



Sistematización de la experiencia de circuito corto de comercialización estudio de caso Tibasosa, Boyacá

Systematization of the short circuit marketing experience: Case study Tibasosa, Boyacá

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ABSTRACT

The Short Circuits of Commercialization (SCC) have become scenarios of vital importance for dismissing the relations between the countryside and the city or the producer and the final consumer. For this reason, the systematization and dissemination of successful experiences in this area of knowledge make sense. The research was carried out to systematize the experience of the SCC of the Municipality of Tibasosa, Boyacá. Following the hermeneutic historical research approach, a descriptive study was carried out using qualitative research tools. In-depth interviews were performed, which were processed using the Atlas ti software. In the SCC, the producers carry out a strategic planning of the organic production and the commercialization of their vegetables that allows consumers to know the origin of their products. This commercial and organizational process has been going on for more than 26 years, in which persistence and discipline have allowed producers to maintain themselves over time. However, the process requires generating new strategies on a larger scale.

Keywords: commercialization, consumer, circuits, solidarity economy

JEL Classification: F19; J49

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RESUMEN

Los Circuitos Cortos de Comercialización o CCC se han convertido en escenarios de vital importancia para la reivindicación de las relaciones entre el campo y la ciudad o el productor y el consumidor final, por esto cobra sentido la sistematización y divulgación de experiencias exitosas en esta área del conocimiento. La investigación se realizó, con el fin de sistematizar la experiencia del circuito corto de comercialización-CCC del Municipio de Tibasosa, Boyacá. Para ello, siguiendo el enfoque de investigación histórico hermenéutico, se realizó un estudio de tipo descriptivo con el uso de herramientas de investigación cualitativa, puntalmente entrevistas a profundidad procesadas empelando el software para el procesamiento de datos Atlas ti. En el CCC los productores llevan a cabo una planeación estratégica de la producción orgánica y la comercialización de sus hortalizas que le permite a los consumidores conocer el origen de sus productos; este proceso comercial y organizativo lleva más de 26 años en los que la persistencia y la disciplina les ha permitido a los productores mantenerse en el tiempo; no obstante, el proceso exige generar nuevas estrategias a una mayor escala.

Palabras clave: comercialización, consumidor, circuitos, economía solidaria.

Clasificación JEL: F19; J49

INTRODUCTION

The objective of the marketing channels is to reduce the intermediation between producers and consumers, as stated by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (ECLAC, 2014):

Proximity Circuits or Short Circuits are a form of commerce based on the direct sale of fresh or seasonal products without intermediaries - or reducing intermediation to a minimum - between producers and consumers. Proximity circuits bring farmers closer to the consumer, encourage humane treatment, and their products, not being transported over long distances or packaged, generate a lower environmental impact. [Los Circuitos de proximidad o Circuitos Cortos



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son una forma de comercio basada en la venta directa de productos frescos o de temporada sin intermediario - o reduciendo al mínimo la intermediación - entre productores y consumidores. Los Circuitos de proximidad acercan a los agricultores al consumidor, fomentan el trato humano, y sus productos, al no ser transportados a largas distancias ni envasados, generan un impacto medioambiental más bajo] (p.7)

The CCCs are characterized by having little intermediation, being strategically located and being generators of trust and strengthening of social capital (FAO, 2016). Espinosa (2016) insists that CCCs offer the benefit of knowledge of food origin; these particularities allow the formation of links based on proximity and contribute to the construction of interpersonal ties, transparency and trust. In addition, CCCs allow "the increase of local possibilities for sustainable development and social equality" (Romero and Manzo, 2017; cited in Quitian, 2020, p. 29).

This form of marketing products was born in 1960 in Japan, thanks to the interest of a group of people to have access to food without any agro-industrial processing. Then, CCCs were disseminated throughout Europe and North America (Furnaro et al., 2015, cited in Andrieu and Brignardello, 2020). Since then, in the world, CCCs have become increasingly important, although under different names: bioferias in Peru; urban fairs in Cuba; free fairs, in Chile; free fairs, local ecological and organic markets in Loja and Cuenca in Ecuador, Jalisco and Xalapa in Mexico (ECLAC, 2014; cited in Craviotti and Soleno, 2015). Currently, they have been consolidated as part of a set of strategies developed by Family Farming (FA) for the purpose of generating surpluses for sale and improving income for families (Caracciolo, 2016; cited in Paz and Infante, 2020).

In the case of Europe, a few years ago, farmers sold their products individually, but then decided to organize themselves into networks of farmers' markets, forming purchasing groups and collective sales stores or local festivals, all with the aim of increasing product sales (ECLAC, 2014). According to FAO (2016), CCCs are growing worldwide, they are configured as local and regional food movements that enable the direct relationship between consumers and producers, encouraging the implementation of public policies in this order.

The CCCs are associated with the promotion of food through applications and web pages, which allows the sale of these in an easy way, in order to improve and specify their demand to achieve a form of sale of easy access with which it seeks to improve the income of rural producers (Devissher and Argandoña, 2014). It is because of the above, and following Suárez and Greeffenstein (2016), that the CCCs contributions are practical forms of peasant economy that involve those cooperation networks that occur in small farmers who use family labor as the primary source of capital for productive processes.

In Colombia, about 65% of the food supply to urban centers comes from the farms of peasant families with small-scale agricultural production. However, their leading role is overshadowed by the excessive intermediation to which their products are subjected. The volumes of food demand are proportional to the demographic density, which is why the greatest requirements are located in the interior of the country, in the large capitals. Therefore, to get from the farm to the final consumer's table, it is estimated that the same product can go through at least five intermediaries, which not only affects the quality of the product, but also affects the grower's profit (Gutiérrez, 2016). Unfortunately, despite the diversity of the food produced by smallholder farmers, the weak organizational and associative processes, the low quality of some products, the lack of capital to invest and improve their productivity and yield indicators have made it difficult for them to access efficient marketing channels under fair conditions with the buyer (Gutiérrez, 2016).

The commercialization of food in Colombia is handled both in wholesale markets and in large retailers, the latter especially involving supermarkets and fruit stores, which gained strength in the 1990s, and by the 2000s had already reached a concentration of 55% of consumer products (Silva, 2003 cited by Gutiérrez 2016). Now, although the vast majority of the country's food is marketed in retail markets, this does not mean that it is done through short marketing chains, since their suppliers are "large producers, forced to produce at low cost, which in turn means the use of agricultural practices that threaten the environment, product quality and the health of the final consumer" (Gutiérrez, 2016, p.54).

Thus, short marketing chains or channels become the alternative for small agricultural producers who sell their products on the street, from house to house, in the gallery and, of course, in farmers' markets. These chains, as already mentioned, are characterized by the direct relationship between the producer and the end consumer. One of the forms of short marketing chains or circuits -CCC- are the farmers' markets, which, according to Molina (2014):

is a social, economic and political process that seeks the vindication of peasants in the Central Region of Colombia. It is based on two fundamental pillars: on the one hand, the direct influence of the peasantry in the

design and execution of public policies and, on the other hand, the fairer economic participation of peasants in the market. [es un proceso social, económico y político que busca la reivindicación de los campesinos y campesinas de la Región Central de Colombia. Está cimentado sobre dos pilares fundamentales: por un lado, la incidencia directa del campesinado en el diseño y ejecución de políticas públicas y, por otra parte, la participación económica más justa de los campesinos y campesinas en el mercado] (p.3)

In some municipalities of the country the traditional practice is maintained, in which farmers, especially on Sundays, bring and offer their products in improvised places in the square. The first farmers' market experience, following the above definition, that was developed in the country was in the city of Bogota on November 4, 2004 in the Plaza de Bolivar. Subsequently, other markets followed, and by 2011 there were already 50 markets in 5 different departments (Chaparro, 2014). Currently, there are reports of farmers' markets throughout the country, some more or less dynamic, but the greatest concentration is in the central part of the country: Tolima, Cundinamarca, Boyacá and Meta (Quitian, 2020; Moreno and Vargas, 2020).

Precisely, and since the early days of the CCCs in the country, in the municipality of Tibasosa, department of Boyacá, two farmers' markets have been operating whose promoters are the associations AGROSOLIDARIA and ASOMERCAMPO, in charge of boosting the marketing of food products. The former holds the market fair on Thursdays and Saturdays, but also provides microcredit and training services (Garavito, 2014; cited in Rojas, 2015), and also promotes business associativity, rural microenterprise and direct communication between the producer and the consumer (Celeita, 2012).

For its part, ASOMERCAMPO has more than two decades of collective and organizational work and has encouraged and energized the CCCs by holding a farmers' market on the first Sunday of each month in the main park, offering products such as vegetables, dairy products, honey and handicrafts, among others (Lucco, 2019). Similarly, home sales are made in businesses and family homes and some producers also sell their production in their villages of origin. These different ways of marketing or distributing their products have allowed a direct relationship between the producers and each of their consumers, providing them with fresh, healthy and organic food. This dedication and perseverance in the exercise was rewarded by the Latin American Cities and Towns Campaign for Fair Trade, which awarded Tibasosa the Certification as the First Municipality of Colombia for Fair Trade.

In spite of the road traveled and the interesting advances, there is no clarity about the history, the process, the current situation, the lessons learned, the challenges of these experiences in CCC, or a self-reflection that allows its protagonists to evaluate their journey and needs for improvement. Therefore, the question that guided the present research was: What are the results of the experience of short marketing circuits obtained in Tibasosa?

METHODS

The experience was developed in the municipality of Tibasosa, Boyacá, which is located in central-eastern Colombia, approximately 220 kilometers and three hours from the city of Bogotá, at an altitude of 2,538 meters above sea level and with 14,196 inhabitants, most of whom are rural. The territory of Tibasosa is divided into 14 villages: Centro, Ayalas, El Espartal, El Chorrillo, El Hato, Estancias Contiguas, La Boyera, La Carrera, Las Vueltas, Patrocinio, Peña Negra, El resguardo, Suescún and Esterilla. The systematization was carried out in the Vereda Ayalas, Agua Blanca sector, 5 kilometers from the urban area, where the farmers have a non-certified clean agricultural production of vegetables such as: lettuce: curly, smooth and purple lettuce, zucchini, chard, cilantro, cauliflower, beets, broccoli, tomatoes, arracacha, spinach, ahuyama and aromatic herbs, among others.

Methodological approach

The present research is descriptive, since the results obtained are as important as the process employed (Gutiérrez, 2014, cited in Sánchez et al, 2020) and is based on the historical-hermeneutic methodological approach, by which we want to understand the meaning of the facts, as expressed by Mardones (1991, cited in Franco, 2009).

Method

The research is qualitative in nature; therefore, an in-depth interview was used as a tool for gathering information. To this end, open-ended questions were asked with variables such as understanding of the concept of BCCs; history; process; current situation; difficulties; achievements and challenges; and lessons learned. The interviews were recorded with prior authorization from the interviewees, converted to plain text and taken to the qualitative data

processing software Atlas.Ti, through which the phrases of interest were identified, grouped into categories of analysis and organized by affinity to establish the families of categories. Finally, the relationships within each family were established, the respective networks were generated, their behaviors were described and the information was triangulated and the findings were written up (Sánchez et al, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interviewees' accounts allowed us to identify about 50 categories of analysis that were grouped into two families of interest (Table 1):

Table 1.
Categories and families of analysis

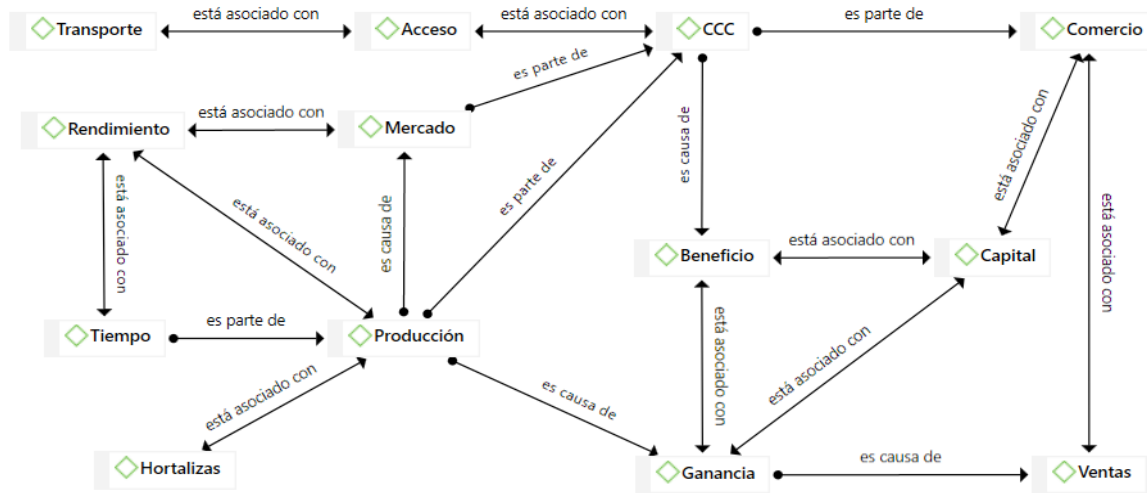
Phrase	Category	Family
We program what everyone is going to plant, what everyone is committed to.	Planning	Organizational
We define the quantities to be produced and who is responsible for them.	Organization	Organizational
Planting plans take into account the errors of previous productions.	Seeding	Economic-productive
Quality problems are analyzed and management strategies are identified.	Improve quality	Economic-productive
It is necessary to maintain profits, this should be stable with a minimum	Strategy	Organizational
Price and weather projections are reviewed and we discuss how we are going to face what is coming.	Challenges	Organizational
The aim is to sell good products at a good price	Profit-Return	Economic-productive
By planting small quantities of vegetables, you will have less losses than by planting large quantities.	Strategy	Organizational
The main difficulties are transportation	Challenge	Organizational
It produces very little, but then we try to generate more resources than it has generated.	Tactics	Organizational

Source: own elaboration.

Economic-Productive Family

For the interviewees, the CCCs are small marketing exercises where the producer is programmed to have short sales. The interviewees consider that the production is small and the time between each market is short. The collective's strategy consists of sowing small quantities of vegetables and thus obtain fewer losses, as they consider that by sowing in large quantities the risk is greater, especially due to climatic instability and the game of supply and demand that ultimately determine prices. By having high sales, a good profit is generated and the products can be sold at a good price (Figure 1).

Figure 1.
Economic-Productive Family



Source: Own elaboration.

Note: the figure appears in its original language.

In line with the above, González et al. (2012) state that CCCs refer to the set of initiatives that revolve around the production, distribution, consumption and sale of food. However, following Craviotti and Palacios (2013) such activities require time, in addition to this it should be taken into account that the main reason for this is related to the peasant economy, which refers to the cooperative associations that occur in small farmers who use family labor as the primary source of capital for productive processes (Súarez and Greeiffeinstein, 2016).

Forero et al (2002), on the other hand, specify that the decisions of farmers in Colombia are made according to the prices of products in the market, since their supply is highly integrated to the market. In the same vein, Llambí (1988) had already considered that among peasants the forms of work are based on domestic labor relations, in which the owner and his family members are present, as well as salaried workers who invest in the production processes.

Now, the production carried out by the farmers involved in the Tibasosa market is periodic and small; the production process is short, it does not seek to produce large volumes but seeks diversity, quality and that everything can be sold in the market, and the production is not strictly thought with the business logic, because the income obtained is not so high, then it is found that what moves the producers to remain in the activity the peasant rationality directed more to the family welfare than in the accumulation of capital.

Similarly, the interesting thing about peasant production is that it remains throughout the year and although small volumes are traded, there is a great variety of vegetables, legumes, tubers, among others that are offered fresh, which reduces the need for processing and storage. Thus, the contribution of food to the CCC, remains in a close relationship between the producer and the consumer, despite the presence of large empires of food agriculture.

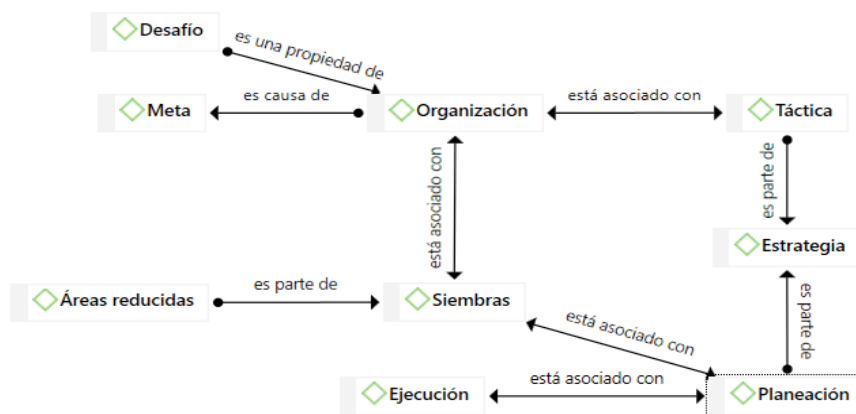
Organizational Family

Following Rojas (2019), although farmers' markets are considered alternative and direct channels that favor the commercialization of rural products, their consolidation and permanence over time will only be possible through the struggle to improve the levels of organization and associativity of the rural population.

In the particular case of the Tibasosa Farmer's Market, the participants emphasized that its success has been in the planning of the work, since the organization of this CCC is framed in the individual challenges that each one sets, that is, what each one commits to, for each fortnight or month, but thinking of the collective. Sowings are planned; being careful with the expected volumes; try to make sure that not everyone repeats the same thing, usually reduce the quantity according to the losses obtained in the previous harvest, and try to improve the quality to maintain stable profits in the production of vegetables. All this is part of a strategy that allows them to better face the challenges that may arise.

The above coincides with the Municipal Development Plan Tibasosa (2016-2019), which states that the planning of different agricultural activities should be part of the strategies for the reactivation of the countryside (Gobernación de Boyacá, 2016). Now, according to Díaz et al. (n.d.), planning implies organizing activities with clarities about what, when and how much is to be established and thus foreseeing the necessary resources for this purpose. Following Munguía et al. (2015) implementation strategies are linked to the forms of soil and seed use in each agricultural cycle, in the constant search for options to the production system and changing climatic conditions (figure 2):

Figure 2.
Organizational Family



Source: Own elaboration.

Note: the figure appears in its original language.

For FAO (2016), short circuits are a form of trade based on the direct sale of fresh produce, minimizing intermediation between producers and consumers. The main *raison d'être* of these is in relation to the peasant economy involving small farmers who use as their primary source of capital family labor for productive processes (Suárez and Greeffenstein, 2016). According to Correa (2020) in Colombia, vegetable production has mainly been concentrated and technologically developed in temperate and cold thermal zones, taking into account factors such as sustainable agricultural production, efficient soil use, and the use of local inputs (Soto, 2003).

For this reason, peasant family farming is considered to be the work carried out in agroecosystems, which also produce the largest amount of food in the world (FAO, 2014; cited in Lucco, 2019). In addition, consumers are currently interested in knowing the characteristics of the food production chain and want this to be as transparent as possible and to allow not only access to safe food, but also to know the traceability of products, with social and environmental information on the process. It is precisely the food marketed in the CCCs that falls between this emerging social demand and the need for farmers to integrate into more equitable markets (ECLAC, FAO, IICA, sf).

CONCLUSIONS

There is a need to cover the lack of spaces for commercialization that would allow farmers to develop their business without the intermediation, which would allow the economic gain to be greater. Consequently, the producer has been carrying out its commercial process for more than 26 years, where persistence, organization and discipline have allowed it to maintain this process.

The products are produced under the conditions of the high Andean forest, which is characterized by being between 2,800 and 3,200 meters above sea level and whose temperatures are between 12°C and 17.5°C (54°F and 59°F). The products are produced under a clean production system because the quality and quantity of water is maintained and the raw material is used to produce both liquid and solid organic fertilizers so that the products can be purchased at a low cost. This makes it possible to produce food under agroecological production processes at very low costs and with high nutritional values, as well as with optimal quality standards that contribute to the benefit of producers and consumers.

Despite the progress made, it is imperative to expand and identify new niches in the markets. In the same way, the process requires generating new strategies on a larger scale, so it is insufficient to be present only in its sales premises and sporadically in farmers' markets organized once a month by the town's mayor's office.

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