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Loss of perceived traditionality in a food product : the case of Tamale, Mexican food product.



The perceived traditionality in the food product can be a favourable element for its consumption. The traditional food product reflects an identity and a culture¹. Our study shows how the traditionality perceived by the consumer is lost when a traditional food product is industrialized. This research highlights the difficulty of moving to the industrial scale in the manufacture of traditional food products due to the alteration or disappearance of the processual dimension related to the product.

According to Gonzalez-Hemon et al. (2018), to be perceived as traditional a product needs four dimensions : Processual, Identity, Dynamic and Ritual. The origin of the traditional product tamale dates back to Pre-Hispanic times. Its elaboration process has evolved over time.

We have collected 153 conversations in two groups on Facebook, one from a chef and another from Mexican consumers. This data collection was carried out in 2016 under a netnographic process as suggested by Kozinets (2010).

We found that consumers do not perceive traditionality in the industrial tamale. We have identified that these consumers of tamales are concerned about the lack of human intervention in processing. Our study reveals that when the processing is industrialized, the processual dimension is not anymore perceived. Moreover, consumers claimed that the taste, the texture and the presentation of the product are affected by industrialization.

“The traditions of artisan
tamales are lost ...”
Guillermo



Our research main contributions are: 1- the confirmation of the importance of the procedural dimension in the traditionality perceived by the consumer, this also includes human intervention and the elaboration process. In this sense, this research goes beyond Aurier et al (2005) and Gonzalez-Hemon (2018) who demonstrate that the product that opposes the traditional product is the industrial product. 2- the lost of perceived traditionality when industrializing a traditional food product. Future research are needed to understand how to develop a traditional product at a large scale.

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