

LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME

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- Transfer of Innovation -

Transfer of knowledge and training for European traditional food producers related to innovative quality control methodologies



TECHNICAL REPORT

KEY PARAMETERS IN THE CONSUMPTION OF TRADITIONAL FOOD PRODUCTS

**D5. Consumers's survey data about the determinants of
traditional foods relevant for consumers**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Food is a complex phenomenon, which includes biological, nutritional and socio-cultural aspects. The economic, social and cultural change, coupled with the industrialization, rhythms of life, increased school attendance, etc. have caused significant changes in consumption, in the food models and structure of the diets. This is why; we will look at the behavior and attitudes of consumers toward the power, focusing on a particular food, traditional foods.

Food consumption has suffered many changes in recent years.

Consumers demand better quality, more natural products, or flavors that remind them of the food they used to eat in the past, with no preservatives or dyes. Because of this, traditional food is one of the most accepted in today's society, even though it is difficult to have it on a daily basis, due to the pace and busy life people have nowadays.

Traditional food products (TFP) are defined as known food products we eat frequently and that our grandparents would have eaten (Hersleth, 1998). A traditional food product is a common consumer product associated with specific celebrations, which is passed from one generation to another. It is made in a specific way according to the gastronomic heritage and is naturally processed. It is distinguished and known for its sensory properties and related to a particular place, region or country (Guerrero, 1998). Traditional foods represent a growing segment in the European food market.

With respect to the definitions obtained in different sources, we can group traditional foods in the following:

- Traditional foods by date of consumption.
- Traditional foods by region
- Traditional foods by celebration

When talking about traditional foods by date of consumption, we mean food such as bread, cheese, wine, meat, pasta, and so on. Products that were consumed by our ancestors and belong to the basic group of food, as long as they maintain their original sensory properties and their composition and nutrients are not modified in excess. This last point is difficult to assess because, despite needing to keep food tradition,

nowadays markets require changes in their products in order to survive. In an increasingly competitive market for food, the traditional food industry in Europe needs to be innovative in order to maintain market shares (Jordan, 2000). From a consumer perspective, innovation in food may involve real novelty or modifications of already existing products (Guerrero et al., 2009). However, some believe that innovation and traditional things are two opposing concepts. Therefore, traditional food producers face the challenge of incorporating the proposed changes and innovations in the food industry without damaging its image (Guerrero L, 2010).

Traditional foods by region are those that are typical of a place or country, which preserves some specific characteristics obtained from this region, either because of its location, climate, soil, and so on...

Traditional foods by celebration are those whose consumption significantly increases at the arrival of a specific date or celebration, for example grapes at the end of the year.

In addition to the food in question, another important factor that will influence consumption is the consumer himself.

The role of consumer has become increasingly important in recent years in certain market segments. The understanding of their needs, desires and their satisfaction is a concern for the market research analyzing consumer's minds, trying to think like them and discover what exactly their wants are.

The food consumer is the one that demands food provided by a producer, who consumes or purchases these products for his or her own consumption. We can also define a consumer as the economical agent who has a variety of needs and desires, and also a disposable income with which to meet those needs through market mechanisms.

In this study, we present a definition of the consumer and traditional food products, along with a discussion of the image consumers have of these products and the various factors that lead to consumption. The results allow us to see how the consumer identifies with this food and how personality traits, gender, age, activity affects their choices. This will be carried out with two methods. The first one qualitative, with questions to focus groups (closed groups of 6 to 10 people) in which the effect of socio-economic characteristics will be studied.

The aim is to obtain new data and contrast existing ones in order to establish marketing strategies focused on gaining greater market share.

2. OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of the present study was to analyze the consumption and choice of traditional foods in three different European countries.

There are a large number of factors strongly related to consumption and purchase of food, so in order evaluate the market for traditional food, the objective of this project is divided into the following:

- Evaluate the current consumption of traditional products;
- Analyze the level of knowledge of consumers about traditional foods;
- Establish which attributes people value the most in traditional foods, for example places of purchase, cost, category;
- Investigate factors that determine the consumer's decision to acquire these products;
- Analyze and compare the perception and habits of Portuguese, Spanish and Romanian consumers regarding traditional foods.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this section we explain the methodology used in the consumer behavior investigation, explaining the scope of study, questionnaire design and the ways the data are taken from the population.

Population is the set of all individuals, objects, processes or events that form the subject interest. The population is directly related to the field of study (Moraguez et al, 2006).

The scope of work study is students from the Universidade Católica Portuguesa and students from different universities of Spain, Portugal and Romania.

Commercial research is an objective and systematic search of relevant information with the intent to identify or solve any problem or situation in the area of marketing (Green, 1998). To this end, there have been made some surveys for closed groups of people, about 6-8 people with open questions (focus groups).

These consist, as already said, in groups of 6-8 participants, a moderator who performs and organizes the discussion questions, and a tape recorder to collect information. The moderator takes questions participants one at a time.

These questions are aimed for analyzing how different characters affect people when consuming, so after collecting the opinions of respondents, we proceed to analysis.

Data Collection Instruments

Surveys are descriptive research tools that require to identify the questions to ask, the people selected (representing the population) and determine the method used to collect the information. It is also necessary to define the size of the sample and the method of choice of component elements (Trespacios-Vazquez-Bello, 2005)

The questionnaire is the media that covers the questions that are asked in a survey of persons selected in the sample. It is the medium that allows communication between interviewer and interviewee to obtain the information provided for in the design of the survey.

Questionnaires used several types of questions depending on the purpose in the search for information, and then discuss the types of questions most commonly used together with the characteristics that define (Trespacios-Vazquez -Beautiful, 2005):

- Closed Questions: The answers are provided for and are presented to the respondent in the shape of alternatives among which it has to choose the data collection is very simple and its subsequent treatment also. Its greatest disadvantage forcing the response to the interviewee, when the alternative proposals do not collect your real opinion.
- Open questions: Do not contain any type of response expected in advance; hence the interviewee has freedom to respond in this type of questions. The information is more rich in content, since that the interviewee has total freedom to reflect his true opinion. The biggest drawback is that the analysis becomes more complex, especially when it comes to obtain data.

To carry out the interviews, we have a type of questionnaire open-ended questions, so the response obtained will be free and not forced. This method is a technique for qualitative research. To understand what we mean by qualitative research we show the following table in which we can watch the main differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

Differences between qualitative and quantitative research

Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Subjective	Objective
Centered in the phenomenology and understanding	Based on the probabilistic induction of logical positivism
Naturist observation without control	Penetrating and controlled Measurement
Inference from their data	Inferences beyond the data
Exploratory, descriptive and inductive	Confirmatory, inferential and deductive
Process-oriented	Result Oriented
Data "rich and deep"	Data "solid and repeatable"
Not generalizable	Generalizable
Dynamic Reality	Static Reality

Table1

The qualitative methodology objective, as indicated by its definition, is the description of the qualities of a phenomenon: it is not a question of testing or measuring to what extent a certain quality is found in a certain given event, but to discover so many qualities as possible.

The main features that we can draw are, firstly, that this type of method bases its strategy in trying to know the facts, processes, etc. , in its entirety, and not through concrete elements. Secondly, uses procedures that make observations less comparable in time, at the cultural level, etc. That is, looking for less generalization, focusing more on the phenomenology and symbolic interactions. A third characteristic is important regarding the role of the researcher in dealing with persons involved in the research process, in order to understand it.

The researcher develops or affirms the central patterns and problems of their work during the same process of research. For this reason, the concepts that were handled in the qualitative research are not defined, in the majority of cases, from the beginning of the investigation.

Research Plan

Regarding the investigation developed, the subject of study was to evaluate perceptions and habits regarding to traditional food, in three different countries,

namely Portugal, Romania and Spain. In order to collect evidence on Traditional Foods, an exploratory methodology was initially used. The data collection instrument was Focus Groups discussions, conducting according to standard procedures (Morgan, 1997) using a specific script for the purpose mentioned above, and a video recorder. The themes exploited in the Focus Groups are presented in table 1.

Table 2 – Themes explored in the Focus Groups

Region
•Due to Family Aspects
•Due to Cultural Aspects
Flavor
Visual Aspect
Health
Naturalness
Quality-Price Relation
Process of Development

All the data collection instruments were developed in English and later on translated by native speakers for the respective languages in each country, so that a common methodology were followed.

It was conducted thirteen focus group all together, seven in Romania, two in Portugal and four in Spain. The participants were recruited following the same criteria: consumers of traditional food at least once a month. The next table summarizes participants' characterization.

Country	Portugal	Romania	Spain
Number of Focus Groups	2	7	4
Total participants	21	69	28

Characteristics of Participants by age	FG1 PT: 25-55 FG2 PT: 18-25	FG1 to 7 RM: 18-25	FG1 SP: Age 30-40; FG2 SP: Age 40-50; FG3 SP: Age 50-60; FG4 SP: Age 60-70
Characteristics of Participants by gender	12 Females 9 Males	48 Females 19 Males	16 Females 12 Males
Characteristics of Participants by occupation	FG1 PT: Working in the food sector FG2 PT: University Students	University Students	Companies
Frequency of Consumption	Daily 5% One time per week 10%	Daily 8% One time per week 15%	Daily 9% One time per week 19%
Places of Purchase	Large Distribution	Local Stores	Local Stores

The focus groups were DVD recorded and all data produced were verbatim transcribed into text, and analysed by using content analysis techniques, to outline findings and meet research goals for this project.

Focus Groups

The focus groups or discussion groups are an interview technique that normally gathers between six and twelve participants and a moderator, in an overview of structured discussion on a particular topic. The participants are selected in such a way to ensure similar characteristics among them.

The questions are made by a moderator, and the goal is to collect the perceptions, opinions, beliefs and skills in relation to a product, service, concept, advertising, or packaging idea. Therefore, there are no good or bad answers; the important thing is that each person shares his or her opinion openly.

Characteristics of the focus groups

- It is an appropriate process to facilitate the learning of the members of
- the organization.
- The theme is focused on a specific aspect.
- The participants have certain homogeneous characteristics.
- The purpose was not to establish consensus, but rather to establish the
- perceptions, feelings, opinions and thoughts from users about products,
- services and opportunities
- Qualitative data is obtained.
- Can be a good forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions.

The main advantages of the focus groups are: it is a social process, lively, dynamic, in which people interact; the views of people can change as they listen to the other participants. It is also cheap; you get results fast, in addition to give the possibility to explore matters not otherwise provided for in advance depending on the conversation. However, there are also some disadvantages compared to other methods of research, such as: the data is more difficult to analyze, it can be difficult to gather the right group of people, and an interviewer has less control over a group than in an interview, etc.

4. ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED: PORTUGAL

Once we have made the focus groups, we proceed to analyze the results obtained. The interview was conducted on two groups of people, in both the questionnaire was the same, and the time devoted to the meeting environment to the twenty minutes. In the first focus group, there were three people interviewed being all of them female employees of companies in the food sector. In the second group, the interviewees were eighteen students of bioengineering. Both interviews were carried out following an agenda of issues, while respecting the response times of each respondent and all of it was recorded, being the participants aware of it, for later analysis.

Technical Content Analysis

The data obtained is intended to answer the main question of this research: Which are the most important determinants in the consumption of traditional food?

Therefore, the most striking factors and greater influence for consumers

are:

1 Region

The region is the most decisive factor when choosing a traditional food. This is because the majority of the people, relates traditional, not necessarily with an old food, but with the typical one of a place or area. It is prepared in a specific way, with a unique raw material, which is going to make the difference between that product and the rest.

"The word traditional sounds to me like demarcated regions, products made with materials specific from each region, which gives them the food to certain characteristics, i.e. a more specialized production, as it is the material of the region, is what makes the products maintain a few attributes specific." (grupofocal1)

" ... A typical product that you can identify with a region, with a brand, made with the traditional methods" (grupofocal2)

1.1 Region due to family issues

In this case, the foods are consumed by family tradition, that is to say, the typical food of the area in which the consumer lives, are the more usual in their food, and the most easily accessible.

" ... The traditional term is somewhat typical of a region, typical of a time perhaps, probably for a long time and that each country, each region and each space has its traditional product" (grupofocal2)

1.2 "Region due to cultural aspects

In this case, the consumer will be supplied by products that even without being of the region in which he lives, by experience or innovate; he consumes food typical of another region. This can be given as we have seen by traveling, or simply by a person's education.

" ... If you visit a new place, you want to try the typical products of the area, whether in typical restaurants or in specific shops. You are Experiencing since you are in a new place, and you have the chance as we have said before, of consuming products that you do not consume in your day to day, because they are of that particular place." (grupofocal1)

"A reliable hydro massage of Porto has nothing to do with one of Lisbon, because within a same country there are many differences." (grupofocal2)

"If we are in a country, what we want is to test any of the traditional products, because a priori they are the best things to have." (grupofocal2)

2 .Flavor

The taste is an important determining factor in consumption, and more when we talk about food. Traditional food are tastier than the rest of food according to those interviewed, and is therefore one of the factors that matter most when choosing a

traditional food. An important fact is that all the interviewees relate traditional food with good taste and unique flavor.

"Traditional foods have more flavor than others; it was something crucial in these foods, while others were more insipid." (grupofocal1)

"Usually people appreciate more these foods, they are much better" (grupofocal2)

"I think the flavor also depends on the region. I like more the typical products from here (Porto) than for example, those from the region of Lisbon. I don't like the taste, surely I am not accustomed" (grupofocal2)

3. Aspect

The aspect is a feature that the food is going to have due to the way of development, conservation, etc. That is specific, and is what is going to convert it into traditional.

"It is a product that is produced with a few parameters of quality, which has joined a particular form of development, it has an aspect, given a texture that is what gives the quality" (grupofocal1)

4. Health

Health earns more and more importance each day to people, and that in its power, tend to seek healthy products. Traditional foods are not exactly healthy in its majority.

"No, I don't think so. I don't think that traditional and health are related as well, in fact quite the opposite, in general they are products that are not as healthy. They are more a whim" (grupofocal1)

"For me they are not as healthy as other products can be, since large companies research to achieve a healthy final product. But one could say that they are more natural" (grupofocal2)

5. Times of the year

The time of the year is another factor that will determine the consumption of certain products. As there are traditional foods linked to specific dates its consumption increases considerably in that time of year; as can be Christmas, parties, etc.

"For example, are typical, when there are festivals of a place, you tend to eat what is traditional there. Are products made at home and therefore I felt that are tastier than others." (grupofocal2)

"When talking about Christmas, for example, people normally do not consume "caldo verde" in a day a day basis. After that there are others, such as wine or cheese, but some are specific to some dates" (grupofocal1)

"For example, the cheese of "serra" is consumed in a different way in Christmas than the rest of the year" (grupofocal1)

6. Naturalness

The naturalness of the traditional products is assured. They are not like other products, treated with additives, sweeteners etc., and is due to its artisan elaboration, so that you get a natural product.

"To seek the naturalness of the product, I usually buy in markets, although there are also large areas that have good brands and products." (grupofocal1)

"Natural ... how to do Natural in that sense? If they are more artisanal? I believe that if..." (grupofocal1)

"Products are developed in a more traditional way, more crafted" (grupofocal2)

7. Quality

Quality is a factor that is implicit for consumers in the term traditional food. Even so, they are considered more expensive products than the rest, by its further and artisanal elaboration. The consumer is willing to pay a higher price, thus ensuring the quality of the product.

"I think that they are usually more expensive products because in the elaboration of a traditional food there are necessary some different raw materials". (grupofocal2)

"The price of traditional products varies if bought in fairs of these traditional products, in large surfaces or if we buy them directly from the producers". (grupofocal2)

"Are more expensive products and more out of your region" (grupofocal1)

8. A process of development (DO)

Consumers know the Denomination of Origin of a product, a certificate that relate with traditional food, linking it to a specific region that produces a traditional food, with unique products of the area.

"The products with this type of certificate are usually traditional products of origin of a certain place. They have a certificate in which people trust, and I think that most people know what these certificates mean." (grupofocal2)

Structure of concepts Factors

1. Region
 - 1.1 Region due to family aspects
 - 1.2 Region due to cultural aspects
2. Flavor
3. Aspect
- 4 .Health
5. The epoch of the year
6. Naturalness
7. Quality-price
8. Process of development

Conclusion

When we speak of tradition we are talking about the set of cultural patterns of one or several generations, inherited from the previous ones and, by the value given to them, sent to the following generations. Therefore, if we make reference to traditional foods, we refer to this food of frequent consumption or associated with specific celebrations, which are transmitted from one generation to another. Facts in a specific way in accordance with the gastronomic heritage, processed naturally, distinguished and known by its sensory properties and associated to a particular place, region or country.

All these aspects that define the traditional food are the factors that will determine the consumer to choose a traditional product or another.

The region, from which the food comes, is the most significant factor for consumers. A food made in a given region, with a defendant and a raw material only that is not available in any other place is the main factor for consumers to consume it before another product. This happens because, as similar as it may seem, if it is not in the region, it will not be equal. By this, there are certain certificates of quality and the well-known appellations of origin, to ensure that the product that you are consuming is a food made with raw materials and through a process of concrete preparing.

Another important determining factor when it comes to consuming traditional foods is the quality you are looking for the consumer in the product they are consuming. Despite the fact that its price may be higher than that of other foods, consumers prefer to ensure a higher quality.

In general, the price is recognized as an important factor that influences the choice of food in general (Furst, Connors, Bisogni, Shobal, & Falk, 1996; Jomori, Proenca, and Calvo, 2008; Steptoe et al, 1995). Therefore also in traditional foods; you can consider the price as a barrier that prevents consumers from purchasing more local and traditional products.

The taste is an important determining factor in the consumption, and more when we talk about food for consumers. Traditional products are more tasty than the rest of food, and is therefore one important factor when choosing one food.

The concern that exists today with health, makes these products considered natural to be consumed with greater regularity. However, providing pleasure instead of nutrition and health benefits (Guerrero et al. , in press). 'Natural', the term has been associated to other emotional terms such as traditional and homemade (Bender, 1989).

Another factor that determines the consumption of traditional food is the time of the year, celebrations, etc. , This is due to the fact that by culture and tradition, there are certain foods that we consume on specific dates, as can be Christmas, Easter, etc. Therefore, with the arrival of these dates, the consumption of these products suffers a great increase. It does not imply that during the rest of the year these foods are not offered or sold and that we cannot consume them. With the level of globalization that the world is currently achieving these foods can be consumed out of dates and concrete region.

Traditional foods are products which are in great demand by consumers today. In spite of their higher prices and availability in the market, its higher quality and naturalness, its process of development, its taste, its appearance, and of course, the region from which it comes, are factors that have a large influence on consumers. Therefore, and

as I already knew, the traditional foods are closely related to the culture and the identity of the population where they are made, and have a strong symbolic value (Guerrero et al. , 2009).

5. ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED: ROMANIA

The focus groups were organized with students from the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest, Faculty of Quality Control of Food Products (29 students) and Faculty of Biotechnologies (40 students).

Different sessions were organized with 8-10 participants/groups. A moderator performed and organized the discussion questions and a secretary noted all the comments to collect information. The used questionnaire was the same as in Portugal and Spain, but translated into Romanian language.

In Romania, 7 focus groups were organized with around 70 students from 2 faculties. 65% from the students are buying traditional foods from supermarket, 24% from specific stores and 11 % from convenience stores. They consume traditional foods mostly 2 times per week (43%), 7 % daily, 14% one time per week, 14% 2-3 times per week and 14% once per month.

The participants explained that when they hear the word "traditional" they are thinking to: something tasty, healthy, to celebrations, produced in family and learnt from grandparents. Usually they made the connection between the traditional foods with tasty foods in the grandparents house as sausages, polenta, meat in pork fat.

When they are thinking of traditional foods, the following ideas come to their mind in first place: dairy products ("Brânză de burduf" is a kneaded cheese prepared from sheep's milk and traditionally stuffed into a sheep's stomach; it has a strong taste and semi-soft texture, "Brânză topită" is a melted cheese and a generic name for processed cheese industrial product; „Branza in cosulet" - is a sheep's milk, kneaded cheese with a strong taste and semi-soft texture, stuffed into bellows of fir tree bark instead of pig bladder, very lightly smoked, traditional product; „Cas" - is a semi-soft fresh white cheese, unsalted or lightly salted, stored in brine, which is eaten fresh (cannot be preserved), traditional, seasonal product, „Cascaval" - is a semi-hard cheese made with sheep's or cow's milk, traditional product, „Telemea" -, cow's or sheep's milk white cheese, vaguely similar to feta; „Urda" - made by boiling the whey drained from cow's or ewe's milk until the remaining proteins precipitate and can be collected, traditional product), sausages, pancake, „drob"- a lamb haggis made of minced organs wrapped in a caul and roasted like a meatloaf; a traditional Easter dish, „sarmale" - stuffed cabbage with meat, red eggs and „pasca" on Easter, "toba" - sausage (usually pig's stomach, stuffed with pork jelly, liver, and skin), ham, polenta, fish, pumpkin pie,

pickles, sausages, pastrami, "caltabos" (sausages with liver), „muschi tiganesc”, ceafa afumata”, bagels, comfitures, marmalades

The main reasons that lead the young consumers to consume traditional foods instead of others are: their opinion that they are healthier than others and bio-, with no additives, the products is very tasty, more real and authentic and with a specific aroma.

Usually they consume traditional food products during special celebrations in the family, when they have guests from abroad, to weddings.

The young participants in the focus groups said that they consume traditional foods everywhere and anytime at home, at restaurants, at weddings, excursions, at grandparents, in villages, in specific villages' areas.

The participants know some traditional foods from Romania as Plescoi sausages, dumplings with plums, sausages ("caltabos"), Dobrogea pie, some specific cheeses, and tuica.

They consider that the relation quality-price of traditional foods is satisfactory but these kinds of products are more expensive.

Usually, they consider these products healthier, more natural, because they are prepared at home, based on old recipes. Some of them mentioned that the smoking process for meat products is not healthy.

All the participants agreed that the traditional foods have more flavor than other foods and that they have a specific charm.

Conclusions

Traditional foods are very appreciated by the consumers participated in these focus groups – students with a background in food science and with knowledge in food quality control. They like these products for their aroma and healthy aspects. Some traditional foods are consumed only in special occasions because of economic reasons but others, like traditional meals are often prepared at home (sarmale - stuffed cabbage with meat, mititei - small sausages, mamaliga – polenta – boiled maize flour in water).



6. ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED: SPAIN

In Spain four focus groups were selected depending on the age of their participants. Focus Group A was integrated by people aged between 30 and 40 years old, B between 40 and 50, C between 50 and 60 and D between 60 and 70 years old.

Description by gender:

Focus Group (years old)	Female	Male	Total
A (30/40)	5	3	8
B (40/50)	3	4	7
C (50/60)	4	3	7
D (60/70)	4	2	6
TOTAL	16	12	28

As already told, the interview was conducted on four groups of people, in all of them the questionnaire was the same, and the time devoted to the meeting environment around half an hour for each group.

All the interviews were carried out following the common methodology, answering the formerly agreed questions, respecting the response times of each participant. Participants were aware that their answers and comments will be useful for the final analysis.

Once the focus groups were interviewed, we proceed to analyze the results obtained.

Technical content analysis

The data obtained are intended to answer the main question of this research: Which are the most important determinants in the consumption of traditional food?

Therefore, the most striking factors and greater influence for consumers are:

1. Region

When we speak about cheeses and wines, in Spain the most decisive factor for using one and not other one is the Region (not physical region, but wines regions that

sometimes includes two or three physical regions). Also Sobrasada or Ensaimada preferably must to proceed from Balearic Islands or Iberian Ham from Andalucia.

For other traditional foods the Region is not so important. For example, dishes like Paella or Gazpacho are so spread in Spanish geography (mainly in the Mediterranean coast, this means regions of Catalonia, Valencia, Murcia and Andalucia) that although it is said that they started in Valencia (Paella) or Andalucia (Gazpacho), they are traditional of all those above mentioned regions (always with slight differences).

1.1 Region due to family issues

In all groups Traditional foods are felt like “familiar foods”. All of them remember their grandmother’s food mainly based on the Mediterranean Diet.

When we discussed about traditional food and family all of them suggested what in Spain are known like “spoon dishes”: potajes, estofados, cocidos, etc., always made with fresh vegetables from Murcia’s orchard and not with processed (canned or frozen ones). Only Murcian Salad is traditionally made from canned whole tomatoes, because they were homely processed at home in summer and kept till winter. Peaches in syrup are also famous canned. It has to be said that canning industries appeared in Murcia in late 19th century and culturally is a tradition during more than 150 years to preserve fruit and vegetables preparing them at home, putting them into glass jars, filling with liquid, closing, boiling in water bath and keeping them in safe conditions till consumption.

“Still now we make at home canned tomatoes and peppers. In some of the cans we add a hot pepper and the taste of the tomato is perfect” (FG A)

1.2 “Region due to cultural aspects

All groups also enjoyed trying other Regions food.

“If you travel to Asturias you have to try Fabada Asturiana and if you travel to Mallorca you have to try Ensaimada Mallorquina” (FG C).

Although, due to market globalization, you can find in one Spanish region almost all the traditional food products from other regions, Focus Group D said “yes, but it is not the same.....”. Regional traditional dishes are felt “better” when you eat them in their region of origin. This does not affect to Denomination of Origin or Protected food products because they have strict production controls and they have to be approved

by their “Consejos”. Wines from Ribera del Duero or Manchego Cheese are really good all over Spain, “but if you can, go to La Mancha to buy cheese” (FG C)

2. Flavor

Taste and flavor are important factors for choosing traditional food. These traditional foods are felt tastier than other foods: “you remember its taste from your childhood” (FG A)

Although other foods maybe also tasty, traditional food’s taste is perceived as “more natural, with less artificial ingredients” (FG B)

3. Aspect

The aspect of the food must also be the traditional one. By the aspect you can check that the product is in fact a traditional one that its conservation process has been carried out properly, etc. “Only having a quick glance at a Paella, an experienced eye knows if it is a good one” (FG D).

Sometimes it is also important the ceremony: “When you eat Cocido Madrileño, first the soup must be served, now the chickpeas and vegetables and finally the meat” (FG C).

4. Health

Health is day after day more important for the Spanish consumer.

Traditional foods immediately are seen like Healthy food.

This is perfect for wines, fruit and vegetables, etc. But for dishes with a high content in sugar or in fat they say “OK, we know that it has too much fat but it is a traditional fat.....” (FG B)

5. Times of the year

The time of the year is an important factor that will determine the consumption of certain food products.

With difference the most “traditional” period of time is Christmas. Some products are only found in the markets at this time. Cordiales, sidra asturiana (cider), and turrón are

eaten mostly only in this time. Sweet wines from Malaga and mantecados can be found all over the year but its main consumption is also at Christmas time.

Here we find an important social factor. It is a familiar tradition to make all the different Christmas cakes at home, usually in the countryside and in early December, in something like a familiar party: all the members of the family and sometimes also friends make different doughs, give different shapes to cakes (stars, flowers, etc.) and bake all of them. At the end they share all the cakes that will be eaten along Christmas time. It is a tradition that when people visit you at Christmas, you offer them a tray with the different home made products and sweet wine or cider. “This is a priceless heritage and new generations must to follow it” (TG D).

Other times of the year and associated traditional foods are:

- Easter: Cod stews (with cod, vegetables, olive oil, etc.)
- Summer: Gazpacho and Ajo Blanco (cold soups), etc.
- Winter: Cocido, Roasted young lamb, etc.
- Regional holidays: For example, the week after Easter it is really important in Murcia. It is known like Spring Week and it is a tradition to wear the typical regional costumes (mainly one day of the week) and to eat the traditional Murcian food: morcillas, salchichas, murcian salad, paparajotes, etc.

6. Naturalness

The naturalness of the traditional food products is assured. They are not like other products, added with additives, sweeteners etc., heat or cold treated, etc., and this is perceived to be due to its artisan elaboration.

“We always buy fruits and vegetable from traditional markets and with a good extra virgin olive oil we get superb food.” (TG A)

“Food is produced like our grandparents used to do it. Some times food is overheated (a good Cocido needs to be a long time on the fire) but all its ingredients are so natural and flavor and taste are so good that the result is perfect” (TG C)

7. Quality and price

All TGs participants agree with the high quality of the traditional food products. This difference of quality is even more important with we speak about wines or cheeses.

For wines appears another factor: price of well-known wines are really expensive, so consumers search in supermarkets for medium price wines for daily meals and in Gourmet shops for special meals wines.

“Now you can find food products from all over Spain everywhere and sometimes at lower prices than in their regions of origin” (FGA)

8. A process of development (DO)

Consumers know the Denomination of Origin of a product, a certificate that relate with traditional food, linking it to a specific region or geographic area that produces a traditional food, with unique products and traditional production methods of the area.

“I always look for DO products when I buy wine, cheese, rice and beef meat. The problem is the price. Mainly for DO wines prices may be much more expensive than non DO ones” (TG C)

Structure of concepts Factors

1. Region
 - 1.1 Region due to family aspects
 - 1.2 Region due to cultural aspects
2. Flavor
3. Aspect
- 4 .Health
5. The epoch of the year
6. Naturalness
7. Quality-price
8. Process of development

Conclusion

In all Spanish target groups Traditional Food reminds: natural, freshness, health, higher quality, better taste and flavor, homemade, family, etc.

Products identified with specific holidays are not in danger at all: the tradition is even more important now that some years ago.

To cook other food products in a working day is time consuming: you have to search the traditional products, to peel and cut them, to fry, to boil, etc., and sometimes it is easier to buy ready to eat dishes or canned fried tomato, or frozen vegetables. But people know that the result is not the same and consumers are day after day more

informed about the benefits of the Mediterranean diet and the properties of the traditional food and the trend is to go back to our grandparent's style food (you can cook during the weekend, frozen the food and it will be consumed along the week).

Region of Origin is important for all traditional foods but mainly for wines and cheeses. Prices for DO wines or cheeses may be higher than normal food products. Spanish consumers will buy DO wines and recognized cheeses for special meals (Sundays, celebrations, etc.) and prefer cheaper wines (also with DO) for everyday meals.

Mainly for young consumers price may become as a barrier that prevents them from purchasing more local and traditional products (pizza instead of roasted lamb, foreign cheese instead of Manchego Cheese, etc.).

But as a general rule, Spanish consumer is so proud of its traditional food products that they eat this kind of food whenever possible.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Overall Results

The results are divided in three parts, one regarding each country, so that later on it is possible to make comparisons and state common conclusions, when more convenient. Relevant quotes were highlight from the discussions to demonstrate opinions and add context.

Country: Portugal

Traditional food for the Portuguese consumers reminds meals made for special occasions, for example “*Caldo Verde*” on winter, and also products like “*Queijo da Serra*” which is more consumed around Christmas. Spread through out Portugal every small city and region has its own traditional foods to offer, among them is wine, cheese and “*enchidos*”(sausages).

1. Region

The first aspect, Region, was demonstrated to be the most decisive factor when choosing a traditional food. This is because the majority of people tend to relate traditional, not with old food, but with typical food from a place or geographic area, prepared in a specific way, with unique raw materials, and these two elements differentiate traditional products from the rest.

1.1 Region due to family issues

Specifically in the case where region is related to family aspects, the foods are consumed by family tradition. That is to say, the typical food of the area the consumers (families) lives in, which are usual in their every day life, and are of easy access.

1.2 Region due to cultural aspects

Passing on to the case where regional foods are defined by cultural aspects, the consumer will be exposed to this kind of traditional foods in extraordinary situations. These are food from a “different region” and the consumption is driven by curiosity and desire for new experiences, for example when travelling.

Portugal has a wide range of traditional food in the small cities, with a long tradition of preparing and consuming these same foods. Participants mentioned specific fairs in Portuguese’s regions as being a good place to try and buy traditional products.

" ... If you visit a new place, you want to try the typical products of the area, whether in typical restaurants or in specific shops. "(FG1 PT)

"If we are in a country, what we want is to test any of the traditional products, because a priori they are the best things to have." (FG2 PT)

2. Flavor

When it comes to Flavor all participants agreed it is a determinant factor in the consumption. Traditional foods were described as being tastier than others and therefore the flavor is a key point when it comes to selecting a typical food. It is also important to highlight that all participants designated traditional food as having a good taste and unique flavor.

"I think the flavor also depends on the region. I like more the typical products from here (Porto) than for example, those from the region of Lisbon. I don't like the taste, surely I am not accustomed" (FG2 PT)

3. Visual Aspect

The visual aspect is an important feature that is attached to food and can represent, in some cases, the reason weather to buy a product or not. As consumers indicated this attribute is dependent upon the process of manufacture, conservation demands and producers wish, that are specific for each good, and these characteristics are going to establish the traditional trait.

4. Health

It's surely known that people's attention to Health, and the desire to eat healthy food, it has been increasing significantly in the last few years. Now-a-days consumers not only seek healthy products, but also products that provide health, furthermore participants do not associate traditional foods with health.

"For me they are not as healthy as other products can be, since large companies research to achieve a healthy final product. But one could say that they are more natural" (FG2 PT)

5. Season of the year

Season is another element that might influence the consumption of certain products, such as traditional foods. Some traditional foods are linked to specific dates of production and therefore consumption increases considerably in that time of year, a clear example is Christmas season.

6. Naturalness

Naturalness is a common characteristic of all traditional foods. Participants strongly relate its artisanal (hand-made?) elaboration to natural products, without the additives that are found in industrial commodities. Besides the idea that small productions provide a higher degree of naturalness was solid.

7. Quality and Price

Quality is another property that like naturalness is implicit for consumers when it comes to traditional food. Thus, these products are considered expensive, due to the artisanal and unique elaboration, plus the exclusive raw materials, which in turn delivers the quality. As stated, the consumer is aware of the high price traditional food can implicate and it is willing to pay that price, if the quality is assured.

8. Process of development (DO)

It is through the Process of Development (DO) that traditional products are defined, it can also be distinct by the origin of the raw matter, nevertheless in any case these products can't be imitated, that is why some certifications exist. Consumers are familiar with the designation PDO – Protect Designation of Origin - which guarantees the product is from a specific geographical area, through a specific process of development and with specific raw matter.

Country: Spain

In Spain, like in Portugal, the different regions have many unique food products; the ones that came up in a first attempt were “*Sobrasada*”, “*Ensaimada*” from the Balearic Islands, Iberian Ham from Andalucia and meals such as “*Cocido Madrileño*”.

1. Region

Spanish participants think of traditional food in different categories. For example concerning cheeses and wines, the most decisive factor for choosing one over another is the Region (not exactly geographical regions, but sometimes wine regions), while for other categories the region is not so important. Spanish dishes like Paella and Gazpacho are so widely spread in Spanish culture, that although it is said that they started in Valencia (Paella) and Andalucia (Gazpacho), these meals are also typical of Catalonia, Murcia, always with slight differences.

1.1 Region due to family issues

Traditional foods are felt like “familiar foods” in Spain. All of the interviewed associated the “picture of their grandmother’s food”, mainly based on the Mediterranean Diet.

When the discussion began about traditional food and family it came up the Spanish “spoon dishes” like *potajes*, *estofados*, *cocidos*, which are always made with fresh vegetables from Murcia’s orchard and not with processed (canned or frozen ones). The association of meals with processed food it is not well accepted. Murcian Salad is the only typical food that is traditionally made from canned whole tomatoes, simply because these fruit is homely processed in summer and kept till winter. Canned peaches in syrup are also famous, it is said the canning industries appeared in Murcia in late 19th century. Therefore is a cultural tradition for more than 150 years to preserve fruit and vegetables, the preparation is made at home, putting these ingredients into glass jars, filling with liquid, closing, boiling in water bath and keeping them in safe conditions till consumption.

“Still now we make at home canned tomatoes and peppers. In some of the cans we add a hot pepper and the taste of the tomato is perfect” (FG1 SP)

1.2 Region due to cultural aspects

People all agree that a part of travelling and getting to know other cultures involves trying the local traditional foods, which is an enjoyable task.

“If you travel to Asturias you have to try Fabada Asturiana and if you travel to Mallorca you have to try Ensaimada Mallorquina” (FG3 SP).

Due to market globalization, now a days there is no need to travel to try typical products from others regions, but quality is never the same.

The PDO certification - Protect Designation of Origin - exists to assure the quality of products, there is a strict production controls and the “*Consejos*”(commissions) have to approve the production goods. Nevertheless, regional traditional dishes taste better when you eat them in their region of origin. For example, *Manchego* Cheese is really good everywhere, but Spanish would certainly recommend the ones bought in La Mancha.

2. Flavor

Taste and flavor are important elements that influence the choice of consumption of traditional food. This type of food is considered tastier and more flavorful than regular everyday food. However, although other kinds of foods are also tasty, traditional foods are perceived as having a more natural taste, with less artificial ingredients.

3. Visual Aspect

Participants agreed that the aspect of a traditional food must also be the traditional and specific for each product. It is believed that only by the visual aspect one can determine if the product is in fact original and if the conservation process has been carried out properly.

“Only having a quick glance at a Paella, an experienced eye knows if it is a good one” (FG4 SP).

4. Health

Health is an increasing concern among Spanish consumer. Traditional food is positively connected with the health concept, especially in regard to wines, fruits and vegetables. However, some products are associated with high levels of fat and sugar, but even those are said to be health because they are less processed fat.

5. Season of the year

The season is certainly a determinant factor in consumption of certain food products. Christmas is a very clear example, in most cultures and countries some products are only available around this holiday, or in other situations people just want to eat a certain food on certain celebrations. For instance, *Cordiales*, *sidra asturiana* (cider), and *turron* are all typical of Spanish Christmas season, plus sweet wines from Malaga and *mantecados* that can be found throughout the year but are more consumed around Christmas.

Related to season is the social factor, sometimes it is a family tradition to make all the different cakes in December, and in countryside, with all members of the family and a few friends. The process of making the dough and shaping the cakes is an especial time. It is a tradition to offer visits a tray of different homemade products, sweet wine e cider, which is a priceless heritage for new generations to follow.

Besides Christmas, there are also traditional products consumed on Easter, summer and winter, for example cod stew, cold soup and roasted young lamb, respectively. Spain has different regions all with strong cultures, and all the different cultures have traditional food incorporated.

6. Naturalness

For the participants, traditional food is related with artisanal and homemade preparation, which provides for them a solid idea of naturalness. It is also believed that traditional food is simple and natural, without harsh industrial treatments and additives. Spanish consumer also assures that when the raw ingredients are natural and traditionally produced the foods made have a better taste and the final result is superior.

7. Quality and Price

It is established that given the high quality of the traditional food products the high price is a consequence. This influence and co-relation is even more evident and important in cheese and wine products.

In wines for instance, the highly well known wines are really expensive, so for a everyday meal consumers buy regular good wine in supermarkets and in specifics, gourmet, shops for especial occasions.

Also important to notice is that the price can vary depending upon where the traditional food is bought; in the region of origin it is normally cheaper.

8. Process of development (DO)

As mentioned, consumers know the PDO certificate that relate to traditional food, linking it to a specific region or geographic area that perform an specific treatment, with unique products and methods from the region. Few consumers are alert to this kind to designation, and associate PDO products with a higher price, for examples in wine.

Country: Romania

In Romania the participants explained that when they hear the word “traditional” they are reminded of: something tasty, healthy, to eat in celebrations, produced in family and learnt from grandparents. Usually they made the connection between the traditional foods with tasty foods in their grandparent’s house, such as sausages, polenta, and meat in pork fat.

The first ideas that are developed when thinking about Romanian traditional foods, can be described in the following table:

Food	Description	Characteristics
Brânză de burduf	Kneaded cheese prepared from sheep’s milk and traditionally stuffed into a sheep’s stomach	Strong taste Semi-soft texture
Brânză topită	Melted cheese and a generic name for processed industrial product	
Brânză in cosulet	Sheep’s milk, kneaded cheese, stuffed into bellows of fir tree bark instead of pig bladder	Strong taste Semi-soft texture Very lightly smoked
Cas	Semi-soft fresh cheese, unsalted or lightly salted, stored in brine, and eaten fresh	Seasonal product
Cascaval	Semi-hard cheee made with sheep’s or cow’s milk	
Telemea	Cow’s ou sheep’s milk white cheese	Vaguely similar to feta cheese
Urda	Boiled whey drained from cow’s or ewe’s milk until remaining proteins precipitate and can be collected	

Drob	Lamb haggis made of minced organs wrapped in a caul and roasted like meatloaf	Traditional Easter dish
Sarmale	Stuffed cabbage with meat, red eggs and pasca	Traditional Easter dish
Toba	Sausage (usually pig's stomach, stuffed with pork jelly, liver and skin), ham, polenta	

Besides all of traditional dishes described, there are also sausages, pumpkin pie, bagels and marmalades that remind the participants of traditional foods.

The reasons that lead the young consumers to choose a typical product over another are strongly related with the naturalness and flavor of the food.

Participants believed that is healthier to consume these products, compared to other industrial ones, they associate the bio factor, with no additives. They also consider traditional foods tastier, with a more real, authentic and specific aroma and flavor. Though some people mentioned that the smoking process in traditional meat products is not healthy.

Dates and traditional food have a powerful relation, some kind of dishes are consumed specifically during celebrations in the family, for example in wedding, also when someone from abroad is visiting. These are not an every day foods, however, it is not very uncommon to eat some traditional foods at home, restaurants, grandparents' house, in some specific villages' areas, according to the person's desires.

As mentioned participants agreed that traditional foods have more flavor, according to them it also have a unique charm. These reasons justify the high price associated, although participants think this type of food is expensive, the quality-price relation is stated as being satisfactory.

Concluding, the young consumers consider traditional foods health, natural, they associate with the image of homemade preparation, based on old recipes.

Overall Discussion of Results and Conclusions

Traditional food is a very wide topic and the concept itself is not strictly defined. Consumers from all three countries described traditional food as meals and as products ready to use, for example cheese and wine are products, while *paella* and *caldo verde* are meals. A few discussions regards only one category while some factors influence the other or both. In Romanian traditional foods were more associated with meals and specific preparation, rather than products.

All European consumers agreed on the fact that traditional foods are tastier and more natural; all these ideas are related to the handmade and exclusive preparation. The fact that these are not industrial product supported the ideas of tradition, without additives and especial. As traditional products are of great quality consumers from each country believe the price is correspondent; and are willing to pay a high price for a good traditional product. Concerning health, Spanish and Romanian considered traditional food as being healthy, associating with the natural aspect. Nevertheless, in Portugal participants did not classify this food as healthy, they believe some industrial products provide better health.

When it comes to traditions around holidays and special occasions, each region has its own customs and food is highly involved, both meals and products.

Portugal and Spain have a lot in common when it comes to traditional foods, even though Spain is much larger than Portugal, both have different regions with long years of traditions of making food. Consumers from these two countries considered that traditional food in the region of origin taste better and are often cheaper.

The study performed is a cross-cultural qualitative research, thus it has an intrinsic error associated. The responses obtained are opinions and not facts; therefore extrapolation and generalization cannot be done.

Even though there are some limitations, the research was well accomplished. It was established a few factors that influence consumer choice, such as region of origin, people like to try new food from different places. Also that some traditional foods are preferably consumed in specific times of the year and that consumers are willing to pay a high price for a good food product.

To conclude, traditional food is a relevant part of every culture, which is present in special moments, being perceived as tasty and quality products.

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WP2: Determinants that influence the choice of traditional food products

Key Parameters in the Consumer of Traditional Food Products

Methodology to organize Focus Groups in Portugal, Spain and Romania

Information to Participants:

The Focus Group (FG) / Discussion Groups are an interviewing technique which normally meets six to twelve participants and a moderator at the scene of a structured discussion about a particular subject. Participants are carefully selected to ensure similar characteristics.

The questions are asked by the moderator and the objective is to collect the perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers, it is important that each element expresses the opinion openly.

In the specific case of this study, the aim is to gather information about the perceptions and attitudes of consumers in the pick and consumption of traditional foods

Expected duration: 30-40 minutes

Number of participants: 4-8 people

Recording audio confidential

Definition of Traditional Food:

Traditional foods have been defined by European consumers as food products that are well-known, that one can eat often and that were eaten already by our grand-parents. A traditional food product is a product frequently consumed or associated to specific celebrations and/or seasons, transmitted from one generation to another, made in a specific way according to the gastronomic heritage, naturally processed, and distinguished and known because of its sensory properties and associated to a certain local area, region or country.

Questionary

1. When you hear the word traditional, which relates with it?
2. When you think of traditional foods, which are the ideas that come to your mind in first place? Which of these traditional foods usually consume?
3. What are the main reasons, the reasons that lead you to consume traditional foods instead of others? What distinguishes them from other foods? What features traditional foods are and which are important to you?
4. When do you consume these products? And why? (Inheritance, Family, Traditions, Celebrations, usually ...)
5. Where do you consume traditional foods? (Home, Dining, Events ...)
6. Where do you usually buy traditional products? (Large surfaces, Local Trade, Market)
7. Do you know traditional foods from different Regions? And do you pick foods according to this factor? (Certificates, DOP, DOC
8. How do you evaluate relation quality-price of traditional foods?
9. Considers healthy traditional foods? More or less than others? These products are more natural?
10. Are traditional foods more flavors than other foods?