de cafés especiais no varejo. Consequentemente, o risco de perda de valor recai predominantemente sobre o comprador. Nesses casos, as alternativas incluem a insatisfação com o café, a percepção de um preço injusto pelo produto e a possibilidade de optar por não consumir cafés especiais novamente.
Palavras-Chave: cafeterias especializadas; garantias; informação; custos de transação.

Abstract
The study focused on the retail market of specialty coffees in a city located in northern Paraná. Based on the Measurement Costs Economics framework, the objective was to understand how the guarantee mechanisms used in the distribution segment guarantee property rights and contribute to the efficiency of transactions involving specialty coffees. The issue stems from the lack of information and the high variability associated with specialty coffees, factors

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that can hinder their commercialization in the domestic market. To achieve the results, interviews were conducted in local coffee shops, considering the retailer as both buyer and seller within the distribution segment. As a key finding, it was observed that the efficiency of guarantee mechanisms in this type of commercialization varies significantly depending on the type of transaction, whether it involves suppliers, coffee shops, or consumers. In the relationship between coffee shops and their suppliers, these mechanisms are deemed efficient as they provide essential information and promote lower transaction costs. Conversely, in the case of consumers, there remain uncertainties regarding the efficiency of the transaction, as the guarantee mechanisms offer limited information during the distribution of specialty coffees at retail. Consequently, the risk of value loss lies predominantly with the buyer. In such cases, alternatives include the potential dissatisfaction with the coffee, the perception of an unfair price for the product, and the possibility of choosing not to consume specialty coffees again.
Keywords: specialized cafeterias; guarantees; information; transaction costs.

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Introduction

According to data from the Brazilian Specialty Coffee Association (BSCA), the specialty coffee market has been growing in Brazil. Its production increased between 2015 and 2018, rising from 5.2 million bags in 2015 to 9.4 million in 2018 (Melo, 2019). In 2024, the market generated $2 billion, and projections indicate it will reach $3 billion by 2030 (Horizon, 2025). Considering coffee consumption, Brazil ranks as the second-largest consumer globally, behind only the United States (ABIC, 2025). Specialty coffee consumption between 2023 and 2024 reached 21.916 million bags, representing an increase of 1.11% compared to the previous period (EBC, 2025).

Additionally, the total number of coffee shops in the country has been growing. In January 2025, there were 18,495 coffee shops in Brazil, an increase of 7.65% compared to 2023. Of these, 66.14% are independent operations, while 33.86% are part of major brands. The three states with the highest number of coffee shops in Brazil are São Paulo (5,561), Rio de Janeiro (1,745), and Paraná (1,516) (Rentech Digital, 2025). Furthermore, Paraná is the sixth-largest coffee producer in the country, following Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, São Paulo, and Rondônia. According to Climatempo (2019), the production of specialty coffees in Paraná was estimated at 1.2

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million 60-kilogram bags of Arabica coffee by the end of 2019. Regarding specialty coffee consumption, Curitiba, the capital of Paraná, is considered the national capital of specialty coffee, with an increase in the use of specialized coffee makers for beverage preparation (Notícias Agrícolas, 2019).

Despite the production and consumption volumes, the majority of this coffee is still destined for international markets. As ABIC describes, Brazil exported 66 million coffee bags in 2023, accounting for about 37% of global production. Internally, specialty coffee consumption represents a smaller portion of the total consumed in the country (Fioravanti, 2024). In other words, despite Brazil's growing production of specialty coffees and status as the world's second-largest coffee consumer, most of the specialty coffee production is exported. This indicates that only a minimal quantity of superior-quality coffee remains available in the domestic market, with the majority consumption directed towards traditional, non-specialty coffees.

The term "specialty coffee" encompasses various configurations and discussions. According to the Specialty Coffee Association's (SCA) evaluation methodology, specialty coffee is any coffee scoring at least 80 points on its rating scale, which has a maximum score of 100. This variation depends on characteristics such as aroma, uniformity, absence of defects, sweetness, flavor, acidity, body, finish, harmony, and an overall grade assigned by the evaluator (Grão Gourmet, 2016).

Even when considering the significant role of physical appearance in determining price, Giomo and Borém (2011) identify beverage quality as the primary differentiator for specialty coffee. The rarer and more exotic the sensory profile, the more valuable the coffee tends to be. In this regard, Nicoleli, Carvalho, Castro, and Santos (2015) emphasize certification as a tool to manage and ensure coffee quality, as well as provide information and guarantee mechanisms for consumers.

Specialty coffee possesses specific characteristics and attributes that determine its quality and require certification. However, it remains a highly

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variable product, from its nomenclature to its more detailed attributes. One justification for this variability lies in the variety of certification seals, which differ in their standards for quality, sustainability, and origin guarantees, among other factors (Nicoleli *et. al.,* 2015). Furthermore, Zylbersztajn and Farina (2001) highlight differentiation beyond the final beverage quality. The authors point to attributes such as environmental preservation and social responsibility in production as additional distinguishing factors.

Certain doubts regarding specialty coffee consumption remain. Even though information is more widely disseminated and classification systems established by international bodies exist, uncertainties persist. As Saes and Spers (2006) observe, consumers have started to develop a perception of differences among beverages, particularly when based on physical and sensory attributes that they can identify after experiencing the product. However, according to the authors, the addition of intangible or more technical characteristics complicates the assessment of this information.

This difficulty in evaluating specialty coffees at the time of purchase can pose a problem, especially when coupled with their high cost. As Zylbersztajn, Farina, and Santos stated in 1993, consumers still need to learn how to recognize, value, and justify paying a premium price for different types and qualities of coffee (Bronzeri & Bulgacov, 2014). Consequently, this challenge in assessing product quality and identifying its attributes reduces consumers' willingness to pay more for specialty coffees. As a result, the consumer experience may not occur, nor may there be a continued interest in the product and its variations.

Based on this challenge, the study sought to understand how the guarantee mechanisms employed in the distribution segment secure property rights and contribute to the efficiency of transactions involving specialty coffees. The analysis focuses on retailers, who function as both buyers and sellers in the specialty coffee market. The study examines how property rights are safeguarded in light of the high variability of the product

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being sold, coupled with its higher added value. This objective is significant because, as demonstrated, doubts regarding the commercialization of specialty coffees persist. These uncertainties can be construed as issues related to the production and transmission of information between agents within the production chain.

Among theories addressing information-related problems, Measurement Cost Economics (MCE) (Barzel, 1982), which is part of New Institutional Economics, was used as the theoretical framework for this study. From the MCE perspective, a transaction – the exchange between two agents – is always subject to two forces: value appropriation and value protection. In other words, during a transaction, agents simultaneously seek to capture value and protect themselves from attempts at value appropriation.

From the MCE perspective, several sources of transaction costs (TC) exist. These include the costs associated with transferring, capturing, and safeguarding ownership, as well as the costs incurred in transmitting information along the production chain (Barzel, 1997). These costs vary depending on the enforcement mechanisms used by the agents during transactions to protect property rights. Guarantee mechanisms include contractual agreements between agents and market mechanisms, such as caveat emptor relationships, wherein the buyer assumes the transaction's risk (Barzel, 2005; Sent & Kroese, 2022). Additionally, vertical integration and long-term relationships are viewed as options for enforcing property rights.

Therefore, the study offers a theoretical contribution by deepening the understanding of how property rights and guarantee mechanisms shape transaction efficiency within specialty coffee markets. Empirically, it provides critical insights into the dual role of retailers as both purchasers and sellers, emphasizing the differences in transaction dynamics between suppliers and coffee shops, as well as between coffee shops and consumers. Furthermore, the research highlights the impact of limited consumer

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information on the efficiency and sustainability of the domestic specialty coffee value chain. It addresses the necessity of implementing robust guarantee mechanisms to mitigate transaction costs and safeguard property rights.

Theoretical Review

Both Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) and Measurement Cost Economics (MCE) are theories derived from New Institutional Economics (NIE). The latter traces its origins to Ronald Coase's seminal work in 1937, The Nature of the Firm. As Barzel and Kochin (1992) observe, "Coase argues that transaction costs, especially those influencing prices, directly explain the firm's existence" (Barzel & Kochin, 1992, p. 20). Accordingly, from these studies on transaction costs (TC) influencing firms' operating dynamics, theoretical developments emerged, leading to TCE definitions based on Williamson's studies (1985) and to MCE, initiated by Barzel (1982; 2005).

From the TCE perspective, transaction costs are understood as market "friction" costs (Williamson, 1985). In other words, they are the costs required to operate the market, negotiation and renegotiation between agents, and depending on the extent of this friction, these costs may vary. Williamson also emphasizes that transaction costs tend to decrease as governance structures effectively oversee exchanges. Firms, therefore, are seen as governance structures, which become more efficient as they organize themselves to reduce these costs (Williamson, 1985). Based on this understanding of firms as governance structures, Williamson (1991) identifies three organizational alternatives from the TCE perspective: market, hybrid forms (partnerships between firms), and hierarchy (vertical integration).

The efficiency branch of New Institutional Economics (Williamson, 1985) is divided into the Governance aspect, contextualized above, and the

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Measurement aspect, discussed in Barzel's studies (1982; 2005). Building on Coase's Theorem, as presented by Barzel and Kochin (1992), when the firm's property rights are well-defined, production efficiency remains unaffected by externalities. According to the authors, at such times, agents begin to allocate resources by analyzing transaction costs in search of efficiency, rather than relying solely on price and production cost mechanisms (Barzel & Kochin, 1992).

From the MCE perspective, transactions involve a dual dynamic: one agent seeks to protect themselves against value loss, while the other aims to maximize gains during the exchange. Returning to Coase's studies, Barzel and Kochin (1992) begin their discussions on property rights and how they can be transferred between agents. They note that as production grows in the market and its value increases, disputes over ownership and transaction gains in the public domain also intensify. Referring to the concepts of Coase (1960), Alchian (1961; 1965), and Demsetz (1967), Williamson (1985) presents property rights as encompassing the right to use an asset, the right to appropriate the returns of that asset, and the right to modify the asset.

In this context, starting with value appropriation, Barzel (1982) argues that a lack of information during transactions provides opportunities for agents to appropriate value. Thus, measurement costs, also referred to as transaction costs by Ito and Zylbersztajn (2016), are the costs associated with obtaining information and preventing the transfer of low-performance products. Simply put, these costs guarantee and protect agents' property rights.

However, measurement itself incurs costs, especially when carried out by buyers rather than sellers. As product variability increases, buyers may engage in double measurement, repeatedly assessing quality to ensure accuracy. Barzel (1982) identifies this phenomenon as "double measurement". According to Zylbersztajn (2018), in the MCE view, information is costly to produce and is responsible for errors in incentive

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allocation. Consequently, when such errors occur, low-quality products may circulate, harming agents' property rights (Barzel, 2003).

Considering that a transaction is the most basic economic activity, Barzel (2005) states that for agents' property rights to be protected during exchanges, individuals require accurate information. Sellers need information about their inputs, while buyers seek the same information to ensure the utility of the purchased product. In this context, measurement is a specific form of information and can be conducted during the production process or at the time of consumption, the latter being more subjective and costly (Barzel, 2005).

While measurement is costly, it serves as protection for both buyers and sellers. Guarantees emerge as an alternative to reduce excessive measurement by buyers and lower transaction costs. Guarantees are vital in transactions because, as Barzel states (1982, p. 32), they "assure the seller that they are not giving too much and assure the buyer that they are not receiving too little in the transaction".

In addition to integrating information into transactions, Barzel (2005) building on Governance Structures presented by Williamson (1985), defines enforcement mechanisms present in the transaction. The author states that a transaction can be governed by various mechanisms, emphasizing the importance of long-term relationships and others derived from this type. Three other forms are highlighted: caveat emptor or auctions, contractual relationships, and intra-organizational transactions (vertical or horizontal integration). Each of these mechanisms varies according to measurement costs and the level of required information (Barzel, 2005).

First, in caveat emptor relationships, considered the simplest type of transaction, information is collected in advance, and buyers assume the risks associated with their purchase. In this mechanism, sellers provide as much information as possible during the transaction to avoid losing value, while buyers (as ultimate consumers or producers) rely on advertising and

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pre-purchase assessments, as they can only measure the product's attributes during use or consumption.

Second, long-term relationships mark a significant departure from caveat emptor mechanisms. In long-term transactions, sellers make implicit or explicit promises regarding the levels of attributes sold, and buyers measure the product during use. If the promise is unfulfilled, buyers do not receive refunds but instead cease future purchases and terminate the long-term relationship (Barzel, 2005).

Third, in contractual relationships, the state does not actively participate in negotiations; however, contracts carry legal guarantees that ensure product attributes are upheld. These guarantees must be effective, and any necessary corrections should be made at the time of purchase rather than deferred to future transactions. Barzel (2005) emphasizes the importance of objective contracts, while Ito and Zylbersztajn (2016), building on Barzel (1997), point out that markets and contracts are imperfect. In competitive situations, agents often become mere recipients of contractual terms, with limited ability to influence production or selection.

Finally, vertical integration is presented by Barzel (2005) as a mechanism to minimize excessive measurement in transactions and ensure that specific attributes remain internal to the firm. The difficulty in measuring and transmitting information is a factor justifying vertical integration, as discussed by Cunha, Saes, and Mainville (2015), Augusto, Souza, and Cário (2018), and Sudré, Souza, and Bouroullec (2021; 2023). Barzel (2005, p. 369) asserts that "as the costs of measurement and verification decrease, agents will use more contracts instead of moving towards vertical integration".

In addition to these three guarantees, Barzel (2005) highlights the possibility of multiple enforcers, particularly in contracts or caveat emptor situations, which are often complemented by long-term relationships and supported by legal structures. In transactions with limited information,

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agents tend to employ multiple enforcers to safeguard property rights, such as combining long-term relationships with contracts (Barzel, 2005).

Furthermore, as Barzel (1982) explains, suppressing information also incurs costs for agents. For buyers, a lack of information can lead to suboptimal purchases, where they are unable to assess value or protect their property rights. As a result, buyers may withdraw from the transaction or avoid similar engagements in the future.

Similarly, for sellers, measurement costs increase when buyers are reluctant to commit due to insufficient information. Suppressing information imposes challenges on transactions, as one agent will incur additional costs to protect their property rights. This can hinder the establishment of long-term relationships when agents are unable to ensure their rights. Therefore, guarantees or multiple guarantees become essential in transactions.

As Barzel (1982) describes, transactions involve both easily measurable dimensions and hidden, more challenging dimensions. Marketing plays a crucial role in communicating these dimensions to buyers, facilitating the measurement process (Barzel, 1982). Consequently, transaction costs decrease because double measurement by consumers is reduced, allowing buyers to perceive greater value in the exchange.

In conclusion, based on Barzel (1982, 2005) and Williamson (1985), an efficient transaction is characterized by minimized transaction costs. These costs are reduced when accurate measurement provides agents with sufficient information to protect their property rights. Conversely, inefficient measurement or a lack of information results in higher transaction costs, negatively affecting long-term relationships and contractual agreements.

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The Specialty Coffee Trading: Origins and Characteristics

The early history of coffee is not precisely documented, but evidence suggests that it was first cultivated in Yemen's Islamic monasteries. From 1615 onward, coffee began to be savored in Europe, brought by travelers returning from the East. Its arrival in Brazil occurred only in 1727, with the first Arabica coffee seedling introduced in Belém – Pará. Due to favorable climatic conditions, coffee cultivation quickly spread to other states. By 1830, coffee had already become the leading export product of Brazilian companies, significantly contributing to the country's economic growth, particularly in the State of São Paulo (Cecafe, 2020).

However, the history of specialty coffee emerged much later. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the North American market faced a coffee crisis and needed innovation to make coffee attractive again. During this period, a group of industries founded the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA), later renamed the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA). Its mission was, and remains, to stimulate the production and consumption of specialty coffees. According to Revista Cafeicultura (2010), in Brazil, these council representatives include the Brazilian Association of Specialty Coffees (BSCA) and the Council of Coffee Growers' Associations in the Cerrado (CACCER).

Indeed, coffee consumption initially began as an exotic and stimulating drink but has evolved into a more complex and refined experience appreciated for its nuances (Boaventura, Abdalla, Araújo & Arakelian, 2018; Campos; Satolo; Mac-Lean & Júnior, 2021; Maspul, 2023). This evolution has been described as a series of "consumption waves." The first wave was marked by the production of low-quality coffees and their large-scale distribution. The second wave introduced high-quality coffees, including specialty coffees with controlled origins and production processes.
In the third wave, coffee consumption underwent a revolution. Products became more differentiated, and consumers began seeking experiences

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beyond the drink itself (Boaventura et al., 2018). There are also references to a potential fourth wave in which quality becomes a minimum requirement. In this context, coffee enthusiasts will strive to understand why coffee is as it is, explore its unique characteristics, and create exclusive coffee experiences. This movement points to a future where exclusivity and deep knowledge about coffee dominate consumer preferences (Ucoffee, 2018).

Currently, various classifications and certifications ensure the quality of specialty coffees. The Brazilian Coffee Industry Association (ABIC) offers programs certifying coffees in terms of purity, quality, sustainability, and intensity (Abic, 2020). In addition to the international certification granted by the SCA, which defines specialty coffee as any coffee scoring at least 80 points on its evaluation scale, Brazil employs the Official Brazilian Classification (COB) methodology. This classification is based on type or defect and the drink's profile (soft, strictly soft, just soft, hard, river, or river zone). It can also be categorized by sieve size, color, roasting level, and description (Thomaziello, 2014; Campos et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the study by Zylbersztajn and Farina (2001) highlights that coffee shops often differentiate products through mixtures such as milk, chocolate, and cinnamon, as well as innovative ways of presenting beverages. As a result, the concept of specialty coffee is broad, encompassing aspects such as drink quality, environmental and social responsibility, industrial processes, and the services offered (Zylbersztajn & Farina, 2001; Maspul, 2023). Therefore, certifications and guarantees are essential to guide and protect the agents involved in the commercialization of this product, which is both specific, carries high added value, and is subject to significant variability.

Finally, another factor influencing the quality of specialty coffees and how the drink is presented for consumption is the extraction and preparation methods. These range from espresso, perhaps the most common and preferred method in coffee shops worldwide, to more modern

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techniques. Among these are the Hario V60, created in Japan; the Aeropress, developed in the United States; and other older methods that have regained popularity, such as Chemex, Siphon, French Press, Moka, and traditional paper and cloth strainers (Duarte, 2017).

Thus, it is clear that specialty coffee is characterized by its superior quality compared to traditional varieties. However, this quality is influenced by various factors, including its origin, aroma, flavor profile, and the consumer experience, which is also shaped by preparation techniques. It is, therefore, a highly variable product with significant added value that requires certifications and guarantees to ensure its safe commercialization for all parties involved in the transaction.

Methodology

The research was a qualitative and descriptive study. Specifically, it aimed to understand how guarantee mechanisms employed within the distribution segment ensure property rights and contribute to the efficiency of transactions involving specialty coffees. To accomplish this, the study focused on coffee shop retailers in a city located in northern Paraná, emphasizing the guarantees present in their purchasing and sales processes. Qualitative research, as noted by Vergara (2007), seeks to capture opinions, reactions, habits, and attitudes within a sample or population. Furthermore, this research is classified as descriptive because, as defined by Gil (2002), its primary goal is to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon.

Primary data was collected in alignment with the qualitative and descriptive nature of the study through interviews lasting between 30 minutes and one hour. Semi-structured interviews served as the research instrument, designed to guide respondents in discussing their experiences with coffee commercialization while allowing flexibility in their narratives. The selection of respondents was purposeful rather than random, with the

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criterion being coffee shops that sold specialty coffees. Retailers were chosen due to their dual role: acting as coffee buyers on one hand and distributors directly selling these coffees to consumers on the other. The interviews were conducted in person at the coffeeshops during the second half of 2019.

Initially, 12 coffee shops specializing in specialty coffees were identified in the city in 2019, all located in central areas near shopping malls and high-traffic commercial zones. However, of these, two coffee shops had ceased operations, one declined to participate in the study, and one did not sell specialty coffee, which led to its exclusion. Ultimately, eight coffee shops actively participated in the study, with interviews conducted primarily with their owners or baristas (professionals specializing in coffee). The profiles of these interviewees are detailed in the "Results and Discussion" section.

To describe the research findings, Content Analysis was utilized. This method, as described by Bardin (2006), consists of a set of techniques for systematically analyzing communications, aiming to reduce uncertainties and enhance the interpretation of data (Mozzato & Grzybovski, 2011). To structure the analysis and discussion of the information, the categories of analysis were defined as "guarantee mechanisms" and "transaction costs."

These categories sought to explore the relationship between the guarantee mechanisms adopted by retailers and the transaction costs involved in the specialty coffee trade. Accordingly, the study proposed the following hypothesis (P1): the guarantee mechanisms adopted at the time of purchase and sale of specialty coffee can contribute to transaction efficiency, understood as the reduction of its transaction costs. This reduction occurs because these mechanisms enhance the availability of information, thereby helping to safeguard agents' property rights. The analysis categories were derived from theoretical frameworks and were examined within the context of the field research conducted in this study.

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Results and Discussion

Coffee shops characteristics

Below, in Table 1, the main characteristics of the coffee shops studied are described. For this, each of them was described according to occupation, by the type of coffee shop, year started in the city, extraction methods of specialty coffees and the sale mode present in the establishments.

Table 1 – Characteristics of the interviewed agents.

Interviewee	Occupation	Type of the coffee shops	Starting year	Extraction methods	Sale mode
E1	Barista	Franchise	2019	Express and Strained	Retail distribution
E2	Owner	Independent	2017	Express, Strained, Hario V60 and Aeropress	Retail distribution
E3	Manager	Franchise	2012	Express, Strained, Frenchpress, Aeropress and Chemex	Retail distribution
E4	Owner	Independent	1999	Express, Strained, Coldbrew, Frenchpress, Moka and Globinho	Retail distribution
E5	Owner	Independent	2009	Express and Strained	Retail distribution
E6	Owner	Franchise	2019	Express, Strained and Frenchpress	Retail distribution
E7	Owner	Independent	2018	Express, Hario V60 and Frenchpress	Retail distribution
E8	Owner	Independent	2017	Express and Strained	Production and distribution

Source: authors.

Considering the coffee shops types, a research by the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae, 2019) found that in Brazil, 66% are independent coffee shops and other 34% are franchises. In this survey, from the eight coffee shops interviewed, five were independent and the other three were franchises. In addition, the majority of them started their activities in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The oldest, E4, started its activities in 1999 selling and renting coffee machines.

For extraction methods, all coffee shops present at least two common methods: express and strained. However, it is important to note that in coffee shops E3, E4, E8 some variations of the strained coffee have been described: strained on the cloth or in the common paper filter, and finally, the option of strained coffee on the table in the consumers' own cup. In addition to these methods, the most modern ones were Hario V60 (filtered through a silk filter, allowing better extraction of coffee oils and free of

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toxins), Frenchpress, Aeropress, Moka and Chemex. Two other methods were also highlighted by the E4 coffee shop: Coldbrew, used for the preparation of cold coffee-based drinks and the *Globinho* or Siphon method, in which coffee is prepared by infusion.

Regarding the products sold, in general, all coffee shops work with accompanying options such as cakes, snacks, teas, juices and bakery. Interviewee E4 reported that in addition to the sale of specialty coffees and side dishes, coffee machines are still being sold and rented, as well as supplies for baristas and household utensils for preparing coffee. Interviewee E5 also works as a bistro serving lunch, in addition to specialty coffees. Coffee shop E8 also offers domestic utensils for preparing coffee and, because some consumers still prefer, sells a traditional coffee with better quality, at a lower price than the specialty ones.

In addition, it is important to note that all respondents have already taken at least one barista course and in all coffee shops, those responsible for coffee extraction undergo training periodically. Considering the specialty coffees average sales, in general it is responsible for 20% to 50% of total, being the remainder for the accompaniments, which are also responsible for a large share of the sales. As consumption options, only E1 and E7 do not sale coffee packaged for the consumer. In exception of E4, which reported the highest sales volume for closed specialty coffees packages, the others consider that the majority of sales go to consumption of the drink on the spot.

Finally, considering the sales mode, all coffee shops work only with retail distribution. However, interviewee E8 works as a producer and retail distributor, selling his coffees to consumers and other coffee shops.

Transaction between suppliers and coffee shops

According to the theory presented and following the study analysis categories, initially, the coffee shops were described according to guarantee mechanisms and transaction costs adopted when negotiating with their suppliers. Subsequently, the guarantee mechanisms present in the sale for

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consumers and how they can contribute to higher or lower transaction costs were characterized.

Based on their characteristics, independent coffee shops E2, E4, E5 and E7 do not have a formal contract and use the market as a governance structure, maintaining an informal relationship with one or more different suppliers. The E1, E3 and E6, because they work in franchises and use a formal contract with their suppliers, fit into the hybrid governance structure type (a partnership between 2 or more firms through a formal contract). The E8 coffee shop, on the other hand, has a hierarchical governance structure, is vertically integrated, working as a producer, supplier to other retailers and as a distributor for the final consumer. These characteristics correspond to the types described by Williamson (1985).

Next, in Table 2, the main results extracted from the content analysis based on their analysis categories are presented. The coffee shops were allocated according to guarantee mechanisms and transaction costs present in purchase and sale relationship with their suppliers.

Table 2 – Guarantee mechanisms and transaction costs between suppliers and coffee shops transactions.

Analysis Categories	**Interviewed Coffee Shops**		
	E2, E4, E5, E7	E1, E3, E6	E8
Guarantee Mechanisms	Informal agreements and long-term relationship	Formal contract and long-term relationship	Absence of contract and long-term relationship
	Sampling and tasting before purchase	Do not carry out sampling and tasting	Failed to send samples due to costs and lack of response
	Information on attributes and certification of specialty coffee	Information on attributes and certification of specialty coffee	Information on attributes and award winning coffees in contests
Transaction Costs	They rarely need to go back in negotiation	They rarely need to go back in negotiation	Direct trading and rarely need to go back in negotiation
	Long-term relationship is the one that most influences	Protection by contract and long-term relationship.	Long-term relationship is the one that most influences
	In the presence of problems, they are easily solved and negotiation is direct with suppliers	Problems are solved via direct negotiation with the franchise or the supplier	Problems are solved directly between the producer and the buyer.

Source: authors.

The guarantee mechanisms present in coffee shops E2, E4, E5 and E7 are configured according to Barzel's theory (2005), as in the market and as long-term relationship maintained with their suppliers. None of them works under a formal contract. In exception of E7, all the others in this category

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have more than 1 supplier from Minas Gerais, São Paulo and Northern Paraná. When purchasing from suppliers, especially in the case of new products, sampling is carried out as a way of guaranteeing the quality attributes perceived in the coffee, such as aroma, acidity and sweetness, among others. In addition, together with this information, they seek guidance on coffee scores based on SCA methodology, ABIC seal, or other certifications. E4 interviewee speech exemplifies the process: "The purchase is after the blind tasting process. First comes the samples, the tests, the certification and then the purchase".

When asked about the long-term relationship, everyone claimed to have a long-time relationship and this is one of the main factors, which facilitates negotiation, trust and continuous purchase with their suppliers. It is important to say that the long-term relationship was a mechanism present in the negotiation involving all coffee shops and suppliers. It was unanimous among coffee shops to consider this as a factor which protects them and reduces the need to return negotiation, in addition to facilitating the problems resolution. Below, E2 coffee shop' speech exemplifies other interviewees' views: "It helps, because all these producers that I told you I have known for about 2 and a half years. So, every two months I am visiting them to exchange an idea. So much to protect myself and protect them too, because I need them".

In coffee shops working in franchises – E1, E3 and E6 – the information influencing the purchase process are the same as before. However, what sets them apart from the rest is the fact that they work in partnership with their suppliers through a formalized contract and not just informal agreements. As already noted, the long-term relationship is present as another enforcement mechanism. For these coffee shops, this contractual relationship offers more protection in the negotiation. These contracts establish agreements based on quality, security, supply, exclusivity of work, among others.

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Furthermore, E1' speech deserves to be highlighted, as it refers to the process of buying coffee through auctions in search of price and quality, even in the presence of a long-term relationship and formal contract: "Our coffee has 87 score. So, we always try to work with an average of this upwards, not much below. Purchases are made by auction, always looking for affordable prices and better coffee quality". His speech is related to caveat emptor or auctions guarantee mechanism described by Barzel (2005), however, it cannot be considered as a transaction in which the risk is entirely for the buyer because other guarantee mechanisms such as contract and long-term relationship are present.

Regarding the guarantee mechanisms offered by E8 when selling to other coffee shops, the data are consistent with those reported by the other research participants. This coffee shop works as a retail distributor and as a supplier to other coffee shops. In relation to them, the guarantee mechanisms present are informal agreements and long-term relationship. As the interviewee quotes: "It is more that relationship of trust. Contract is complicated because they want me to guarantee volume and price, and since I am a small producer and I do not have a warehouse to buy and store coffee, I cannot promise. It is more an informal contract".

In addition, when asked about offering samples to his possible customers, the producer highlighted an important point related to the cost of sending samples and not receiving any returns. Such costs are characterized as the transaction costs described by the theory, since they do not enter in the balance sheet, but impact on the final production volume: "Many ask for samples, today I no longer send too much samples, because I am tired of sending them. If count the amount of packages I've already sent to the coffee shops and I haven't had a return".

Besides, when asked about the information required by retailers buying coffees, the interviewee cites the same types of information described above, however, he points out that only the winning competition coffees are able to him guarantee their attributes. This statement is similar to the certification

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process, in which the winner seems to have the same reliability as the coffee certified by ABIC, for example.

Moreover, in the second analysis category, the transaction costs involved in this process of buying and selling between supplier and retailers, it is common among respondents that they rarely need to return to the negotiation because they receive allotments different from the agreed. In addition, everyone claimed having easy access to their suppliers to solve any problems encountered in coffees. The E8 interviewee also states that he easily receives and seeks to solve his retail consumers' problems in reason for the relationship with them and for understanding that coffee is a living product and can suffer variations. The statement below illustrates the negotiation with suppliers in solving problems: "It is easy to solve, because no matter how much the negotiation is via franchise, I have free access. It happens little. Since I am here there were 2 situations, which they took back and fixed" (E3).

In summary, it is possible to conclude, therefore, that considering the guarantee mechanisms, all coffee shops work with what the theory names as Multiple Enforcers (BARZEL, 2005). That is, none of them uses only one mechanism, the conjunction between them provides greater protection and lower transaction costs. Thus, in search for information, retailers in general combine the caveat emptor relationship with a long-term relationship and informal or formal agreements by contract. This situation confirms the theory proposed by Barzel (2005) when defining that as a form of protection, agents search for several guarantee mechanisms, capable of providing as much information as possible.

On the other hand, it is important to highlight that the sampling required by coffee shops (E2, E4, E5 and E7) is seen as an efficient guarantee from the retailer's point of view. However, when analyzed from the supplier's side, this can be a costly guarantee, since it uses part of the specialty coffees production, which have a high added value and, in some cases, no return. Therefore, even if it can be efficient for one side of the

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transaction (buyer), when analyzing the other side (seller) it is costly. In addition, this situation is configured as double measurement, generating transaction costs to guarantee the attributes in dispute for both parties.

Even so, when considering the transaction between the coffee shops and their suppliers, it is possible to induce that the transaction costs are low. Such costs situation is justified by the absence of problems in trading and by the combination of various guarantee mechanisms present in the transaction. In other words, these mechanisms currently contribute to an efficient availability of information in the supplier-coffee shop transaction, although in certain transactions, some costs are still present.

Transaction between coffee shops and consumers

When asked about the guarantees offered to their consumers, the interviewees reported that offering samples is not much common in most of the coffee shops. Only E3 and E7 reported offering samples if the customer does not know about specialty coffee and is afraid to consume. All of interviewed said that when they realize the customer knows just a little about specialty coffees, they try to give as much information as possible so they feel comfortable to consume.

In addition, different from the others, E6 sells a tasting menu as part of the service, including four different types of coffees and once a month E2 offers tasting with different types of specialty coffees, as stated: “Usually, we always buy different coffees and call customers who have availability and interest in participation. We are teaching some techniques to identify the coffee bitterness and fruitiness” (E2).

Regarding the information given at the purchase time, according to the coffeeshops, the consumer still knows very little about specialty coffees. Many of them go to coffee shops to meet friends and drink coffee, but not really looking for the experience of consuming a specialty coffee. In general, all of the coffee shops recognize the need to better inform the consumer

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about what a specialty coffee is and E2 stands out for offering courses and often seeking to pass some knowledge, as stated by him: "Since the service, we ask if they have already heard about specialty coffee. We explain and talk about the difference of our product. Everything for the person starts to understand and come back the next day to have a different coffee".

Furthermore, to the coffee shops, the customers who ask for more information are usually those who already have some contact with the specialty coffees world. For the consumers are usually given information about the origin of the coffee, the cultivation period when the roast was made, the best extraction method for what the customer is looking for, among others. In exception of coffee shops E2, E3, E6, which also provide information on the menu, the rest only transmit the information by talking to customers. Especially in the sale for consumption at home, only interviewee E4 emphasizes the importance of information, quoting: "It is mandatory that you tell the customer the type of coffee he is taking, the roast, drink, and aroma. If not, what justifies the variety of coffees on the shelf? […] You have to talk about what is there, because if not, the customer takes a product that he does not like".

Finally, considering the consumer satisfaction, the coffeeshops seek to maintain a closer relationship according to the openness they receive. From that, they try to hear what their costumers thought about the experience, the quality of the coffees and feedbacks of what they can improve. All coffee shops carry out this process by talking to customers. Only E2, which in addition to the conversation and the courses, provides a system of grades attributed by customers at the exit of the coffee shop.

In particular, some cases of coffee return have been reported. In most situations, these cases were related to wrong orders due to lack of consumer's knowledge about the differences between each type of specialty coffee, or in rare situations, as reported by E4, due to problems in the coffee batch sold to the consumption at home. In these situations, after an evaluation, they all affirmed the possibility of exchanging coffee and seeking

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a solution to the problem. The lack of consumer's knowledge about specialty coffee is configured as an information problem described by Barzel (2005).

In other words, in cases where coffees were returned, it can be induced that the factor responsible for this was the lack of guidance on the types of coffees and the differences they carry in attributes easily perceived at the time of consumption, such as aroma, flavor and sweetness of the coffee. This lack of guidance and information may have meant that consumers were unable to identify the coffee purchased attributes and assess whether the value paid for the product ensured their property rights. Thus, resulting in exchange or return of the product, which is configured as a transaction cost for both the seller and the buyer.

It can be observed, therefore, that generally in this type of commerce, the caveat emptor is the predominant relationship, in which the buyers assume the purchase risks. However, considering the fact presented by the interviewees that the majority of consumers still do not know the specialty coffees culture, or that many consumers do not frequent the coffee shop due to the experience of drinking a specialty coffee, this mechanism alone does not seem to be sufficient in protecting the consumers' property rights.

With this in mind, we can infer that some dimensions involved in the consumption of specialty coffee are not yet being identified in this relationship. It can occur either on purpose, given that the product may not have the quality promised, or even due to the lack of knowledge about the dimensions actually traded. What is suggested is that this guarantee mechanism alone is not sufficient because it provides little information for agents, does not provide the exchange of information, or perhaps because it does not transmit security in the transaction. This situation confirms Barzel's theory (1982, 2005), in which transaction costs are higher in the presence of this mechanism alone, because it provides little information and, consequently, makes it difficult to guarantee the agents' property rights.

Indeed, in this case, leaving the transaction risk only to the consumer may not be the most efficient mechanism for two reasons: 1. The consumer

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knows very little about the specialty coffee universe; 2. The dimensions and information about specialty coffee attributes are complex and loaded with high variability. In many cases, as stated by the coffeeshops interviewed, the consumer has only the information contained in the package or menu and explanations about the extraction processes. However, basic information easier to perceive at the consumption such as color, aroma and sweetness, is not passed on by all coffee shops without the customer having to ask them.

Hence, in this context, when coffee shops fail to do what Barzel (1982) indicates as the sellers' responsibility - to disclose as much information as possible to secure property rights in the transaction – all the agents end up losing value in the transaction. Whether because they make room for double measurement, because they end up needing to exchange the product sold or because they hinder the transaction itself occurrence.

In short, according to the coffeeshops, when considering the consumer side, it can be suggested that those who have more knowledge about specialty coffees (less present in the market) are the ones who can judge the quality of the coffee purchased, guaranteeing their property right, as defined by Williamson (1985) and Barzel (2005). The biggest problem occurs when the consumer has limited information about the specialty coffees, a common situation in coffee shops.

In this case, the consumer who pays for a complex product with limited information available, is unable to assess the product quality and, therefore, to judge its value comparing to traditional coffees on the market. Combining this lack of information with the high price charged for specialty coffees, it is inferred, by the results in the study, that the consumer who was unable to assess the quality of the product, may, as a consequence, stop consuming specialty coffees again because he believes that his property right is not being secured in the transaction.

On the coffee shop side, this situation directly affects the long-term relationship with its customers. As explained by Barzel (2005), most

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guarantee mechanisms derive from the long-term relationship. This, in turn, will depend on a consistent relationship between agents, in which both sides recognize that their property rights are being protected. Therefore, if consumers are unable to assess the value paid for specialty coffees, they will hardly ever consume again from the same coffee shop, or even, they will hardly ever consume again specialty coffee in general.

Therefore, no matter how much the coffee shops judge they have a good relationship with a portion of its customers, they must work to provide coffee information such as color, aroma, flavor and sweetness, in the transaction between the coffee shops and its consumers. In addition, in order to continue increasing their specialty coffee market share, the commitment with customers' property rights is important. Hence, the need for frequency, explicit information in addition to what is already available, and the assistance for consumers are also necessary. In this way, even complex the evaluation may be, the coffeeshops must assure that consumers will be able to distinguish basic attributes that justify the specialty coffee value, compared to the traditional one, identifying and recognizing the dimensions, which express its value.

Thus, the results confirm the proposition (p1) of the study, considering that the guarantee mechanisms adopted at the time of purchase and sale of specialty coffee can contribute to transaction efficiency, understood as the reduction of its transaction costs. In conclusion, relying solely on the caveat emptor principle was deemed insufficient for ensuring consumer property rights, as the specialty coffee market requires a higher level of information sharing. Coffee shops must bridge this gap by offering detailed information about specialty coffee attributes, educating consumers, and ensuring the transparency of transactions.

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Conclusion

This article sought to understand how the guarantee mechanisms employed in the distribution segment secure property rights and contribute to the efficiency of transactions involving specialty coffees. The study aimed to identify how property rights and guarantee mechanisms align to enhance efficiency. It was found that the guarantee mechanisms utilized in the specialty coffee trade effectively safeguard the property rights of the agents involved, although their application varies based on the type of relationship established during the transaction.

In transactions between suppliers and coffee shops, the study concluded that the diverse guarantee mechanisms implemented provide sufficient information to reduce transaction costs. However, in transactions between coffee shops and consumers in the retail market, relying solely on the caveat emptor limits transaction efficiency because it fails to provide adequate information to guarantee consumers' property rights, as observed in the data provided by the coffee shops.

This issue is particularly noteworthy given that Brazil is one of the largest producers of specialty coffee globally. Nonetheless, a significant portion of its production is exported, making Brazilian producers heavily reliant on external demand. One explanation for this situation is the limited consumption of specialty coffee in the domestic retail market, largely due to Brazilian consumers' lack of awareness about this segment. According to the study's findings, consumers may face difficulties in evaluating the superior quality of specialty coffee compared to traditional coffee and often opt for the latter, which has less added value.

This dynamic is critical because, in the short term, the lack of consumer information could lead to the exclusion of one of the agents, in this case, the coffee shops. Furthermore, in the medium and long term, the lack of consumer information regarding the value of specialty coffee could potentially result in the exclusion of the entire production chain from the domestic market, as there would be no consumers willing to engage in such

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transactions. This situation confirms the proposition of the study considering that the guarantee mechanisms adopted at the time of purchase and sale of specialty coffee can contribute to transaction efficiency, understood as the reduction of its transaction costs.

As highlighted, this study serves as a warning for the specialty coffee distribution segment in the domestic market. While the analysis concentrated on local coffee shops, the insights presented here not only emphasize the importance of seeking efficiency, understood as the reduction of transaction costs, but also shed light on challenges that hinder the distribution and growth of the specialty coffee production chain within the domestic market. By suggesting that increased domestic demand could drive greater specialty coffee production, the study offers a potential pathway for producers to transition away from the uncertainties of foreign markets and focus on the stability of the domestic market.

Theoretically, this study provides a contribution to the understanding of how property rights and guarantee mechanisms enhance transaction efficiency by minimizing costs and safeguarding the interests of the involved parties. Empirically, it sheds light on the divergent dynamics between the flow of information and efficiency in supply chain transactions, as opposed to interactions with consumers in the retail market. Finally, it is recommended to replicate this study in other Brazilian regions or even within the specialty coffee distribution systems abroad and with the consumers. This would help confirm that information-related challenges, seemingly simple as they may appear, can significantly impact the sustainability of the entire specialty coffee value chain.

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