

Strategies of commercialization of the fruits in the tianguis of Malinalco, Mexico

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Abstract

The tianguis is conceived as a public market seen as spaces of exchange and some have the particularity that the economic activity of acquisition of goods is done through barter, without the intervention of the currency as an exchange value. It is important to ethnographically describe the different exchange strategies to reveal that economic events are mediated by the sociocultural features of the subjects; whose function is fundamentally economic. The objective of the research was to present and analyze the traditional and modern marketing strategies used by sellers and buyers of the fruits of Malinalco, State of Mexico. From January to December 2015, a survey with closed questions was applied to 70 collectors/marketers located within the tianguis, for the preparation of the list of techniques used to sell each of the fruits.

Keywords: family economy, exchange systems, sellers.

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Introduction

The studies of anthropological interest existing on tianguis in Mexico began in the 1950s. According to Licona (2014), some Mexican and foreign anthropologists became interested in tianguis, due to their historical continuity and economic function in peasant and indigenous regions; the tianguis have been studied because of their prehispanic origin and the complex market systems they institute, these places have been studied because they are the expression of local indigenous economies, places of social link, goods supply and articulation spaces with the economy national and global, among other reasons.

The tianguis of the Toluca Valley, Mexico Tianguis. They are exchange spaces established in specific places in a fixed or mobile way. Literature (Diskin and Cook, 1975; Licona, 2012) on the subject distinguishes the “market” as a fixed space for exchanges; while the tianguis as a movable space for it, but for the purposes of the work we will adopt the fusion of both, insofar as the tianguis studied generally present both dimensions; that is, they include both a fixed and a mobile space of exchanges. In addition to the foregoing, they are important spaces in economic, social, cultural and even political terms, the investigations that exist in this regard derive more from historical interests (Menegus, 2015), anthropological (Licona, 2014), economic (Salinas, 2013) and even gastronomic (Romero *et al.*, 2009).

Economic relations are a transaction in which the participants agree on the good and the value that they will exchange in a specific sociocultural context, so that the tianguis, when a system of exchange is instituted, subjects, spaces, transactions, goods, amounts and measures are heterogeneous, and what ethnographic data are presented to interpret, first, the market as an economic-sociocultural complex, and secondly, barter and socializing exchange systems as subsistence mechanisms and social relations of marginal sectors, which constitute, thus, an economic institution (Lorenco, 2012).

Among the existing tianguis of the state of Mexico, the one in Malinalco stands out, specifically on wednesday of each week, from 7:00 am to 6:30 pm, you can find the tianguis in the main streets of the municipality, opposite the municipal presidency and around the church of the Divine Savior, which has a long tradition, from the time of the colony. In the offer, different products such as exotic fruits (cuajilote, cajinicuil, jackfruit, huachocotes, huismarines among others), bread, various local dishes such as barbecue and bishop, clay utensils, leather goods, stones, carved wood and handmade tortillas, roa, rebozos elaborated with waist loom and seed and wood jewelry (Guadarrama, 2016).

In the tianguis, although the prevalence of the mercantile exchange system does not suppress exchanges by which the prices of the products are reduced, social relations of mutual aid are structured and goods are exchanged for other goods (barter), which work as economic mechanisms of subsistence and in some cases, they acquire the function as generators of new social relations and as cultural features of indigenous and peasant societies that characterize a regional economy in a context of national economy impacted by processes of economic and cultural globalization (Callón, 2008).

Added to the above, it can be mentioned that in the tianguis of Malinalco the exchange between sellers-collectors and buyers is not always reduced to the simple act of giving one thing for another, since several of these actors are thinking about future exchanges. The objective of the research was to present and analyze some traditional and modern marketing strategies used by the sellers and buyers of the fruits of Malinalco, State of Mexico.

Materials and methods

An ethnographic work was developed in the tianguis of Malinalco, state of Mexico, a municipality that belongs to the biogeographic province of the Sierra Madre del Sur, between the parallels 18° 45' 18" and 19° 01' 58" north latitude and 99° 25' 43" and 99° 33' 24" west longitude (Figure 1), (Schneider, 2000). According to the climatic classification according to Köppen, a climate of type A (C) w1 (w) (i') g, predominates, semi-warm subhumid with rain in summer, with an average annual temperature of 20 °C, (García, 1988; López-Patiño *et al.*, 2012). It has a variety of vegetation, Torres and Tejero (1998); Rzedowski (2006), which corresponds to *Pinus* forest, *Quercus* forest, mixed forest (*Pinus-Quercus*), gallery forest, mesophilic mountain forest and tropical forest deciduous.

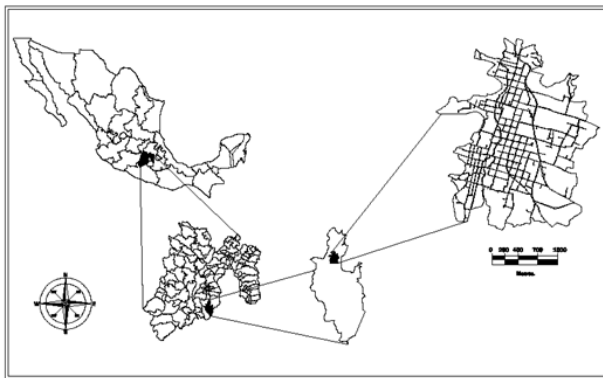


Figure 1. Location of the tianguis of Malinalco, State of Mexico.

The data on the species traded in the tianguis were obtained through biweekly tours in the study area. The above in order to know what are the dynamics and techniques of sellers/collectors during the sale of the fruits (Sánchez-Niño, 2012). Semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and direct observation were employed (Emerson *et al.*, 1995; Murchison, 2010). From January to December 2015, a questionnaire with closed questions was applied to 70 collectors/marketers (44 men and 26 women) located within the market, for the preparation of the list of techniques used to sell each of the fruits. The data were analyzed from the qualitative perspective (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), through the descriptive analysis of the interviews and through the re-categorization of the data obtained on the knowledge and dynamics of the sale of the fruits.

Results and discussion

At any time of the year, the first thing that is admired is the enormous diversity of fruits that are put on sale. Nowadays fruits can be appreciated in stalls (Figure 2), which are placed from a table supported by four cans or as the stalls were placed several years ago, on the floor in banana leaves.

Within the area of exotic fruits the usual practice of exchange is not generated solely through money, but through the exchange of fruits that commonly gives rise to what we know as barter. It is possible to emphasize that this practice of knowledge and goods has a historical sense and has been developed during centuries and up to the present time in the study region.



Figure 2. Different ways to find the stalls in the market.

Marketing strategies

Although in the different mechanisms of marketing of the tianguis appear questions that could seem non-mercantile, in the tianguis of Malinalco can be seen five identified types appear more clearly reflected. Therefore, it is important to discuss the different forms used in some other marketplace as well as being able to make relevant about the values and knowledge that are transmitted with these sales strategies.

Section of fruits

This strategy consists in that the traders of the tianguis set aside certain fruits (soursop, jackfruit, guamuchil, cajinicuil), to clients that request it for a purchase or acquisition of the product in the later, because this type of fruits is those of prices high (between \$35.00 and \$50.00). Although this mechanism is also reproduced by some trading companies, in these generally it is necessary to leave a certain percentage of the total cost of the product, while among the traders of the tianguis not always. This is due to the fact that if the client is already known, they generate a bond of trust, so it is no longer necessary for them to leave a monetary contribution in order to preserve their separate benefits. However, several reasons can be stated, two of the most important ones that we have in the fieldwork it is that it responds to the trust that is still in the people-clients and to the incorporated knowledge of the interpersonal relationships.

Cases such as those mentioned by Licona (2014); Colombo (2011), where to make the sale by section is inverse to that of the advanced purchases (it is bought before it is offered), but its content is similar. Taking into account that in the purchases mentioned in advance there is favoring the reseller in a deal in which the other party needs resources immediately and has nothing to offer in

return. What indicates, on the contrary, is that the sale by section constitutes a logically secondary moment in the circulation of capital, since it supposes the previous accumulation of means of subsistence in the hands of the intermediary. As regards trust, which points to a faith in the subjects, it derives from a kind of recognition between buyers and sellers.

An example of this is that of the 59 edible wild fruits that can be appreciated in the market 15 of them tend to make a section among the fruits that can be stated is the jackfruit, passion fruit, cajinicuil, bonnet. Recognition that makes those involved imply that each one of them will keep his word in order to make the committed purchase-sale effective in the future. On the other hand, as far as embodied knowledge is concerned, it derives from the daily journey and the interpersonal relationships cultivated both by buyers and sellers that lead those involved to think about not only requesting the removal of the products but also acquiring them in a certain time.

These elements, subjective certainly, are combined to create a kind of commitment that cannot be forgotten by those involved, knowing that doing so can create a subsequent mismatch and even the non-commercialization of the product section. “We usually set aside the fruits that are usually more expensive sometimes we ask them to leave us some money, but when we know the customers we tell them that we separate them and that if they take a long time to go for the small fruit, with the purpose of knowing if they do not return can be sold, since otherwise that fruit stays and is no longer sold then they become pachichis” (Doña Aurora interview May, 2015).

Colombo (2011) mentions that the different mechanisms, strategies or forms developed for the exchange and sale of products allow for an analysis of the diversity and increasing complexity of commercial appropriation mechanisms and can be seen from the point of a practice that is identified Partially with the resale of merchandise and with it the various forms of acquisition of knowledge among the interested parties (buyers and sellers).

Give the pylon

This strategy refers to the process by which sellers, particularly wild edible fruits, give a portion of more to those who buy a product, although this strategy is eventually handled by some companies is more widespread in the markets. Some fruits such as tamarind, poma rosa, jaquinicuil. Among others are those in which it can be seen or appreciated that merchants offer an extra portion of the fruits for what they have acquired. “We always try to offer one or two pieces more than those that buy us, but it is when we sell small fruits because of those that are sold per piece we do not give a pylon, otherwise it is not convenient to sell, when a customer buys more than 70 pesos of merchandise we offer as a prize because thanks to them we will finish selling our fruit” (Don Efrén interview May, 2015).

Therefore, it should be noted that vendors through the pylon recognize as a connection the attention that buyers had to them and not others; that is to say, they return part of the favor they did in buying them, for other sellers they take it as the one that rewards the consumption of the actors. However, some of them point out that providing the pylon also intends to hook customers for future sales, making customers feel that when buying with certain people they get more and better fruits with less money.

Bargain

One more strategy now handled by the vendors of Malinalco's tianguis is bargaining, which consists of making the original price of a good or service more flexible, by means of speeches that usually encourage lower prices. This mechanism is typical of the Mexican market and points to the sensitivity of the seller, to "do" aware of what he asks for a thing, would say a comparator (Licona, 2014).

In the tianguis, the price is often "negotiated" (offering a lower payment than the advertised price that the seller almost always accepts or re-offers). The prices of the fruits vary from 12 to 45 pesos, according to the offer, types of diversity of fruits and their availability. For example, in spring and summer, when there is a greater quantity and diversity of fruits, they are not so expensive compared to the start and end of the season, when the supply decreases.

As a result, the quantity and variety of fruits harvested decreases, so the sale price increases, for example in the tianguis are few fruits such as huachocotes, when they are offered in the tianguis its price ranges from 15 to 25 pesos the sardine, the cajinicuiles are in danger Don Efren tells us "now these fruits have to sell them more expensive because in the orchards where they bought their fruits the worms ate them and others throw them so that they do not affect the other trees, then the price it rises and if put five fruits in a pile to sell them now only put three, the same goes for the pachicurres, this fruit almost nobody brings it to the tianguis, so take advantage and sell a piece in 20 pesos so that can pay the boy that helps me to go for them" (Don Efren interview, August 2015), so that haggling in this type of fruit is difficult because it cheapens its price too much and the merchants do not make them and.

Barter

Another strategy is barter, which is a commercial practice in which the participants of the mercantile process carry out an exchange of merchandise (goods or services) without the intervention of a monetary value directly in the transaction. It is the product of ancestral commercial practices and survives today because often the local traders themselves observe it as a strategy to market their products mainly when they are perishable. Generally, their practice is associated with a process of bargaining or negotiation with the business partner to generate an agreement between the value of the merchandise offered and that received in exchange.

Studies such as those of Pérez (2006); Tocancipá (2008); Molina (2011); Egea and Fabre, 2015) agree that the barter strategy is seen as an economic reality prior to capitalist development; however, it is currently emerging as a survival strategy, this being a generational practice.

An example of the haggling in the market of Malinalco is appreciated when buyers ask as the pile of white sapodilla is the sellers answer 20 or 25 pesos depending on the season and the buyers answer is already the least conforming there a talk of no more than five minutes and making a social relationship in which the seller wants to convince the buyer telling him what the fruit is for in the case of the white sapodilla, prieto or chicozapote they mention the medicinal value they counter as well as they can use it culinary.

Giving “proofs”

Finally, another marketing mechanism is the “giving evidence” (Figure 3) that consists of the offeror or seller (in the daily lexicon is also known as a dealer) provide the buyer with a “test without compromise” of the quality of their product, in this way it builds a link that ratifies the need to acquire a good or service, but also builds an expectation based on the taste, texture and presentation of the product. In short, the commercial commitment through the “test” is a commercial link through the senses. This is a common practice in traditional marketing, but at the same time similar strategies can be observed in supermarkets.



Figure 3. Marketing strategy.

Conclusions

The tianguis or also known as traditional markets are distinguished by having weekly places, without some infrastructure, in fixed days and places and great diversity of sellers of local products, as well as specific areas for certain products, as a kind of niches immersed in an economy globalized in the tianguis of Malinalco, different types of vendors arrive with different exchange systems, measures and products depending on the culinary culture, what they can produce and access to the surrounding jungles.

The exchange relationships in the tianguis also turn out to be important points since they depend on whether the products can be sold or not, based on moral principles of reciprocity (Osorio and Niño, 2012). An approximation to the tianguis of the valley of Toluca mentions that there are five types of mechanisms for the sale of products among which it mentions: test, section, pylon, haggling and the best known barter the latter is the one that is most frequently used in the tianguis of Malinalco since the fruits that are less sold are those that they exchange to obtain other products with which they satisfy their different food needs (Escobar and Vázquez, 2012; Osorio and Niño, 2012).

Through the information analyzed, it was possible to distinguish the importance of non-market strategies in the Malinalco market, as well as its ability to adapt to differentiated commercial contexts, as a result of the interaction of the formal and the informal in the commercial dynamics. Knowing the mechanisms of exchange allows us to delve into the daily life of people who work in the market and constitute a variety of social interactions, originating dynamic processes that are structured with the passage of time and generate a way of life. For this reason, the tianguis of Malinalco has been conceived, rather than as a center of supply or a public service, as a space for interaction, exchange and reproduction of culture.

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