

What should we know about first sugar trade

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



Before Christopher Columbus brought cane sugar to the Caribbean in 1493, most of European didn't know about the very tempting and pleasant food called sugar. However, once sugar got popular, the market for sugar rapidly expanded. The Sugar Trade was driven by four elements such as climate and land, consumer demand, slaves, and the mercantilism. Refereeing to the Document A, most of the Caribbean countries are colonized by Europeans: Spanish, French, and British. Those colonized countries had a pretty much perfect land and climate for sugar plantation. Facts from Document B, cane sugar production's productivity would be maximized when the temperature range is sixty-eight to eighty-six Fahrenheit. In 1980, the temperature range in Jamaica was sixty-eight Fahrenheit to eighty-six Fahrenheit, and Barbados's one was seventy-two Fahrenheit to eighty-six Fahrenheit. In addition, Jamaica and Barbados had almost ideal soil type and precipitation. All conditions were not exactly ideal, but they were almost perfect. It allowed cane sugar to thrive and provided European more sugar. (Document A, B).

Another main compound of accelerating the sugar trade was consumer demand. Europeans got extremely attracted to sugar, so the consumption of sugar was soaring in Europe. The drawing shown in Document C shows people clustering around the sugar hogshead which is a large barrel contained seven-hundred to twelve-hundreds of sugar, and people are eating sugar out of the sugar hogshead. Benjamin Moseley describes the addictiveness for sugar as "... the influence of sugar, that once touching the nerves of taste no person was ever known to have the power of relinquishing the desire for it" (Document C). Sydney W. Mintz also mentions about the addictiveness for sugar.

Mints explains that all exotic import goods such as tea, coffee, chocolate, and sugar as a sweetener can be classified as drugs. What Mintz wrote was just her opinion and incorrect information, but all of those documents show how much European people were addicted to sugar, and how much they were willing to buy sugar. For instance, in 1700, British sugar imports (1,000s cwt) is 280.7, but the number keeps growing. As the number of annual per capita consumption gets higher, the number of British sugar imports gets higher and higher. The number of British sugar imports eventually increases by almost five times in seventy years (Document G).

To provide gargantuan volume of sugar to satisfy the demand of sugar in Europe, the slave trade was necessary, because sugar plantations need a lot of slaves. In Document H, the treatise shows that a sugar plantation of five hundred acres of land requires three hundred slaves. Ever since the first shipment of slaves went to the Caribbean from Africa in 1518, both the number of slave population and the amount of sugar produced rapidly grew because the demand of sugar was continuously increasing. The slave population in Jamaica which was British's colony is 45,000 in 1703, but it increases by more than five times in eighty-six years. In other colonies such as Barbados, Saint-Dominique, and Cuba, the slave population also increases. Using slaves let plantation's owners grow more sugar and gain more money, so owners became very wealthy.

For example, Robert Hibbert was an owner of huge Jamaica plantations, and he owned more than 1600 slaves in 1833. He received £31,120 in compensation from the British government for his slaves. John Gladstone

was also a wealthy sugar plantations owner. He received £85, 600 in compensation when his 2, 183 slaves were freed in 1830s. As above, the sugar trade was beneficial for Europeans and provided them with profits, but sadly, it accordingly accelerated the slave trade. Document D states “ For why is the Slave Trade carried on? To supply the West India planters with hands to cultivate the islands. And why are the islands cultivated? To furnish the inhabitants of Europe with sugar! if sugar was not consumed it would not be imported - if it were not imported it would not be cultivated, if it was not cultivated there would be an end to the Slave Trade ...” (Document D). It claims the result of the growing sugar trade was more and more money and more and more slaves. (Document M, H, I) (Bentley 419)

The economy was another important factor that helped push the sugar trade. During this period, laws were set up for English merchants and manufacturers. Laws let English merchants and manufacturers buy raw materials from the colonies cheap. They made finished goods such as white refined sugar, clothing, and fine furniture. Then English merchants sold those goods for higher prices. This trading system was called mercantilism or a mercantile system, and England was gaining more money than they were using because of this system. During this period, the sugar industry was generating huge profits and it attracted other nations. The letter to a member of parliament states “ And should the Sugar-Colonies be so much discourag'd, by the laying on of an additional Duty (tax) ... in Proportion as our Sugar Colonies should decline, those of our Neighbors, our Enemies and Rivals in Trade and Navigation, would advance” (Document Q). The author of the letter warns a member of parliament that raising tax would do more

harm than good. It shows that sugar gained more power over military, economic and political issues, and it could lead to conflict with other nations. (Document P, Q) (Bentley 419). Many factors drove the sugar trade: land and climate, consumer demand, slaves, and economy. Those factors and the sugar trade gave a significant impact on the world, because since then, sugar has been eaten and consumed all over the world until now.