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La identidad cultural y los negocios: Los Gordos de Tepatitlán

Cultural Identity and Business: Los Gordos from Tepatitlán

Identidade cultural e negócios: Los Gordos de Tepatitlán

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Resumen

En este trabajo se presenta un análisis de la historia de Los Gordos, un restaurante de comida típica mexicana cuyo platillo principal es la carne de cerdo que se fríe en un cazo. La historia del restaurante se puede asociar con la de la urbanización del municipio de Tepatitlán, en donde se localiza dicha empresa. Los elementos culturales fueron importantes en el éxito de esta, así como dotaron de elementos identitarios al municipio. El restaurante no era el área fuerte de la empresa, pero fue la que volvió famosos a sus dueños en la región. Se planteó en esta investigación demostrar que existe una relación entre los negocios y la identidad cultural; relacionar la evolución de un negocio con la urbanización de una ciudad media, y delimitar cuáles son las consecuencias del paso de un negocio tradicional a uno más urbanizado en una comunidad que intenta resistirse al cambio cultural. A partir de tres entrevistas a profundidad hechas a los nuevos dueños, así como a empleados que laboraron desde la década de los 60 en el negocio, es que se presentan los resultados de este trabajo. A ello se suma un análisis de la importancia que tiene la gastronomía como elemento cultural de un territorio. La explicación de la identidad cultural que evoluciona tiene características propias, distinguibles con respecto a otras. La religión, ruralidad y economía son elementos que aparecen en este



trabajo, además de la cultura, como influencias para el éxito y desarrollo tanto del restaurante que se estudió como del municipio en el que se encuentra.

Palabras clave: identidad cultural, negocio, restaurante.

Abstract

In this text it is presented the analysis of the history of Los Gordos, a Mexican food restaurant whose main dish is fried pork made in a *cazo* (a huge copper pot used for this dish). The history of the restaurant can be associated with that of the urbanization of the city of Tepatitlán, where this company is located. Cultural elements were also important in its success, as well as providing identity elements to the place. The restaurant was not the principal area of the company, but it was the one that made its owners famous in the region. In this work it is presented an analysis with three objectives: to demonstrate the relation between business and cultural identity; to link the evolution of a business with a small city urbanization process, and to define what are the consequences of going from a traditional business to a more urbanized one in a community that tries to resist the cultural changes. Based on in-depth interviews made to the new owners, as well as with employees who have worked in the business since the 60's, the results of this paper are presented. There is also an analysis of the importance of gastronomy as a cultural element of a territory. And the explanation of the cultural identity that evolves has its own characteristics. Religion, rurality and economy are other elements presented in this paper, as influences in the success and development of both the restaurant that was studied, and the city in which it is located.

Keywords: cultural identity, business, restaurant.

Resumo

Este trabalho apresenta uma análise da história de Los Gordos, um restaurante de comida típica mexicana cujo prato principal é o porco frito em uma panela. A história do restaurante pode ser associada à da urbanização do município de Tepatitlán, onde se encontra a empresa. Os elementos culturais foram importantes para o seu sucesso, além de fornecerem elementos de identidade ao município. O restaurante não era o forte da empresa, mas era o que fazia a fama dos seus proprietários na região. Foi proposto nesta pesquisa demonstrar que existe uma relação entre empresa e identidade cultural; relacionar a evolução de um negócio com a



urbanização de uma cidade média e definir as consequências da transição de um negócio tradicional para outro mais urbanizado em uma comunidade que tenta resistir às mudanças culturais. Os resultados deste trabalho são apresentados a partir de três entrevistas em profundidade com os novos proprietários, bem como com funcionários que trabalham na empresa desde a década de 1960. Soma-se a isso uma análise da importância da gastronomia como elemento cultural de um território. A explicação em evolução da identidade cultural tem características próprias, distinguíveis das outras. Religião, ruralidade e economia são elementos que aparecem neste trabalho, além da cultura, como influências para o sucesso e desenvolvimento tanto do restaurante estudado quanto do município em que está inserido.

Palavras-chave: identidade cultural, negócios, restaurante.

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Introduction

This work aims not only to tell the story of a famous business in a region located in western Mexico, but also to explain how there is a relationship between territory, identity and businesses considered traditional or typical of a community - as an example you can review Castro (2020) -. The business, in this case, is the restaurant in Los Gordos, in Tepatitlán, Jalisco, famous for the sale of carnitas, a pork dish that is fried in a saucepan (Los Gordos, 2020). This food preparation became a symbol of the municipality and continues to be one of the most recognized at the regional and state level for several decades.

The main objective of the research was to describe the history of a nationally recognized business. However, among the specific objectives, the approach was aimed at demonstrating that there is a relationship between the businesses and the communities to which they belong, as well as the changes that exist in them. These objectives are the following: 1) to demonstrate that there is a relationship between business and cultural identity (based on a qualitative analysis); 2) relate the evolution of a business with the urbanization of an average city, and 3) delimit the consequences of the change from a traditional business to a modern one.

The nature of this work is qualitative in nature. The interest is in the meanings. It is impossible to measure how a business is part of the identity of the people, but from the stories



it is possible to glimpse an appropriation of the history, traditions and incorporation of a business as an identity element for a community. To obtain this information, it was necessary to resort to the in-depth interview as the main technique. To do this, an interview was conducted in different sessions with the current owners and with two of the workers who began working in the restaurant since the 1960s.

The intention was to obtain from them an account of how modernity comes to replace tradition and can affect businesses such as the one referred to here, which at one time were not only profitable, but, in this particular case, was also one of the most income-generating and popular in the region, not forgetting the large number of people it employed. His anecdotes, memories and statements not only shaped the history of the restaurant, but also related this particular story to Tepatitlán, the city where it is located.

Using various textual sources, the way in which cultural identity manifests itself and evolves alongside a business is analyzed. Identity thus takes elements of tradition (Castro, 2020; Giménez, 2016): being from Tepatitlán implies knowing about carnitas and having consumed them on different occasions. Being from the region involves knowing what the sale of these carnitas was like, narrating how they went to consume these and the way in which, sitting down to eat pork tacos, without a plate, without a table and without a chair, it could be an experience that some still remember with nostalgia.

Territory, identity and urbanization

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography [Inegi] (2019), a population is considered rural when it has less than 2,500 inhabitants. This makes it clear why it went from 43% of the Mexican population that was located in cities in the 1950s to 78% in 2010. However, this definition is not sufficient for what is intended to be reviewed in this document.

It is important to ask yourself some questions: how do you know when you go from country to city? At what point does the rural become urban? And, with regard to this work more particularly, what happens to the traditional once that small populations grow? It is possible that economically there is a recognition of the transition from rural to urban based on social services and infrastructure that determine the difference between one and the other, as Franco (2016) points out: electricity, health, telephony, roads, sanitation and the circuits of productive activity, among others. However, we can discover that there are societies that



resist change, such as Alteña. You can count on these services, but the population maintains deep-rooted traditions that seem not to change over the years (Fábregas, 2019).

For some authors, such as Aguilar (1992), the emphasis must be on the process of change from the countryside to the city; for others, like Pradilla (2002), capitalism has expanded in such a way that the rural structure becomes urban.

Agriculture has defined the urban from specialization: it generates the food and raw materials that the city requires, while the latter offers goods and services to the countryside; thus, both are complemented (Méndez, 2005; Ramírez, 2005). Migration between the countryside and the city means that tertiary activities can be developed in rural areas. Just as small cities have inhabitants who travel to the city for consumption, the small populations take the cities that are in this intermediate point - rural cities, Méndez calls them (2005) - as a meeting point and where they can do use of goods and services on a smaller scale than is done in the metropolis.

For Arias (2005), the new ruralities imply economic changes, where agriculture does not become the economic activity on which the progress of the town is based. The skill of the inhabitants means that they can develop new trajectories in the work areas. We can think that this is the case of Tepatitlán, which in the 60s began to develop in poultry farming, with ranchers and farmers who began to bet on the production of eggs and the sale of chickens and chicken meat.

The new industries led to changes in markets and, in terms of expansion, to go beyond the local or regional scope, a case that happened especially with Tepatitlán and Lagos de Moreno (Cabrales, 1991). The population was increasing and the economic base remains related to livestock (with egg, milk and meat production).

This change in the population, which Patricia Arias (2005) calls the new rurality, depends on economic specialization, which leads to two possible scenarios: 1) specialization becomes the economic activity of the population and all activities revolve around it and 2) the maquila becomes an activity where mainly women work.

This urbanization leads to the arrival of new demands, especially for services (Ramírez, 2005). One of the activities in this field is related to gastronomy and the restaurant sector. The main beneficiaries of these services were the inhabitants of smaller nearby towns, such as Acatic, Capilla de Guadalupe, San José de Gracia, Mezcala and Pegueros (Cabrales, 1992).

There are those who define the rural not only as the field, the agricultural, the place lacking in goods and services, as well as the space where noise, crowds, crime and pollution would be absent, as pointed out by Méndez (2005); the rural would also include the traditional. Industries would be concentrated in the city, as well as providing places for commercialization. However, it is also in small towns where spaces are offered to market goods and services and where the traditional can be a successful business. Urbanization does not occur only in territories such as municipal capitals, and that influence the dynamics of rural populations that surround them (Ramírez, 2005). For this reason, the changes that occurred in Tepatitlán in the last decades of the 20th century also had an impact on other municipalities, a topic that will not be developed in this work, but that is worth noting for possible later studies.

The community leaves its rural life behind to move to urbanity based on changes in its infrastructure - for example, the construction of highways that connected municipalities more quickly and efficiently - as a way to achieve economic growth and population development (Ramírez, 2005). This search for urbanization, to differentiate itself from the countryside, did lead to a process of improvements in some aspects. However, businesses like Los Gordos were hit by these changes.

Tepatitlán, the city where the business analyzed in this work is located, is located in the Altos Sur region of the state of Jalisco, in western Mexico. The city had a population, towards the end of the second decade of the XXI century, of 136,000 inhabitants; of this total, 100,000 were concentrated in the capital. It is important to note that it is located 70 kilometers from Guadalajara, a similar distance from San Juan de los Lagos and just under 120 kilometers from Lagos de Moreno. It is a municipality that has more than 18,000 private rural properties (Inegi, 2019).

Currently, Tepatitlán has an economy strongly oriented to commerce, especially grocery stores or food sales (44.9%), services (44.8%) and industries (10.3%); and only a minimal percentage is oriented to agriculture (barely 0.1%) (Institute of Statistical and Geographic Information of Jalisco [IEEG], 2020; Martínez, 2016). It is a municipality whose population is characterized, as Fabregas (2019) pointed out, for being extremely hard-working, proud of its work, which comes from a land that is very difficult to work.

Now, when speaking of region, the definition is not only focused on the territory, but also on the identity, what distinguishes the inhabitants of one region from the other. "The

territory would be the appropriate and valued space — symbolically and / or instrumentally — by human groups" (Giménez, 1999, p. 27). And according to Giménez himself (1999), three types of territories can be glimpsed: identity, among which can be towns, neighborhoods, small cities and larger ones such as nation states; the territories related to sociability, and the cultural territories, which have to do with the symbolic appropriation of space.

The territory will provide a frame of reference for its inhabitants. González (1997) points out that Spanish speakers understand the region as a smaller place than a kingdom or republic. In addition, people can very easily distinguish between region, terroir and land. The territory or land would be where the person comes from, it implies a spatial denomination with which they feel a link, a link between man and soil (González, 1997).

Here it would be worthwhile to return to Giménez (1999), who suggests that the inhabitants will be able to “physically abandon a territory, without losing the symbolic and subjective reference to it, through distance communication, memory, recollection and nostalgia.” (P. 102). And this attachment also arises from the internalization of certain symbolic elements that promote the feeling of belonging, that differentiate it from others. One of these elements is culture and its symbols. The gastronomy of the territory begins to play an important role. It shows a relationship between food and culture, the way of cooking and expresses, through food, the culture itself (Castro, 2020).

Geographic space falls short when we talk about territory. The territory is both an object of representation and of attachment. It endows the individual with the feeling of belonging, since the subjects internalize this space as part of their cultural system (Giménez, 2016). For this reason, we can find migrants who, despite the distance, bring their territory with them: they manifest it in what they eat, how they dress, how they speak, the traditions they follow and so on.

Thus, there is an external territoriality, delimited by geography and politics, and an internal, invisible and subjective one. It is possible that there is a physical deterritorialization, but this does not imply that the subjects lose their territory as a symbolic reference, memory or memories. Then, regional identities are shaped when symbols and values of the subjects are incorporated into the region. And at the same time, the image of this region and all its symbols and meanings are internalized by the subjects (Giménez, 2016).

At this point, it is necessary to return to the "matrias" that Luis González proposed (1997). These are the cultural micro-regions, the small worlds, in which there are "societies of inter-knowledge". These regions have their own history; the delimitation will not be, therefore, only spatial, it will also imply a period of time. This work talks about the development of a business, but, in turn, it is linked to the history and tradition of a geographic space, especially between the 60s and 90s.

The matrias are those "patriecitas" (González, 1997, p. 170) that have particularities; mini-societies where the municipalities, towns and terroirs have objective characteristics. For Luis González (1997), they are small worlds that remember the mother because of her protection, which goes beyond birth. It may be difficult to understand the term theoretically, but if any Mexican were asked about his origin, he would most likely tell us about his motherland. Beyond the municipality, region or locality to which it refers, the term refers to the territory - geographically delimited or not - to which an individual feels more attached. It will also involve traditions, the emotional aspect, own values and customs.

The head of Tepatitlán is considered, then, as one of these matrias, since it is a smaller population (if we compare it with the size of the Alteña region or the state of Jalisco) with common denominators, some of which are exclusive and some others share them with more people from El Alto. Tepatitlán is made up of strongly conservative, Catholic settlers, attached to traditions, like the other people from El Alto. They are also working people, proud of who they are and what they do, who live off their work in the fields, again, like the rest of the people of El Alto. However, it became an important center with the arrival of buses, with its rapid economic development and with symbols of which its inhabitants appropriated and of which, of course, they are extremely proud. Some of these symbols would be the Lord of Mercy (an image that for more than 100 years has been a source of devotion for Tepatitlenses), the characters who were born in this town and who have stood out for their work and exemplary lives, as well as symbols more tangible, such as carnitas, a dish that became a symbol of this town and for which it is recognized in other geographical areas.

Gastronomy and cultural identity

Gastronomy fulfills, among several functions, that of being a cultural reference, being part of a territory, where its activities do not only involve the production and sale of food. There are cultural elements around food, it involves people such as producers and consumers (Castellón and Fontecha, 2018). This work aims to show how gastronomy and the development of a business focused on restaurant service endowed the community with an element that identifies it with respect to others. It became part of the tradition and of the population itself. Thus, gastronomy and the gastronomic exercise go beyond the sale of food products, because it carries cultural, social, historical and economic implications of course.

Torres, Madrid de Zito and Santoni (2004) explain that the foods that are eaten by individuals in a community, regardless of their place on the social scale, become symbols of self-referencing or self-identification. All the members of this community appropriate them and turn them into references, they become emblems of their identity. Such is the case of the carnitas in Tepatitlán, they are a typical dish, whose sale dates back several decades and which has acquired great importance by becoming a symbol of the city.

Cultural identity includes the beliefs, values and customs of the collective. Gastronomy is part of this identity as it is one of the symbols that are transmitted for generations and that remain within the group. Recognition of the product, its history, the elements that converge around it, are characteristics that in the territory evoke the community itself (Castellón and Fontecha, 2018).

Gastronomy becomes a symbol of what roots men in a certain culture. Beyond eating food, it is a cultural transmission. It includes aspects such as climate, language, history (Fusté, 2016). In the case of this work, even the religious element plays an important role. The consumption of carnitas became one of the rites that was part of the pilgrims' journey.

Palomar (2005) points out that there is a symbolic appropriation that is implied in identity, there are elements that add up to shape it. You might think that food is one of these elements. However, when analyzing the history of Los Gordos, it is not just about food; It was the arrival of the trucks, meeting halfway to a pilgrimage or on the way home. Sit on the bench, eat without using plates or cutlery. It was not just the flavor of the carnitas, but everything that was around the act of savoring them. For this reason, we can still find people who are nostalgic about the memory of this business, and who, despite this, do not go to buy carnitas in the restaurant that still bears this name, which continues with the recipe and,

therefore , with the same flavor. The dish could then be the pretext: actually the way of consuming it was what became traditional.

Results: the Los Gordos carnitas business

The history of Los Gordos begins with the brothers Antonio and José Gutiérrez Villarroel. His work revolved around the hatchery and sale of pork. In Tepatitlán, the city where they had settled, they had a small workshop, where they could slaughter and process these animals. The small space they had was not enough to carry out all their activities, so they expanded it until they became the owners of a packing plant.

They traded with pork legs, and began to work in the elaboration of other products, such as pork rinds, lard, chorizo and carnitas. The latter were the ones that brought them fame in this municipality and also outside of it. Don Pepe and Don Toño, as their employees and townspeople knew them, learned the recipe from their father, who was originally from Mexico City. In turn, he learned it from his father, who was Cuban. Los Gordos carnitas were a novelty in the region, although they did not involve a recipe or way of cooking that was carried out exclusively by the owners of this business, for example, the carnitas from Michoacán are made in the same style as those from Tepatitlán. . If the recipe is similar, if the way of frying them also, what is it that made these carnitas so famous? And why did they become a symbol that is part of the cultural identity of Tepatitlenses?

An explanation about it is given by the municipality. In its official history it is noted that since the seventeenth century Tepatitlán had the commercialization of beef and pork as one of its sources of economy, the meat was sent to the mining companies of Guanajuato, Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí. The beef, made jerky, while the pork was prepared into carnitas, frying them to rid the meat of all moisture. The recipe was then passed from generation to generation, and thus it has reached the present time. This explanation contrasts with that given by the owners of Los Gordos, who learned the recipe from the Villarroel brothers, who, as already noted in previous lines, explained having inherited it from their Cuban grandfather.

Attributing the recipe to a Cuban origin does not eliminate the possibility that a mode of preparation was passed down through the generations over three centuries. However, the fame was the preparation of Los Gordos. But, as I explain later, it is not only the preparation

of this dish, there are other elements that contributed to the formation of this symbol of the municipality.

Besides the carnitas, there are other things to highlight. The name Los Gordos comes from the physical condition of Don Pepe and Don Toño, both of whom — according to what was reported in interviews with their workers and those who knew them while they were still living — weighed more than 100 kilos. This physical characteristic became something that identified them, not only among the population, but also legally: the name became their company name and the brand that made them famous both within and outside the Altea region.

The business was very productive. During the sixties and seventies, foreign trucks came to Tepatitlán as a place of passage. As there was no bus station, they parked in the Plaza de Armas, next to the parish of San Francisco de Asís, the most important in the population. The Los Gordos restaurant was located around said square, on one side of the parish, so locating it was easy for those outside the population. The brothers had started working in their bakery in 1963 and four years later they established their famous restaurant. The main objective of their business was to work with pork, so two years after the restaurant, in 1969, they set up a packing house that was located on the outskirts of the head of the municipality.

The brothers were partners. Don Toño took charge of the restaurant, in the center of Tepatitlán, and Don Pepe of the packing house. Once the restaurant changed its location next to the packing house, Don Pepe took charge of this as well. The brothers began by making little meat slices and offering them on the street. The carnitas dish quickly became popular.

Trucks bound for León, Mexico, Aguascalientes, Zacatecas, Laredo and Saltillo, among others, were pausing in Tepatitlán. The drivers used to notify the restaurant before starting the trip, so that they could calculate how many trucks would arrive and at what time they would arrive. One of the owners points out: "There was never a low season in the restaurant, but on some dates there was more mobilization, such as July 27". On that date they made pilgrimages from Tonalá to San Juan de los Lagos to visit the Virgin: up to 67 trucks in one day came to pass, especially when the restaurant was already located on the banks of federal highway number 80 (where the section that passes through the head of Tepatitlán is known as Anacleto González Flores Boulevard).

Passengers got out of the truck and lined up outside the restaurant to receive their tacos de carnitas. The tacos were delivered on brown paper, not on plates, and were

accompanied only by the sauce. "The tortilla was all wet, the paper too, but they didn't care," says one of the restaurant's employees, who has worked there since the 1960s. The workers also explained that the custom was to eat sitting on the sidewalk, but if they were Inhabitants of Tepatitlán, happened to eat inside the premises.

During that time, carnitas were made with meat that we know as tripa, loin, ear, crop, trunk and others. Kidney, lullaby (sow's udder) and crop were also fried. All three are difficult to cook, and for that reason — with the exception of the crop — they are very rarely offered in restaurants that sell carnitas. "The pots were sold quickly, many times, before one came out, it had already been sold," says one of the workers.

The competition appeared with two restaurants that also remain at this time: El Che and Los Jáuregui. Carnitas were made in both, but the taste was different. Thus, they were able to satisfy a larger number of the population. For the Villarroel brothers, the main business was the packing plant, since they produced ham, sausages, chops and bacon, all of which they sold throughout the country.

Carnitas had gained fame outside the region, this particular business stood out. They were pointed out for a time for having sold loggerhead, which was denied by the workers and owners in the interviews conducted for this job. The restaurant stopped being in the center and was established next to the packing plant, on federal highway 80, where it is still located. The trucks no longer arrived at the Tepatitlán Center, a space was located for them as a bus station on the outskirts of the head. Although the place is close to where the restaurant was now located, the tradition of going to Los Gordos carnitas was disappearing.

The urbanization of the municipality affected the business, as indicated in the interviews carried out. People stopped flocking to buy the carnitas and the business suffered greatly. In addition, the Villarroel brothers were already old and decided to leave the business in 1984. Don Pepe announced that the restaurant, the packing house and the trail were being sold to the members of the Jalisco Chamber of the Food Industry. They would be sold as a package, not separately. It was bought by 11 partners, but this partnership was short-lived. In the end, the business became three partners, part of a family that still owns the restaurant, the bakery and the packing house. The businesses were transferred and also the recipes. The same products were maintained and are still sold today: bacon, ham, sausage, chorizo, chop, chamorro, marinated loin and carnitas.

An event room was added to the restaurant, the first one was modernized and this alienated the clientele. The restaurant stopped looking traditional and more like a place for business people. The dishes persisted, but the customers changed. Many of the workers continued to work, despite the change of owners, but many others did not want to adapt to the new proposals and left their jobs. The new administration had come up with a different mindset about how to do business, one that was more like that of big cities, and was moving away from the traditional.

Although the restaurant's sales were not as good as when it was in the Center, they remained good and were numerous on some dates when there were pilgrimages or parties in different towns and Tepatitlán, with its carnitas, was still a must-see.

The most drastic change was when the Zapotlanejo-Lagos de Moreno highway was built, which began to be used in the 1990s. The federal highway gradually became a boulevard and stopped having heavy traffic. The restaurant was no longer a usual stop for pilgrims or tourists. Sales decreased, although the recipes and quality of the dishes offered have been maintained.

In the interviews one of the owners points out that it is common to find people who come to eat at the restaurant because it reminds them of when they did when they were younger, or that they were recommended by their parents or grandparents. Also, talking with someone who is outside the municipality and mentioning that you come from Tepatitlán, leads to being asked about the carnitas de Los Gordos.

Thus, talking about Los Gordos is talking about carnitas, and talking about carnitas is talking about Tepatitlán, as if it were a chain of synonyms and one of these words always refers to the other two: Los Gordos, carnitas and Tega.

To respond to the first objective of this research, it is possible to define some elements of relationship between cultural identity and business that, although they are implicit in the results presented, are summarized below. In the first place, the typical dish (the carnitas) that became typical of the community, regardless of the origin of the recipe and method of preparation. Following this, there is a link with religion, since for religious reasons many people outside the municipality made a stop there, and a stop in Tepatitlán led to eating carnitas. In addition, the business strategy in which the bus drivers agreed with the restaurant owners on the consumption of food. Finally, how is it that the tradition did not only imply

eating the food, but the place where it would be made, what kind of dishes would be ordered for the place and which ones to take away.

The city evolved, from rural to urban, making changes, adopting the use of technologies, and also modifying traditions. Although people wanted to continue shopping in Los Gordos, the buses no longer parked a few steps from the restaurant. The tradition was lost and instead it was easier to transport outside the municipality. Finally, the business's transition from traditional to modern led to a contrast between the clientele that came before and after that moment. This notion of identification was lost, he felt alien to the population. From being a traditional restaurant for the entire population, it became an exclusive one for businessmen. And not because the owners raised it that way, but because the consumers themselves were deciding it.

Discusión

The history of Los Gordos was used as an example to analyze the development of a population and its urbanization process. The custom of arriving by truck to Tepatitlán as a stopover on the way, either by pilgrimage or to visit other municipalities or states, became a tradition both for those who did not live in Tepatitlán and for its inhabitants to receive them. Eating carnitas, sitting on a bench was an experience that visitors craved, even decades later they comment on it with a certain nostalgia.

This custom made Los Gordos carnitas in particular famous, and in general this dish became the typical food of the city, so much so that even today you can find different businesses that offer them. Of course, no longer in tacos that people eat on the street, now they follow the restaurant model that is currently proposed.

The tradition endowed the population with identity, by giving it an element that made it famous. However, change, urbanization, and even globalization meant that there were better communications and that the demands were different. This brought the need to create a trucking station. And consequently, from the consolidation of this central, the businesses that surrounded the town's Plaza de Armas began to stop receiving so many consumers.

The urbanization came to disrupt the small city to turn it into a larger one, the modern replaced the traditional, things changed following the “deterritorialization of the localities” that Giménez (2016) points out: the influences external to the locality come to change the ways of life that were followed. However, the traditional remains in the community, in the



collective memory. Thus, we can find that, although people no longer go to the Los Gordos restaurant as before, the business is maintained because it brings longing and memories of times that, for some, were better.

Businesses can benefit from becoming part of the identity of a community. Taking ownership of it, as the population does the business, leads to a relationship that can be beneficial to both parties. The commitment to help between the two becomes solid. Company advertising receives a benefit that not all can aspire to, and there are also obligations of the institution towards its community: collaborating with some sectors of society, making its spaces available to others, for example.

It is possible to delve deeper into the work done on this business as an example of the cultural identity that arises from the work that a company develops. One can also think of other businesses, in different sectors, that have also given the municipality an identity (such as poultry companies, for example). However, it seems that it is difficult to make a separation between companies, since the development of these occurred around similar years, and they have worked collectively. Which did not happen with Los Gordos, since they did not associate with other restaurants, in addition to the fact that the sale of the company was made to people outside the municipality. However, it is still an interesting story from the cultural, gastronomic, economic and, of course, the history of the municipality.

Conclusions

The sale of a dish could be conceived as a simple transaction, the customer pays for a service - which would be the preparation of food - for his personal consumption. But it becomes a symbol when the preparation makes it unique or distinguishes it from the rest. In the case of the Los Gordos carnitas, a myriad of characteristics made this meal become important and part of the identity of the municipality of Tepatitlán.

For other businesses, building on this example could lead to an analysis of the relationship you have with the community you belong to. How it has impacted society, and also how it affects the company. Exploiting this situation can lead to great benefits for both the place and the business, and situations such as the one that led Los Gordos to find a negative impact from the construction of the highway could also be foreseen.

It was not only the preparation of a food with a distinctive quality of ingredients, the good seasoning of the cooks, but also everything that it implied for the visitors who came to



the municipality: going by truck as part of a religious pilgrimage, knowing that a stop The road involved the consumption of carnitas, which they would eat on the sidewalk, holding the food with their hands, on brown paper, without having a plate. And from there, once you have replenished your energy, you can continue with your pilgrimage.

For the inhabitants of Tepatitlán, always proud of their land, the fame that this restaurant acquired became one of the characteristics of its population. It is possible to glimpse how then a business becomes part of the identity. Beyond a reference or description of your municipality, it allows you to explain about the gastronomy, customs and changes that have occurred in the community.

Thus, the carnitas of Los Gordos became something that went beyond a business to be part of the cultural identity of a territory. It is common to find companies in the industry that are also dedicated to the sale of carnitas, but they have never equaled the fame or nostalgia that comes with thinking about those that were sold on one side of the town square in the 60s. Los Gordos are part of the history of the population, its gastronomy, its memories, and even a reference to the past (especially when consumers talk about when the restaurant was in the Center, next to the place where the buses parked, which is a recurring conversation in older Tepatitlenses).

Economic changes, population growth and urbanization led to changes in the structure of the restaurant: adopting new ways of doing business, another physical space, the sale of the same food with another presentation. These changes, however, although they may seem alien to what this company was at first, in reality they have not changed its essence. The recipes and the ways of preparing are kept, but society has stopped making its obligatory stop at the restaurant, as part of its pilgrimage. However, it will be very difficult for these changes to shed the association that is made between Tepatitlán, carnitas and Los Gordos. Both have given each other symbolic elements, and have shared history in recent decades. Thus, it will not matter where the carnitas are eaten, there will never be ones like Los Gordos de Tepatitlán.

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