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## **Producer-consumer relationships in typical products supply chains: where are the theoretical differences with standard products?**

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## **Producer-consumer relationships in typical products supply chains : where are the theoretical differences with standard products ?**

### **SUMMARY**

*At the beginning of the nineties, consumers and citizens were more and more concerned with new social problems as pollution, unsafe food, population drain in less favoured areas, declining of artisan sectors, etc... Since many consumers seem to be more and more interested in buying artisan products, our aim is to analyse the difference among the marketing approaches for typical products and standard products. This contribution presents first the theoretical framework and apply it then to three concrete cases. We propose the idea that marketing for Specific Quality Products have theoretically grounded particular feature. We call this kind of marketing "cognitive marketing" insofar as it intend to change consumers preferences and not only to measure their requirements and to make products to fit them.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION : EMPIRICAL CONTEXT**

During the sixties, seventies and eighties, the food sector has expanded dramatically. In the same time as product and process innovations occurred as well as technical and financial concentration, firms applied new marketing technics in order to make products characteristics to meet consumers demand about product qualities on following features : safety, high nutritional level, taste and convenience. Thus the product range has been deeply changed on markets and the distribution channels have been transformed by the fast growth of supermarkets. Nevertheless, in the beginning of the nineties, consumers and citizens were more and more concerned with new social problems as pollution, food consumption related diseases

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(for example ESB), population drain in less favoured areas, declining of artisanal sectors, etc... The evolutions of the CAP and the quality policies in the EC could be influenced by such concerns. In the matter of facts, the EC regulation 2081/92 aims to promote quality products related to specific areas. Thus, the production processes concerned in these areas are most often artisanal and the production units are often rather small. Since many consumers seem to be more and more interested in buying such products, we would like in this paper analyse if marketing approaches for specific qualities are theoretically different from standard approaches. We consider that a product quality is specific if its production process is based upon specific resources due either to technical reasons (not imitable or reproducible technics) or to specificity in transactions or to reglementation (B. Sylvander, 1995, G. Allaire and B. Sylvander, 1996). This contribution presents first the theoretical framework and secondly the case of three exemplar organisations and products : the firm ESSBEE, making standard product (SP), the bakers organisation "My bread", making a Specific Quality Product (SQP) and the hypermarkets "MEET US !" who made a compromise between both approaches.

The marketing plans and the new products development are strongly different when we consider the marketing of SP and the marketing of SQP. The SP are most often produced by industrial and weakly specialised firms and the SQP are most often issued from smaller firms which are strongly specialised on traditional and typical products.

First of all, if the marketing objectives may be considered as similar in both cases, the general objectives of the firm are basically different. In the case of SP, these general firm's objectives are growth and profitability under independence constraint, while the smaller firms who are involved in SQP marketing, the main objectives are the survival of the activity (and of the firm), and the independence, under profitability and growth constraints. A second fundamental difference stays on the market size and delimitation and on the production potential. For SP, firms try to sell products to the majority of consumers on wide markets and develop their capacity to increase production when it is necessary. For SQP products, the market size is often on a smaller scale with specific localisation around the firm's implantation. The producer are not able to easily grow up their production capacities.

Besides these main differences, the different steps of the marketing management are nevertheless all the same from the previous market research to the fundamental elements of the marketing mix which are stated in the '4P' rule : Product ( Concept and characteristics), Price, Promotion ( Advertising, in-store informations, etc...), Placement (distribution channels), wich come however in different hierarchical order in each model.

**Table 1 : The main differences in marketing approaches for SP and SQP products**

Marketing mix	SP	SQP
Market segmentation	Market segmentation according to the results of panels and surveys	No previous market segmentation before product development.
Methodology	Predominating marketing PULL towards the selected segments	Predominating marketing PUSH towards all the usual customers
Hierarchy of action's means	Product 2. Price 3. Promotion 4. Placement	1. Product 2. Placement 3. Promotion 4. Price

The differences and similarities between both models mentioned above are useful, but obviously not sufficient to state a theoretical background for our question. We will now propose to refer to the conventions approach for building it up.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In a general situation where quality is uncertain for the consumers, the information asymmetry can be a crucial factor for explaining how markets work. Thus Akerlof (1971) showed that this concept could explain why some markets in certain conditions do not work. Then, a lot of works intend to explain consumer's behaviours with regards to quality signals. These researches concern for example the roles of prices, publicity, reputation, brand etc... as quality signals. It has also been proposed, to fight against information asymmetry, to use warranty systems, but in this case opportunism may occur : this was called "moral hazard".

### The "quality conventions"

Concerning the quality question, let us notice that the neo-classical approach considers quality as exogenously defined (see appendix). The assumption in this framework is the existence of a previous defined list of products, which qualities are known by the producers. Therefore the information becomes the main question. On the other hand, the theory of conventions assumes that quality is endogenous in the economy. It means that the product definition process is a part of the economic activity and that actors are involved in this process. As mentioned by Orlean

(1991, p.140): "When goods are heterogeneous, products can hardly be defined without regarding exchanges process ... Behind the nomenclature hypothesis an intense social process is hidden which progressively states an impressive set of defined goods and provide the structure of markets". Therefore it is possible to assess that quality is the result of socio-economic adjustments between actors.

As in the global economy, the uncertainty on products quality is high in the food sector. Several factors increases this feature especially in this sector, among which the variability of raw materials, the uneasy technical control on production processes and the lack of co-ordination between actors within the supply chains. This fact can be raised for explaining for example why consumers may sometimes lack confidence in the industrial enterprises concerning the hygienic quality of the products (see pesticide residues, nitrates, ESB disease, etc...). Therefore it may be quite relevant to consider that economic actors must have the same idea on quality in order to be able to produce and exchange goods on the markets.

On a general level, L. Boltanski and L. Thevenot (1991) have proposed six different ways of co-ordination available for the actors :

- Interpersonal links : actors know and trust each others about the product qualities ("domestic" or "interpersonal convention")
- Reputation : actors take into account the reputation of the best known firms (opinion convention)
- Standards : actors asses quality by reference of technical defined and implemented standards (industrial convention)
- Innovation : actors refer to innovation rate to judge quality (inspiration convention)
- Society : actors assess quality in reference to the links with civic interests (civic convention)
- Market : actors are able to judge by themselves the product and refer to price (market convention)

### The product quality as a negotiation process

If we are to apply this frame of reference on quality questions, we must admit with F. Eymard-Duvernay (1993) that actors may reach a good co-ordination on markets by using the same convention of quality. This author explains that quality can be considered as built up simultaneously within two processes. On one hand, quality is an issue of a learning process and a negotiation between partners on the market and on the other hand, quality supposes a global agreement within institutions, which are produced by the actor's strategies and co-ordinations. Products can also be considered as co-constructed by the partners on the market. This idea has been developed by S. Dubuisson (1996), who analysed this process in different sectors, among which catering. She showed that several devices can be used for continuously taking into account consumers demand and improving the goods and the service and that this activity contributed highly to the firms return.

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At this point of the analysis, it can be useful to make a link with marketing research, since this research field appears quite close to our question. This discipline deals also with quality questions by taking into account in the approach consumer's behaviours and satisfaction. A lot of research have been carried on about the logical relationships between products characteristics, quality perception and consumer's satisfaction (see M. Mourlas, 1994, J. Levy and D. Manceau, 1993 and Y. Evrard, 1993). The perception of global quality and in the same time of products attributes seems to be a very important question, since product innovation is strongly based upon this process. Therefore, J-B Steenkamp (1989) built up an integrated model of quality perception which can be helpful for understanding product innovation. We can consider that marketing research is about to show that product innovation is an issue of a learning process between consumers and producers. Thus marketing implements continuously several tools for making goods to meet consumers demand : consumers surveys, panels, own marketing data processing, product and market tests, etc...

Thus, whatever the marketed products and the types of firms are, the marketing approach of product's development and management appears as built on the similar following objectives :

- To propose and to sell on the markets products which are able to bring Some satisfaction to consumers or to a part of them.
- To find the best ways and criterias for differentiating products to reduce the competitive pressure.

**Table 2 : The market analysis technics involved in the negotiation process**

Market research	Standard Products	Specific Quality Products
Methodology	<p>Qualitative and quantitative consumers surveys.</p> <p>Use of samples of consumers and of panels</p> <p>Formalised analysis of datas.</p> <p>Collective interpretations with validation proceedings</p>	<p>Empirical observations by listening to the individual customers opinions and expectations</p> <p>Non formalised analysis of datas</p> <p>Individual interpretations without validation proceedings</p>
Information sources	<p>Internal datas issued from the registration of sales statistics</p> <p>External datas bought from consultants and specifically gathered for the firm.</p>	<p>Internal datas issued from individual memorisation of sales events.</p> <p>Non specific external datas when they are free of charge or not too expensive</p>

Thus, we mean that this interactive adjustment is close to a kind of negotiation process (which we will now call "quasi-negotiation", see scheme in appendix), where consumers interests are taken into account by producers through the continuous analysis of their behaviour and their attitudes. This process can be identified in the standard marketing as well as in the marketing of specific quality products. To this extend, this approach leads us to include in the frame of the analysis the construction of the products and their qualities.

### **Towards a cognitive marketing**

We wish now to point out a second assumption about the theoretical differences between both marketing processes. It concerns the function of information. In the standard marketing, the information delivered to the consumers intend to let them know that their requirements have been met by the product improvement. In the marketing for specific products, information aims to change the consumers preferences (see scheme in appendix). Therefore we refer to a cognitive process.

In order to give an answer to the question "Is marketing for specific products different from marketing for standard products ?", the previous point doe's not seem sufficient, since product innovation may in every case be seen as a negotiation process, although different means are applied.

The main difference seems to refer to the way producers manage the quality variability in both cases (F. Marty, 1996). Let us go back to the convention's theory. F. Eymard-Duvernay (1989) builded up the concept of firms models which was supposed to fit the different conventions. Theoretically, the firms models would refer mainly to one of the conventions for their actions. This author kept only the "domestic", the industrial and the market convention in his models. B. Sylvander (1993, 1995) found in the food sector a correspondence between the productive actors conventions and the consumer way of defining and purchasing goods. Furthermore, R. Salais and M. Storper (1994) included in the reasoning two main types of functions in the firms : the technological one and the marketing one, with regards to Knight theory about uncertainty (no probability) and risk (probability) (Knight, 1921). Driving further this way of analysis, F. Marty (1996) builded up a theoretical approach of the action (decision and action) in the firms on the basis of these assumptions, meaning that the way each firm handle with product and market variability will influence it's performances. More precisely, the performances will be linked with the consistency of the firm in applying the principles of action about variability and not only in building up the "right strategy". In this approach, technological variability factors as well as market ones are considered. We will here focus on the first ones.

In the "industrial" approach, quality management is based upon risk reduction. The raw material's characteristics are uncertain (for example in the cheese making : bacteriological level, fat material rate; protein material rate, etc...). The variability can be measured (in order to select the raw material's quality) and the implementation of scientific technical means allows cheese makers to reduce the technical variability by applying industrial technics (pasteurisation, skimming, standardisation, selected ferments, etc...). This reduction can be



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analysed in terms of likelihood calculations and is consistent with scale effects goals and cost reduction. Thus the production process (and in particular the innovation process) can be considered as technically controlled.

On the other hand, in the "domestic" approach (as "conventional" concept), the producers deal with variability by applying empirical know how, which could combine some general knowledge (as hygienic rules) and very specific technics (in order for example to use the native ferments in the milk). The variability is taken into account and the processes are suited to every kind of situations.

Consequently, the objectives, the types of know how, the codifications of activities, the development of know how and its management will have different forms in both models, as shown in the following table.

**Table 3 : The technical know how in both models SP and SQP**

Know-how	SP	SQP
Objective	To reduce the degree of uncertainty	To improve the product specificities
Types of know how	New ones which are formed on the basis of industrial concepts	Ancient and traditional ones which are transmitted by apprenticeship
Codification	Well codified know-how on written forms ( specification's books)	Partially or totally non codified know-how
Developments	Evolution and adaptation of know-how to reduce costs of production under quality constraints	Preservation of usual know-how to improve the product's specificities under costs constraints
Management	Fight against the risks of variability of the product's characteristics.  Quality controls all along the processing chain with modern tools ( HACCP) Elimination of products which are non consistent with the codification	Acceptation of a degree of variability for some final characteristics of the product Only final quality control of the product.  Elimination of the products which are devoid of the typical characteristics
Final product	Constant and homogeneous characteristics for all the processed products.	Variability of the product's final characteristics

Therefore, the final product's quality will in the domestic model be quite heterogeneous and subject to an evolution in the time. Then the quasi-negotiation cannot have the same nature as in the standard marketing. Obviously the producers is able to let the product meet consumer's demand but to a limited extent. It means that for certain features where producers are able to control the process, the product can be improved, and for other features, it will not be possible. Then any information cannot compensate consumer's dissatisfaction, while coming in conflict with consumer's preferences. The only way out is then to try to influence the consumer's preferences, which means that consumers is considered as actors who are able to learn things and to make their behaviour to change. That is the reason why we propose to call this : "cognitive marketing". Let us mention lastly that this approach allows to include consumer's preference building in the field of the economics.

The producers improve the product as far as possible, but doe's not make any compromise on crucial points. On theses points, he will explain to the clients why their demand cannot be met : to keep our example about cheeses, he will explain that the winter milk is fatter than the summer one, and therefore the cheeses is a little bit more difficult to ripen. Therefore, the cheese should be eaten fresh or from the previous year. In this case, the right concept is no longer the information but the relevance of the information (B. Sylvander, 1996) : it will be well suited to the consumer's learning process ("which attitude must be changed, how, for which consumer ?")

In the following part, we will illustrate both models (SP marketing versus SQP marketing) and a third combining model, by following up step by step our scheme based upon product quasi-negotiation and cognitive marketing (see scheme in appendix), according to the main functions to be completed along the process.

### 3. APPLICATIONS

The chosen examples concern the marketing of SP and SQP in the case of bread. France is very well known for its breads productions. One product, the french 'Baguette' has got a great international reputation. But a lot of other traditional and modern varieties of breads are marketed in France. The reasons why we have chosen to develop examples in the field of bread market is that this market's evolutions are very relevant to the general trends of the food sector. On one hand if bread process is perhaps one of the most difficult to be standardised, large firms have developed during the last thirty year an industrial supply based upon technical innovations like continuous baking, controlled fermentation and more recently quick frozen dough and pre-cooked breads. Supermarkets and hypermarkets are also more and more involved in bread processing . However the artisanal bread processing form remains the leader on the bread market with more than 34000 small independent bakeries (Lassaut et al., 1989). On the other hand although bread has a strong symbolic image in the consumers mind, consumption has been regularly decreasing until the beginning of the 80's. Since this period each competitor on

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the bread market (industrial as well as traditional) tried to stop this trend by differentiating products and marketing a larger range of breads (Lassaut, 1991).

In this framework, we will develop the case of three recent different products and marketing strategies which are the following ones :

- A new product, fresh soft bread (SP) which is marketed under a national brand in the modern distribution channels : "ESSBEE".
- A traditional French bread (SQP) which is processed and marketed by a regional association of 40 small bakers "MY BREAD"
- An organic bread (SQP) which is processed and marketed inside an hypermarkets chain : "MEET US".

The first and second examples are an illustration of the two ways of marketing previously described and analysed (standard marketing and cognitive marketing). The third one represents an original form issued from a compromise between standard marketing and cognitive marketing where the tools of both models are combined to develop a SQP on modern supermarkets channels.

#### **3.1. An illustration of standard Marketing for SP: the development of fresh soft bread under a national brand in the modern distribution channels.**

The firm ESSBEE (Standard Breads) is an industrial bakery which is involved since a long time in the processing and the marketing of pre-packed breads and more specifically long conservation and packed soft breads. ESSBEE is the leader on the french market with a 45 % market share for all industrial pre-packed breads. The long conservation breads is the most important segment of this pre-packed breads market with a 50 % market share . ESSBEE developed a pre-packed fresh soft bread in 1993 according to the standard marketing approach.

##### **Pseudo negotiation based on market research :**

The regular purchasing of panels allowed ESSBEE to observe the stagnation of the long conservation soft breads market and to measure the effects of its competitors'actions leading to prices erosion. In the same time the ESSBEE's marketing managers analysed the evolution of market' s needs on the basis of surveys about food consumption and consumer's behaviour. So they identify a specific trend for fresh products which was enough important to be considered as a real market segment. So the marketing strategy of ESSBEE was based upon the following objectives :

- To find new ways of growth on the stagnant market of soft breads and to resist to its competitors by differentiating its products.

- To propose a response to the identified and selected market's expectations for fresh products.

#### **New product development :**

The new pre-packed fresh soft bread which resulted of this approach was a really standard product which had following characteristics :

- Creation of a new concept of standard bread with industrial and well codified know-how
- Definition of a special mixed flour enriched with improving ingredients and added sugar, fats and milkpowder differentiated from other soft breads flours by the absence of preservatives.
- Use of a continuous baking process with controlled yeast fermentation, and with cooking in a special bread tin to get an original form for the bread slices.

#### **Product characteristics**

The final product's characteristics were the following ones:

- Constant form, aspect, slices and weight of the fresh soft bread
- Limited shelflife (5 days) in comparison with long conservation soft breads(14 days and more), but which is sufficient to allow the distribution delay which are required for a national marketing.

#### **Information on quality**

As the standardisation of the process allowed it, all the communication topics were based upon the constant 'fresh' characteristic of the product during five days :

- Creation of a new and appropriate brand : "The FRESHWAY"
- Development of the 'fresh' image by all the usual means of publicity and promotion by the repetition of the same message: "Five days of supreme freshness and mellowness".

The aim was to give the information to the consumers belonging to the previously selected market segment which is involved in fresh products purchasing.

#### **Quality perception and satisfaction assessment**

The quality perception of 'The FRESHWAY' breads by consumers has been appreciated with tests, surveys and observations of sales evolution in foodstores. The results were the following ones. The market development in the beginning of 1995 (after almost two years) was under the previsions : almost 50% of the products were out of date in shops. In fact and in spite of the

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important communication plans, consumers didn't perceived the link between the short shelflife of the product and its mellowness and freshness. Tests showed that consumers appreciate the mellowness of bread by touching products in the shop. Moreover it was established that the bread judged as the freshest gets the longest shelflife and so the latest expiry date.

#### **New pseudo negotiation**

Consecutively to these market tests, ESSBEE 's marketing managers realised new observations and analysis about packed breads market segmentation. Then they identified a new pertinent criteria for differentiating fresh soft bread which was linked with the British image of these breads for those ones by consumers who look at a good morning breakfast and who are more and more numerous to be interested in foreign products according to surveys on food ways.

#### **New product development**

The product remains almost the same one but its shelflife has been increased until 7 days to reduce the risks relative to the out of date products. ESSBEE renounced to 'The FRESHWAY' brand and created a new brand 'BRITISH PLEASURE'. The communication topics about freshness were given up for developing a new image based on the reputation of English breakfast as a quality signal for the product.

### **3.2. An illustration of cognitive marketing for SQP : a traditional French bread processed and marketed by a regional association of 40 small bakers**

These bakers are located in the East part of France, they are traditional bakers who got the usual baking know-how by apprenticeship in their youth with older bakers. They process bread every night and on a very little scale. Then the wives sells this fresh and unpacked French bread in the shop at the same place and all along the following day to the neighbouring consumers. For a long time, bakers have been the only bread furnishers on the French bread market. But since the sixties, the growth of new competitors on a decreasing market bread (development of industrial baking ), the entrance of bread processing inside hypermarkets as well as the break out of new technologies like quick frozen dough have seriously affected their own activity which is regularly growing shorter.

In theses conditions, the baker's association has been developing a concept of traditional French bread for the last ten years. They named it "MY Bread" as customers usually say: 'I'm going to MY bakery for buying MY bread'

#### **Pseudo negotiation based on direct relation:**

The bakers grouped themselves to compare their experience and knowledge about consumer's behaviour and about their customer's preferences. They had no technical or financial means to

realise market research and all their conclusions were exclusively based upon that direct and daily relation which allows them to listen to their customers.

### **New product development**

As the bakers' objectives concerned first of all the survival and the independence of their bakery trade they looked at their specific know-how to reduce investments and to differentiate their products from standard breads. So they decided to return to ancient and traditional ways of baking. The definition of bread processing which resulted of this approach was actually in the field of Specific Quality Products (SQP) and presented the following characteristics.

- Definition by the bakers themselves of the quality criteria of the flour to the exclusion of every additives and improving ingredients.
- Selection and choice of relevant wheat varieties for traditional baking
- Research, identification and agreement of those ones by local mills which accept the baker's definition for flours and wheat varieties. Then purchasing flours only from these selected furnishers.
- Prohibition of controlled fermentation by keeping dough cold, but use of long fermentation to further dough development, and to get a cream-coloured and sweet-smelling crumb.
- Limitation of mechanical operations with manual division of dough and manual shaping of bread.

### **Product characteristics**

The final product's characteristics were the following ones :

- French traditional bread with cream-coloured and sweet-smelling crumb.
- A specific 'long fermentation' taste very different from the classical 'Baguette' 's taste
- Non constant weight and form from one bread to the other.
- Unpacked bread with individually weighing to fix the piece's price.

### **Cognitive information and influence on consumer's preferences**

As consumers where accustomed to eat the classical French 'Baguette' with white crumb and weak flavour, bakers had to modify their preferences. A learning process was started as the direct relation with customers allowed bakers and their wives to explain the specificities of their product and of their traditional way of baking. So they used direct dialogue with consumers, opened their bakehouse to make processing demonstrations and organised degustations of bread samples.

### **Quality perception and satisfaction assessment**

The success of that product devilmnt was assessed exclusively by the information resulting of the direct relation with consumers and by comparison of the consumers reactions between

every membership of the baker's association. There were neither formalised tests or surveys nor any statistical analysis of sales evolution or market shares.

### **Direct relation and new cognitive information**

This marketing experience was primarily successful but a few years after its beginning, bakers observed that sales were no longer developing. So they decided to improve their cognitive strategy without modifying the product itself. They built a new direct communication with their customers on the basis of the concept of 'shared quality' in the bread chain from wheat producers to the consumers themselves: They not only went on explaining their traditional baking know-how but they also began to explain their supplying policy including the fact that mills and wheat producers were located in the same region that the consumer's themselves. The general aim of this new dialogue was to convince consumers that every chain's actor worked for their own satisfaction, and so that they wanted to share their conception of quality with them. Moreover one of the greatest advantage of such a whole chain communication stays in its ability to explain the final variability of the products.

### **3.3. An illustration of introducing an SQP in a standardised channel of distribution : organic bread processed and marketed inside an hypermarkets chain.**

The 'MEET US!' hypermarkets chain is one of the most important distribution firm in France as it manage more than one hundred large hypermarkets. This chain is mainly involved in the Standard Products distribution system with predominating self-service sales. In each 'MEET US!' hypermarket stores there is a bakery looking like an independent bakery if we except that every bread is packed and on self-service sale.

#### **Pseudo-negotiation based on market research**

The 'MEET US!' chain has well identified by the way of consumers surveys the problem of consumer's uncertainty when purchasing in its stores. At the beginning of the 90's the survey results showed that consumers who feel reassured when they find a PSC supply in food stores are enough numerous to constitute a real market segment.

So one of its objectives is to reduce uncertainty by getting a traditional brand image for some of its activities, although the processing and distributing system is a modern and standardised one.

#### **New product development**

The choice of organic bread resulted of a study of the whole potential of small bakery's know-how. For this specific study the 'MEET US!' managers encountered and listened to the best French bakers and to the main mills. The official label for organic foods was an important factor for taking the final decision as it brings an extra guarantee to get the consumers trust. In

the general case, to achieve such an objective, hypermarkets chains have to find the right suppliers who process and sell traditional products belonging to the SQP category. But concerning bread the response to the consumers expectations is more complex because such a fresh product has to be processed in each store.

Thus 'MEET US!' had to import inside its bakeries a specific know-how which was beforehand unknown by the hypermarket's bakers. To achieve this task, 'MEET US!' managers used two main ways :

- First of all they identified and selected only one competent mill to negotiate and define with him a type of bread and the specifications of the correspondent flour.
- Secondly, they looked for and recruited a traditional baker as a teacher to transfer the know-how to every hypermarket's bakers. This formation plan began in 1992 for the first hypermarkets and was achieved three years later for the last ones.

The definition of bread processing which resulted of this approach was really in the field of specific quality products (SQP) and presented the following characteristics:

- Wheat varieties cultivated in accordance with French and European organic regulations.
- Traditionally crushed flour with millstones
- Prohibition of every additives and improvement ingredients.
- No yeast but leaven fermentation.
- Manual shaping of bread.
- Exclusive use of springwater and of salt coming from the specific area of GUERANDE.

### **Product characteristics**

The final characteristics of the product were the following ones :

- French traditional bread with cream-coloured and sweet-smelling crumb.
- A specific 'long fermentation' taste very different from the classical 'Baguette' 's taste
- Two constant weights, 500g and 1 kg
- Packed bread in a white paperbag with a cellophane window.

### **Cognitive information and influence on consumer's preferences**

Big hypermarkets are frequented by a great number of customers and that is a fundamental difference with a small bakery: communication cannot be based on a direct dialogue with consumers. However as the organic bread belongs to the SQP category, it requires a cognitive approach to transfer the appropriate informations to the consumers and influence their choices. On this point of view the 'MEET US!' hypermarkets use the same advertising media than for Standard Products (i.e. in-store display and leaflets mailing to the customers). However the message is relevant to a SQP strategy and is the following one :



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- To rediscover bread on an ancient form !
- The organic bread from 'MEET US!' is born from a rediscovered know-how around traditional components.

These claims are followed by the enumeration of the organic bread's ingredients and by the description of the traditional characteristics of the baking method such as we have exposed them previously. The communication in stores and on leaflets insist on the time necessary to elaborate an organic bread for 'MEET US!' bakers, on the existence of an alone selected supplier and on the selection of the most convenient wheat varieties. These features are devoted to let consumers change their preferences about bread, since they are accustomed to standard breads without variability.

#### **Quality perception and satisfaction assessment**

'MEET US!' use the same tools and technics than an industrial firm to assess the satisfaction degree of consumers. Statistical analysis of sales store per store are centralized and consumers tests are realized inside sampled supermarkets.

#### **New pseudo negotiation**

As they use only internal datas the results remains confidential but it is established that the market for this product is growing up since its first marketing in 1992. It is also established that 'MEET US!' has preserved the primarily concept. For instance and on the contrary of some of other competitors in the modern distribution channels, innovations running on standardisation of organic breads are refused (other hypermarket 's chain actually can buy pre-cooked organic breads from industrial bakers). This last product is almost standardised and appears as non consistent with the 'MEET US!' strategy, as it doesn't allow to "educate" consumers about its processing way, and its origin. In that way 'MEET US!' adopt the same marketing behaviour that small bakers and refuse to change its product characteristics. Moreover the hypermarket's bakeries have to develop more and more their communication policy on that way.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This contribution intend to state the theoretical conditions for a marketing approach suited to Specific Quality Products. The first case is based upon a combination of industrial and market conventions, while the second refer to a combination of "domestic" and civic conventions. These kind of arrangements has been decribed in the productive sector in earlier researches (B. Sylvander, 1997). We proposed here to drive further the discussion in the field of consumer behaviour and marketing. The first and second studied cases can be considered as "polar case", since the types of firms and products concerned are "pure" (standard versus specific). We raised up the third case, in order to show that an arrangement of pure quality conventions is

possible and is able to work efficiently, when artisanal production models have to be combined with supermarkets channels. Therefore a research program on this topic appears important since many economic actors in the food sector intend nowadays to coordinate their activities to construct and manage supply chains based on quality. A cognitive marketing may in our mind be able to support a combination of different kind of production and distribution models.

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