

SHORT COMMUNICATION

The Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Center's (OAPGRC) Science Café: A Success Story

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Abstract

Science Cafés are held in many towns and cities across the world for the promotion of scientific culture and the understanding of our daily lives, which we live in. They provide a platform for interaction and dialogue between scientists, researchers, businesses and the community on trends towards current scientific issues the extent of their impact on culture and society. The Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Center (OAPGRC) Science Cafe is a forum for the discussion of important and interesting scientific topics and issues. Since May 2013 to December 2015, OAPGRC has held a series of science café sessions on topics related to biodiversity, food security, climate change, pollution and sustainable use. The OAPGRC science café is the first in Oman to be put on the international map of scientific cafes around the world. Reviewing the data on the outcomes and performance of these sessions indicates that the session attendance and active participation was 51% by men and 49% women. This is an exceptional case where the interest is almost equal between the genders. As for the age group, the highest percentage 49% was of a class of young people aged between 18-25 years. Followed by the age group (26-35 years) which was 30%. The lowest percentage was 21% for the age group of above 35 years. The experience of the science café in Oman has been proved as a major success for both the scientific and social aspects. Therefore there are different plans to maintained and develop it in the near future.

Keywords: Scientific, Café, OAPGRC, Success, Story

Introduction

The science café format has spread across the global; adapting to different cultures and audiences. Duncan Dallas in Leeds, UK organized the first Science Café in 1998. Dallas was the founder of Café Scientifique (4) whose worldwide success has helped introduce science to millions of people at any age and stage of education. Dallas based the Science Cafe on the Café Philosophic movement developed by the French philosopher Marc Sauté. In France, science cafes were established by scientists who thought they ought to inform the public on the current scientific topics of concern. In the UK it was started by members of the public who wanted to know more about science. In both countries, they began within an academic structure and spread to more popular locations, and thereby attracted audiences. It started at a time in the UK where COPUS, the Committee on the Public Understanding of Science (organized by the Royal Society and the British Association for the Advancement of Science), considered that a better understanding of science was needed by the public. Newspapers considered it odd that people should go to a café, drink wine and discuss science rather than just a gossip (1). However, the public was becoming more concerned about topics like Mad Cow Disease, GM crops, Cloning, etc.

Science café is usually held in countries that support the scientific culture in everyday life. Where scientists, researchers and community all gather to share a two-way dialogue on the latest relevant scientific issues and their impact on culture and community. The issues discussed at Science Cafés are important topics that require awareness. The issues discussed are important and play a major, role in food, agriculture, and industrial security. Through supporting an entire global biodiversity. The purpose of Science Café is to address the major scientific, and social issues that are related to genetic resources, as well as discussed the means of maintaining them in order to serve the community and future generations.

Individual Cafes have many different names and often do not require funding; only payment for the speaker is travelling expenses, usually made through donations given by the audience. The Cafes provide the opportunity for individuals and groups to explore and discuss science through much different form, such as street scenes, comedy, music, theatrical readings, and demonstrations.

Public science initiatives are currently running in more than 40 towns across the United Kingdom and in many other countries around the world. At least twelve cafés outside the UK are organized by the British Council alone. A science café chain organized at schools called Junior Café Scientifique. (3)

Today, Science Cafes are organized in towns and cities across the world – including Oman. (Diagram 1)

What is the OAPGRC Science Café and its objectives?

The OAPGRC Science Café is a forum for the discussion of important and interesting scientific issues. We meet on a monthly basis and the sessions are informal, relaxed, fun and accessible. It's an opportunity to get together with old and new friends in a relaxed atmosphere and discuss cool scientific topics.

Our audience consists of people who are interested in science, but generally never have the opportunity to discuss with their views, and ask questions of, someone in the know. The Science Café panelists assume no scientific knowledge, so anyone can come along and participate

OAPGRC is determined to create awareness of the importance of genetic diversity in animals, plants, and microorganisms in Oman, as they are all considered as natural traditional resources. The Center's goal is to achieve excellence in the various fields related to genetic resources, ranging from education and scientific research to innovation and investment. (5)The main goals of the science café are to Create dialogue and communication between scientists, experts, and the community, to raise awareness of animal and plant genetic resources, microorganisms and marine life through experts in the fields of genetic resources, to start discussions about the challenges and opportunities of genetic resources and set up networks for knowledge exchange and top scientific practices in order to maintain genetic resources.

The Science café is one of the main achievements on awareness of the Center. In 2013, the first Science café was launched together with The Research Council (TRC), in order to pursue the goals of the center, the first sessions focused on establishing a platform for mutual learning and dissemination of knowledge and science in Oman. To our knowledge, this is the first example of a Science Café in Oman. Main operated sessions in Oman from 2013-2015 as per the schedule below (Table1)

Results and discussions

Table (2) and Figure (1) shows the analysis of 11 sessions of Science Café during the period from 28 May 2013 to 30 December 2015. The results indicated that the Science Café introduces important topics to the community, such as the marine life, and other topics about the honey, which highlights the benefits of honey. Another successful topic was the importance of medicinal plants, and traditional medicines. An exceptional attendance was achieved, with a great diversity of audience with 51% of men and 49% for women participating. As for the age group, the youth (18-25 years) attendance was highest with 49%. Followed by the age group (26-35 years) which was 30%. The lowest percentage was 21% in the age group of above 35.years.

Regarding the question, how did you hear about Science café? The options were through email, scientific speakers, and social Media MS, and other. The top percentage of 44% was through speakers, followed by Social Media with 31%, then 22% for Email, 19% from SMS, and the other 18%.

The science cafés audience's occupation was also monitored, with the highest percentage being job seekers and students with 52%. This statistic shows the usefulness in providing the latest information for their related studies. While for the public sector, the attendance percentage was 34%, and 14% of the private sector.

Science Café of Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resource Center has been successful in maintaining and developing the various genetic resources. The center was recently established by Sultan Qaboos's order, under the umbrella of TRC in 2012. The center's activities were highly recognized in spreading awareness in Oman's community, especially in sustainable development of genetic resources to support the food security. Furthermore, the opportunity for the use of resources in medical plant investment by producing medical drugs and pharmaceuticals.

From the above results, it turned out that the scientific café has achieved part of the goal of increasing the public awareness among the Omani society, especially the youth, to conserve the natural resources, particularly genetic resources, as they represent the basis of food security and protecting of the Omani environment.

The Sultanate of Oman was labeled on the map of science cafés around the world (2) as well as OAPGRC as a registered scientific institution that organizes the Science café every month and presents advanced science programs that offer the community needs, and spreads media awareness of animal and plant genetic resources together with other species.

Table 1: The Main Operated sessions of Science Café held in Oman from May 2013 to December 2015. for English and Arabic sessions.

	Topic	Date	Venue	Center help session
1	Biodiversity and Genetic Erosion: A Game of Consequences (Arabic session)	28-May-2013	Bait Al B aranda Museum	1. Pro.Othman Mahgoub,2.Dr.Ali Al-Lawati, 3. Michel Claereoudt
2	Global Warming and Genetic Resources: Are We Ready for the Change?(English session)	27-Sep-2013	Al Bustan Palace Hotel	1. Dr.Salim K. Nadaf,2. Dr. Antoly V Chernyshev, 3. Dr.
3	Renewable Energy and Biodiversity (English session)	13-Nov-2013	Café' Barbera(Bait Al Reem)	1. Dr. Amar Al.Obidani, 2.Dr. Antoly V Chernyshev
4	Mammals Genetic Diversity: Horses, Camels (Arabic session)	24-Feb-2014	Café' Barbera(Bait Al Reem)	1. Dr. Albano, 2. Ihab Shatt
5	You are what you eat. Food for thought (English Session)	1-Apr-2014	Al Mouj Golf Restaurant	1.Dr. Ahmed Al. Shukaili,2. Mr. Yahya Al. Mukhaini,3. Dr.Mohammed Essa
6	Millennials and the future of food (English Session)	24-Sep-2014	Oman Tel	1.Dr.Nejib Guizani,2.Mr.Robert MacLean (NHI), 3. Sami Al-Shaikh.
7	Microbial Genetic Resources (The best things Come in Small Packages). (English Session)	3-Dec-2014	Moka and More coffee Shop	1.Dr. Saif Al- Bahri,2.Dr.Siva kumar, 3.Mr. Nelesh Bakal
8	Oman's Marine Life: Plenty More Fish in the Sea? (Arabic Session)	28-Jan-2015	Moka and More coffee Shop	1.Dr.Shekar Bose,2. Abdesslam Fahfouhi
9	Buy Local Supporting Communities and Protecting the Environment (English session)	27-05-2015	Lulu Hyber Market	1. Malik Al.Ghahdami,2. Dr. Hameedichalloob, 3.AssadAl.Kindi
10	Solving Our Problems Through STEM. (English Session)	28-10-2015	Moka and More coffee Shop	1. Mohammed Al.Magiri,2. Basel Dhyani
11	Planting for the Future: Native Plants in Our Gardens (English Session)	30-12-2015	Sultan Qaboos University	1. Dr.AbulAraheem Al-Ismaili,2. Abdullbaqi Al.Raisi,3. Dr. Abdullah Al-Jafari

Table 2: The data regarding the Science Café collected during the period from May 2013 to December 2017 for English and Arabic sessions

Title of Session	Attendees Number	Women	Men	Age Group			How did you hear about Science Café?					Occupation		
				18-25	26-35	<35	Email	Word of Mouth	Social Media	SMS	Others	Govern	Private	Student / Seeker
Microbial Genetic Resources (English session)	29	12	17	13	7	8	2	9	13	3	1	8	1	12
Microbial Genetic Resources (Arabic session)	8	4	4	4	3	1	1	4	1	2	/	4	/	4
Oman's Marine Life Plenty More Fish in the Sea (English session)	25	7	18	3	10	12	9	7	5	4	/	6	7	6
Oman's Marine Life Plenty More Fish in the Sea (Arabic Session)	33	20	13	20	10	3	5	16	5	1	6	9	2	18
Another Treasure from Oman (The Honey) (Arabic Session)	14	9	5	11	3	/	1	1	3	1	7	1	2	5
Dose of Our Medicine (Arabic Session)	14	7	7	10	3	1	3	5	1	1	4	2	1	5
Buy Local Supporting Communities and Protecting the Environment	15	9	6	6	5	4	1	2	3	7	/	4	1	3
Total	138	68	70	67	41	29	22	44	31	19	18	34	14	53

Figure 1: Shows the percentage of the four indicated characters (Gender, Age group, Advertisement and Occupation) which was adapted in this study

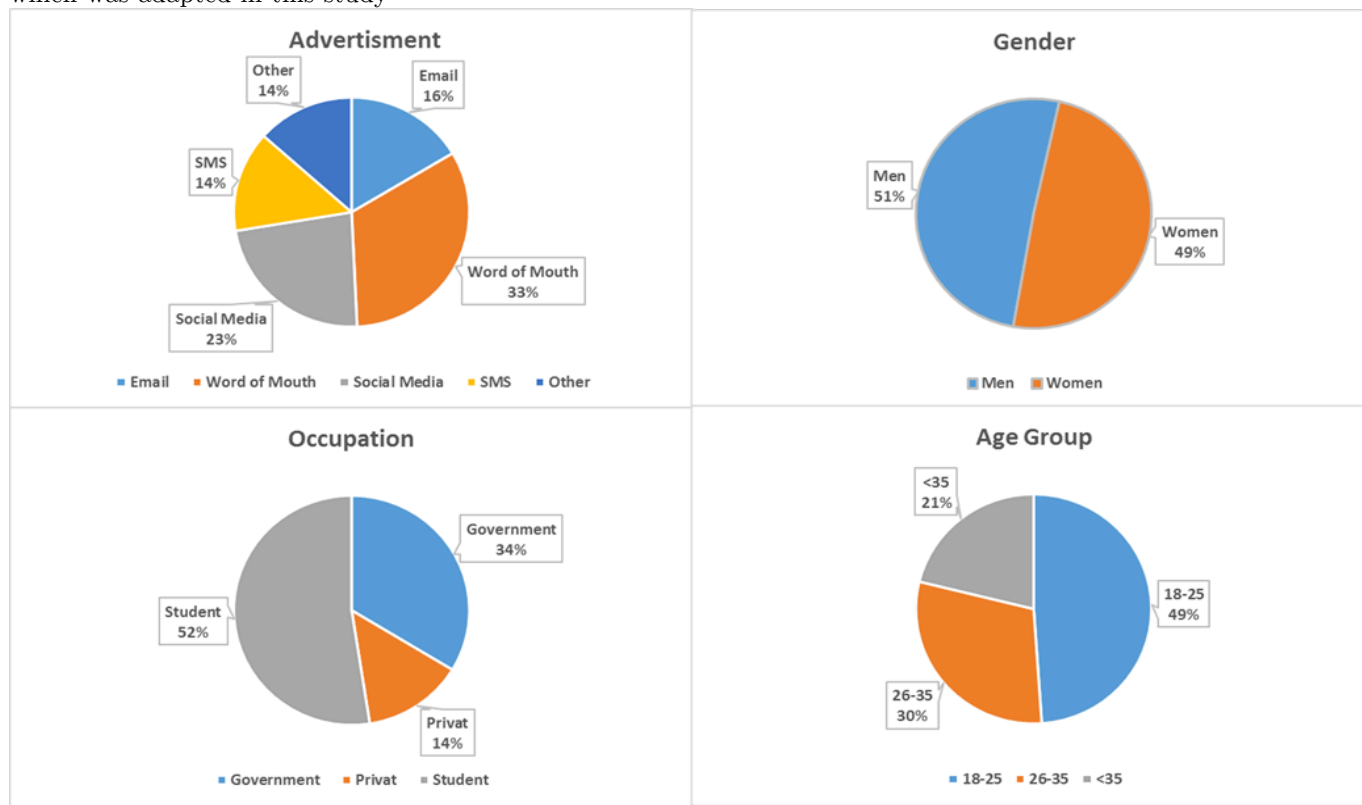


Diagram 1: The location map of science cafes around the world, and recently the Sultanate of Oman were added.



Number of sessions organized by Science Café, in diagrams 2 and 3.

Diagram 2: Shows events posters of Science Café

Microbial Genetic Resources

The Best Things Come in Small Packages

Time: 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm
Date: 1 December 2015
Venue: Moca & More Coffee Shop

book your seat today
call 24 34 33 79 or email oapgrc@trc.gov.om

Oman's Marine Life

Plenty More Fish in the Sea?

Time: 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm
Date: 28 January 2015
Venue: Moca & More Coffee Shop

Come and explore this invisible world and its possibilities with us
Let's talk over coffee!

To book your seat,
please call 24 34 33 79 or email oapgrc@trc.gov.om

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الحدائق المنزلية: مستقبل الزراعة!

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لإثرائنا وأرضنا بما أن الكثير من الناس أمسكوا
محميين بالبيئة لأن هذه الحديقة ستعطي لدرجة
الحكومة وقطاع الفصول والشعب في المساعدة في
خلق واداء النباتات المحلية الصافية والمساعدة في
إزالة كيميائياً الأسمدة والوقاية والوقاية والوقاية
في الحديقة، يحتمل زيارتنا الوطني للتعاون مع
أحد وغير قابل للاستبدال.

بعض الحدائق عن أنواع النباتات العمالية

أكثر من ٢٧ نوعاً مسجلاً في عمان في بيدها.

بعض المؤسسات الحكومية والخاصة
المشاركة في صون واستخدام أنواع النباتات
في عمان مثل:

- أكثر من 100 نوع يستخدم في التقديرة والزراعة
- أكثر من 180 نوعاً يعتبر من نباتات الحدائق
- أكثر من 280 نوعاً يستخدم في الزراعة
- أكثر من 700 نوع ذو صلة بالتحصيل البرية

أكثر من ٢٤٠٠٠٠ نوعاً من النباتات البرية
٢٤٠٠٠٠٠ نوعاً من النباتات البرية
٢٤٠٠٠٠٠ نوعاً من النباتات البرية

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Crucial Critters: Insects Are Invaluable

Benefits to Environment	Benefits to human (as food)
Aid nutrients and oxygen to the soil	Most insects are high in protein and low in fats
Keep insects to nature	At least 2 billion people worldwide eat insects, according to the FAO
contribute to the nutrient cycle	The list of edible insect species is at 1,300 and growing

Book your seat today, call 24 34 33 79 or email: oapgrc@trc.gov.om

Diagram 3: Participants and discussions of Science Cafe



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