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Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

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AgriSciences

**Consumer behaviour analysis as a tool for biocultural  
heritage conservation: case of Mexican vanilla**

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## **Declaration**

19<sup>th</sup> of April 2018

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**Consumer behaviour analysis as a tool for biocultural heritage conservation: case of Mexican vanilla**” is my own work and all the sources have been quoted and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Adam Janata

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## **Abstract**

Food and tourism have proven as a dynamic combination which can enhance not only the economic well-being of certain regions, but other aspects such as local identity or composition of local fauna and flora as well. The main aim of this study was to identify the factors that influence tourists' decision on purchasing the Mexican vanilla products, which could be used to increase the sales and therefore, in the long term help maintain vanilla in its region of origin. The survey was performed at the El Tajín archaeological site, outside the town of Papantla, Mexico, both of which are historically linked to vanilla. It took place from September 2016 to January 2017 and a total number of 301 respondents participated in the questionnaire survey oriented at consumers' behaviour and knowledge about vanilla and its products. Significant interest in vanilla products was identified among the tourists, as well as a great gap in exploiting this potential. Five key factors which influenced the respondents' decision making regarding the purchase were described. These included prior knowledge of the products ( $p=0.001$ ), awareness of the fact that vanilla is native to the region ( $p=0.000$ ) and source of such knowledge ( $p=0.004$ ), as well as place of encounter with the products ( $p=0.000$ ) and provenance of the tourist ( $p=0.014$ ). Additionally, two major drawbacks limiting the sales of the products (poor visual presentation and lack of information) were identified and visualized using word cloud. Findings of this study could contribute to better management of promoting vanilla to tourists by the authorities, as well as local farmers and vendors, if mediated. This could have a positive effect on both economic development of the region and preserving vanilla as a biocultural heritage in its place of origin.

Key words: consumer behaviour, food tourism, *Vanilla planifolia*, rural development, Papantla, Veracruz.

## Resumen

La comida y el turismo se demostraron como una combinación dinámica que puede ayudar al desarrollo económico de varias regiones, igual que a la preservación de la identidad de las comunidades y a la preservación de flora y fauna local. El objetivo principal de este estudio fue identificar los factores clave que influyen a los turistas en sus decisiones en cuanto a la compra de los principales productos provenientes de la vainilla Mexicana, que pudieran resultar en un aumento de ventas y en tal manera ayudar a la preservación de vainilla en su región de origen. El estudio fue realizado desde Septiembre 2016 hasta Enero 2017 en la zona arqueológica de El Tajín, cerca del pueblo Papantla, México, dos lugares que ambos comparten su historia con la planta de vainilla por siglos. Al final de la investigación, que fue enfocada al comportamiento de los consumidores y sus conocimientos sobre la planta de vainilla y los productos provenientes de ella, logramos encuestar a unos 301 participantes. Se reveló un interés considerable en los productos de vainilla entre los turistas, igual que un vacío en la explotación de este potencial. Se describió un total de cinco factores que influyeron las decisiones de los turistas en cuanto a la compra de los productos de vainilla. Estos factores fueron el conocimiento previo de los productos ( $p=0.001$ ), conocimiento de que vainilla es originaria a la región ( $p=0.000$ ) y el fuente de estas informaciones ( $p=0.004$ ), igual que el punto de encuentro con los productos ( $p=0.000$ ) y la procedencia de los turistas ( $p=0.014$ ). Además se identificaron dos puntos débiles (presentación visual de poca calidad y una gran falta de información sobre los productos) en las estrategias de venta de los comerciantes de vainilla en la zona arqueológica y se usó el word cloud para su visualización. Los descubrimientos de este estudio pudieran ser utilizados para un mejor manejo de promoción de los productos de vainilla a los turistas por parte de las autoridades, igual que por los campesinos y los comerciantes. Este mejor manejo de venta pudiera tener un efecto positivo al desarrollo económico de la región y ayudar en las actividades de conservación de vainilla como un recurso biocultural en su región de origen.

Palabras clave: comportamiento de consumidores, turismo culinario, *Vanilla planifolia*, desarrollo rural, Papantla, Veracruz.

## Abstrakt

Spojení jídla a turismu ve vědecké literatuře se v posledních letech prokázalo jako velice užitečná kombinace, která dokáže pozitivně ovlivnit nejen ekonomický rozvoj regionů, ale také pomáhat v udržení místní identity i zachování kompozice lokální fauny a flory. Hlavním cílem této diplomové práce bylo identifikovat faktory, které nejvíce ovlivňovaly turisty v jejich rozhodování při nakupování produktů z Mexické vanilky, a které by teoreticky mohly posloužit ke zlepšení prodejů těchto produktů a v dlouhodobém horizontu tak pomoci se zachováním pěstování vanilky v místě jejího původu. Průzkum trhu a kupního chování spotřebitelů byl proveden v areálu archeologického naleziště El Tajín, nacházejícího se nedaleko města Papantla v Mexiku, přičemž obě tato místa jsou po staletí s vanilkou historicky spjata. Samotný sběr dat proběhl od září 2016 do ledna 2017 a na konci se nám podařilo nashromáždit dotazníky od celkového počtu 301 respondentů, kteří souhlasili s účastí na tomto průzkumu spotřebitelského chování a znalostí o vanilce a z ní vyráběných produktech. Získaná data odhalila pět hlavních faktorů, které ovlivňovaly rozhodování se těchto respondentů ohledně nákupu produktů z vanilky. Mezi tyto faktory patřila předchozí znalost daných produktů ( $p=0.001$ ), povědomí o tom, že vanilka pochází z regionu ( $p=0.000$ ) a zdroj těchto informací ( $p=0.004$ ), stejně jako místo, kde se s produkty turisté setkali ( $p=0.000$ ) a to, odkud na místo sběru dat přijeli ( $p=0.014$ ). Tato práce také s pomocí word cloud-u odhalila dva problémy, jimiž byla špatná vizuální prezentace a absence informací o produktech z vanilky, které zásadním způsobem limitovaly prodeje turistům. Poznatky vyplývající z tohoto průzkumu mohou posloužit místním autoritám, stejně jako farmářům a prodejcům, ke zlepšení managementu propagace těchto produktů. Zlepšení propagace by se tedy v dlouhodobém horizontu mohlo pozitivně promítnout jak do ekonomického rozvoje regionu, tak do zachování vanilky jako rostlinného a kulturního dědictví v místě jejího původu.

Klíčová slova: chování spotřebitelů, jídlo a turismus, *Vanilla planifolia*, rozvoj venkova, Papantla, Veracruz.

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# 1. Introduction

During the past decades, alongside with globalisation, a new phenomenon of tourism has emerged. It represents both an immense opportunity (Hall et al. 2003) and a threat at the same time (Sigley 2010). In the meantime, as the interest in food and tourism rose during the recent years, branding a destination based on a dish or a cuisine became more and more frequent (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares 2012; Amuquandoh & Asafo-Adjei 2013; Pestek & Cinjarevic 2014). There are countless of examples of countries famous for their cuisines such as France, Spain or Italy, but even Canada or Peru have decided to promote their country image through the national cuisines (Hashimoto & Telfer 2006; Nelson 2016). In the ever-growing importance of the fast, universal and shallow, focusing on food may be one of the last ways how to offer the authenticity for the visitors (Reynolds 1994). Mexican vanilla is as authentic as something can be, after all it is native to the region. However, being neither food nor cuisine, no matter how famous and important, can an ingredient be enough to attract visitors and create, develop and promote a destination? It deviates from the usual understanding of a food tourism component and therefore we tried to fill the gap that lies between the destination branding, food tourism and vanilla research. Combining the words Papantla and vanilla is the same as saying Pilsen and beer, for many people they represent a synonym, or at least they should. These two combinations share more than would be apparent at the first sight. Both have the history of being actually created or promoted by a foreigner. After all, beer was nothing new in the Czech lands at the time but it was a Bavarian brew master who, in 1842, made the first batch of a beer that later became a synonym for beer around the whole world, the Pilsner (Plzeňský Prazdroj 2018). The case of vanilla is quite similar, it has always been a part of the culture of the native Central American nations, but it was the French colonizers who mastered the process of its curing and made it what we know today, the shiny bean with a unique scent (Kourí 2004). Both Pilsner beer and vanilla from Papantla have a history of being connected with the place of their origin for more than 150 years (Plzeňský Prazdroj 2018; Kourí 2004), and both products have gained world-wide recognition, yet in a very different ways. This study is not supposed to defend Mexican vanilla based on its superior quality or extraordinary organoleptic properties, because it mostly is not superior to vanilla from the leading vanilla producing countries such as Madagascar. It has its place in the

world because there would never have been the famous Bourbon vanilla in our ice-creams today if there was not the Mexican town of Papantla which started exporting this product over 250 years ago in the first place (Kourí, 2004). By applying the food tourism perspective at Mexican vanilla, we aimed at looking for new points of view that could support and preserve vanilla as the biological and cultural resource, encourage everything it represents in its place of origin and after all benefit the people whose lives have been tied with this plant for centuries.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Food tourism and destination branding**

Food is an essential part of every travel experience, whether it is expressed as an ordinary need that must be sated, or as a specific interest of the traveller. In any case, there has been a rising interest in the topic of food and tourism across the world (Quan & Wang 2004), as the two started to be perceived as quite a fruitful combination (Hall et al. 2003). Since food represents such an important part of every travel, and therefore largely contributes to every travel experience, Pestek and Cinjarevic (2014) summarized three approaches towards food and tourism found in the today's scientific literature. It can either represent an addition to the usual tourist attraction through its unique nature of being a heritage (Hegarty & O'Mahoney 2001), a key and main attraction that gives the destination a new impulse for being an attractive brand or serve as a tool that helps bring the tourists to a destination (Cohen & Avieli 2004; Fox 2007). According to Hall et al. (2003), there is a great deal of synergy between agriculture and tourism that literally asks for being utilised by the rural communities, however as Hillel et al. (2013) pointed out, when locals do not present a believable genuine relationship to the food tourism product the region is trying to use as a pull factor, these activities tend to fail. In agreement to a number of studies, authenticity is presented as something crucial for the success of food tourism initiatives (Sims 2009; López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares 2012; Hillel et al. 2013; Björk & Knaappinen-Räisänen 2014; Pestek & Cinjarevic 2014; Pestek & Nikolic 2011).

#### **2.1.1. Consumer behaviour in food tourism**

Consumer behaviour research is a distinct scientific field which explores the motives of people for making their consumer decisions (Swarbrooke & Horner 1999). Given the limited amount of relevant literature sources available at the time, Mitchell and Hall (2003) called upon the scientific public to put more focus on consumer behaviour in relation to food tourism. Since then, the situation has quite changed and great number of authors such as Bruwer et al. (2011), López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares (2012), Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013), Björk and Knaappinen-Räisänen (2014), Millán and Pérez (2014), López-Guzmán et al. (2016) or Torres and Phakdee-auksorn (2017)

explored the consumer behaviour in food tourism context across the whole world, both in the developed and developing countries.

### **2.1.2. Food tourism in developed and developing countries**

The importance of food related tourism has been studied in all parts of the world, while each country faced a different set of issues. Canada for instance has been characterised for its natural beauties and clean environment. Having such a strong brand already, [Hashimoto and Telfer \(2006\)](#) discussed what it would take to add a new component to this country brand, the cuisine element. Being a country of immigration, apparently it could not present itself in the same way as countries of the Old World. However, the multiculturalism element that Canada counts with offered new possibilities, which resulted in the *Cuisine in Canada* brand – combination of the dozens of different cuisines brought by the number of immigrant nations over time, combined with the unique local ingredients found across the many Canadian provinces. Such a combination offered the posterior development of sub-brands that were based on each nations' original contribution. [Everett and Aitchison \(2008\)](#) studied the role of food tourism in the development and maintenance of regional identity in Cornwall, located in the south-west of England. By studying the literature, policies and performing in-depth interviews with the restaurateurs of several popular tourist destinations in the region, they concluded that food tourism research is a valuable addition to the usual tourism and branding research. But more importantly, they showed that food related tourism can be a key in the process of forming local identity, notwithstanding the concerns that mass tourism arose among the local people.

In the study focused on a specialty culinary tourism, [López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares \(2012\)](#) explored the culinary tourists' perceptions and positions towards the traditional restaurants and cuisines of Córdoba. The researchers employed a questionnaire survey in various restaurants of the city and through the answers of 213 respondents, they found that Córdoba with its typical tabernas (Spanish term for a tavern) and tapas, which stands both for a dining practice and a small dish, attracts both national and foreign tourists who enjoy the high quality and authenticity of the local foods. Such findings implied the potential for the attempt to develop and promote Córdoba as the culinary centre of the region. Similarly [Björk and Knauppinen-Räisänen](#)

(2014) performed a questionnaire survey at the annual Helsinki traveller fair in order to study the factors that played role in tourists' culinary experience at a particular place. As a conclusion they identified that one's culinary experience largely consists of the overall service provided and that these experiences are based on the authenticity and locality of the food culture.

Contrary to the frequently positive perspective towards food tourism research, [Cohen and Avieli \(2004\)](#) discussed the other side of the topic, the complications Western tourists frequently have to face during their Third world food experience, such as low hygiene standards which are largely connected to health issues, low awareness of the local cuisine or the language barriers they have to deal with during their visit. From a completely different point of view, [Tikkanen \(2007\)](#) studied the food tourism experience from the psychological perspective. This study searched for the link between the Maslow's hierarchy of needs and motivation for tourism and the choices done by the travellers. This way, she identified five different kinds of food tourism in Finland of the time: food tourism based on psychological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs. In the first case, food and its quality is considered a tourist attraction. From the safety point of view, this kind of food tourism is mainly represented by the academic staff, health officers or people active in the food distribution process, who meet at various food related conferences. Food tourism from the social needs perspective is being represented by the food festivals and other food related events that aim at outsiders as well as local participants, that is to say at the socialisation element of food gatherings. The esteem needs are related to the specialised food tourism which gives the tourist a new understanding of a certain food product and as a result provides a certain esteem gain. The fifth and the last was the self-actualization needs point of view, which helps to rise the tourists' self-respect through their knowledge or skills related to food. In the light of globalisation and the emergence of new multi-ethnic nations, [Henderson \(2014\)](#) studied the relationship of food and globalised Singapore culture. Singapore, nowadays a global financial centre in the South East Asia, used to be a simple fisherman island and thanks to the British East India Company in the 1800s, it quickly turned into one the first truly globalised places on Earth, which caused the immigration of the surrounding nations. According to the study, food represents the connection with the past for any place and as such, it can

serve as a tool for the tourists to share and experience the history that is embedded into a place, in that case Singapore.

With the rising availability of food possibilities, a new kind of food tourist emerged, the so called foodie, and [Robinson and Getz \(2014\)](#) set out to study these food enthusiasts in Australia. Such people were described to be highly interested in food which drives them to seek food tourism experiences, in case of this study mainly within the national scope. They profiled the typical Australian foodie to be well-educated females who search for special food experiences that consist of food, culture and sights, and who find interest in traveling in order to experience this combination. Using the perspective of promotion and how it can be applied for branding a destination, [Okumus et al. \(2007\)](#) focused on finding how two different countries, Hong Kong and Turkey, use brochures, booklets and web sites to promote their national brand through food. While Hong Kong is a small multicultural country where Asian and Western influences merge, it uses the food promotional material far better and professionally than Turkey, geographically enormous country that has a rich historical and cultural heritage in comparison to Hong Kong. Such a cultural wealth offers immense possibilities for food promotion, however these possibilities find themselves pushed back from the focus of promotion materials by the generic trait of Turkey being a typical sunny vacation destination, a quality that can be easily interchangeable with any other country. Contradictory to the potential, this study shows how Turkey fails to promote what it has to offer, compared to Hong Kong that has to rely mainly on food since it does not count with such a strong cultural and historical heritage.

As the previously mentioned study by [Okumus et al. \(2007\)](#) showed, the food tourism researchers do not focus only on the well-established regions of the Western world. Increasingly it has become a tool for those parts of the world which are at their dawn of becoming tourist destinations. A thorough look has been put on the promotional materials developed by Malaysian government in the study by [Jalis et al. \(2014\)](#). Having quite similar cuisines as the neighbouring countries like Indonesia or the aforementioned Singapore, Malaysian government invested its resources into the visual presentation of Malaysia through its food. In order to distinguish itself, a number of promotional materials and entities – brochures, websites, travel agencies and government agencies – were developed as marketing strategies. The researchers

analysed these and found out that mainly photographs with the local foods, fruits or ingredients combined with number of words and phrases emphasising the quality and attractiveness of the Malay cuisine were used. The aim of such marketing strategy was to lure the tourists and was found to promote Malaysian identity as well the destination itself. On a similar note, [Okumus et al. \(2013\)](#) used this scope of studying promotional materials such as brochures or websites in comparison how these are being used by four different Caribbean islands – Aruba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Martinique. Even though each island used different approach towards their promotional materials, the authors noticed one common drawback that was found in all of them – all four national food tourism materials provided just superficial information on the food experiences.

From the perspective of tourist consumer preferences, [Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei \(2013\)](#) aimed at identifying which Ghana's local foods were popular among international tourists. Having interviewed nearly 700 tourists who were leaving the country, they identified 17 traditional dishes that received vast appreciation among the foreigners. Recognising there was a market potential, they concluded that raising awareness and improving packaging, quality and hygienic standards would positively influence the market of local foods and simultaneously, this would influence the Ghana society in terms of raising income for the locals through using local ingredients for the tourism sector. [Adongo et al. \(2015\)](#) followed up in a similar manner with the aim to investigate the tourist experiences with Ghana's cuisine. Not only they characterised five types of tourist experiences in relation to local cuisine, but more importantly they concluded that such experiences had a statistically significant effect on recommending the destination to others.

In search for consumer behaviour data [Torres and Phakdee-auksorn \(2017\)](#) explored the tourists' motives in relation to the street food of Phuket, Thailand. With a sample of 294 international tourists they identified that affection is the most influential motive among others like hygiene, food and service quality, and overall satisfaction and value. [Pestek and Cinjarevic \(2014\)](#) performed a similar study in an attempt to identify how visitors to Bosnia and Herzegovina perceive the image of local cuisine in the city of Sarajevo. Aiming at filling the gap between theoretical and practical application of food tourism research, the authors identified that large portion of tourists' satisfaction with their food



experience lies within the attributes that food should comply: “food quality and price”, “affective image of food” and “food uniqueness and cultural heritage” (Pestek & Cinjarevic 2014). Despite the uniqueness and heritage aspect of the experience being listed as third, it has been identified and underlined again by different authors in different setting as an important trait.

The common thread that can be found in the majority of research papers on food tourism is the accent on authenticity, locality and the potential for development of a “unique brand” based on the qualities which in most cases are not fully exploited. Pestek and Nikolic (2011) set out to find a new way of creating a tourist brand, the city of Mostar in Bosnia. As a historic city with rich culture, Mostar can count with the same unique combination of qualities that give it the potential for providing the tourist with a distinct experience. The authors suggested to combine the products and activities from various tourism sub-sectors such as rural, agro, religious and cultural, which would provide a pleasurable experience for the tourist. In order to utilise this combination for creation and development of the tourist brand of City of Mostar, they stressed out the need for the cooperation and trust among the number of stakeholders active in the local tourist sector. Trust among locals turned out to be an important key for creating the bond that effectively attracts outsiders and makes them experience the authenticity of a place.

Last but not least, an interesting study regarding the tourism-driven changes in Georgia was published by Gugushvili et al. (2017), who focused on how tourism development affected the Kazbegi region. They concluded that despite the obviously beneficial effect of tourism on economic development, the other sectors such as agriculture lacked such a positive effect and should receive more attention in order to balance the overall agri-tourism package.

### **2.1.3. Product specific tourism**

As seen above, food tourism research can be investigated based on the locality, promotion approaches or materials, experience, tourist perception or tourist motivation among others. Another approach is to focus on one specific product only. The biggest attention has been paid to wine so far, e.g. by Hall et al. (2000) in their extensive book which studied wine tourism around the globe. However the following paragraphs

demonstrate that the range of possible products that could benefit from development of a distinct product specific tourism is quite broad, for instance tea (Jolliffe 2007), coffee (Kleidas & Jolliffe 2010), beer (Plummer et al. 2005), tequila (Millán et al. 2014) or olive oil (López-Guzmán et al. 2016).

#### **2.1.3.1. Wine tourism**

Wine is a natural fit for fusion with tourism, given its characteristics and what people seek when they drink it (Bruwer 2003). In the food tourism research it became one of the prime product specific research directions and in terms of areas of the world, wine tourism research has been explored in Australia and New Zealand (Beverland 1998; Dowling & Carlsen 1999; Charters & Ali-Knight 2002; Mitchell & Hall 2003; Alonso et al. 2007; Sparks 2007; Bruwer et al. 2011), North America (Dodd 1995; Peters 1997; Skinner 2000; Telfer 2001; Williams & Kelly 2001; Williams & Dossa 2003; Hashimoto & Telfer 2003; Xu et al. 2016; Garibaldi et al. 2017), South America and South Africa (Preston-Whyte 2000; Sharples 2002; Bruwer 2003; Demhardt 2003; Hojman & Hunter-Jones 2012) and Europe (Gilbert 1992; Szivas 1999; Frochot 2000; López-Guzmán et al. 2011; Millán 2012; Colombini 2013; Gómez et al. 2015; Lourenco-Gomes et al. 2015; Nicolosi et al. 2016; Santeramo et al. 2017) among others.

Hall et al. (2000) described the wine tourism as “visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of the grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors.” This combination of possible attractions eventually led to development of the wine route concept. According to Bruwer (2003), wine route is a path designed specifically to connect wineries and vineyards in a particular area. They are designed to guide the tourists through the region so they visit the wine estates while getting to experience and enjoy the distinct landscape of that particular area. Additionally an element of exploration occurs through this activity. Outside of Europe, wine routes have been studied in a number of countries, e.g in Canada (Telfer 2001; Hashimoto & Telfer 2003), South Africa (Bruwer 2003), Israel (Jaffe & Pasternak 2004) or Chile (Hojman & Hunter-Jones 2012). However, despite attracting people to the region, there is a limit in terms of the actual geographical distance which the tourists would have to travel in

order to get there, and that it should not exceed approximately 200 km one way (Bruwer 1990).

A great number of authors focused on the aspect of consumer behaviour within the wine tourism context. In their study focused on Australian wine tourism, Bruwer et al. (2011) described the Australian wine tourists and how their preferences differ according to sex and age and how this projects into their wine purchase choices. Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) elaborated an extensive paper on wine tourism, profiling the wine tourists and studying their motivations, similarly to Sparks (2007) who investigated the tourists' intentions to take a wine tourism vacation and who implied the factors for predicting these intentions and therefore help promote wine tourism in Australia in the future. A demand analysis was performed by Getz and Brown (2006) with wine consumers in Calgary. Through the consumer oriented data, the authors identified key factors that would grant a given wine tourism destination its success. This type of wine tourists, which are the ones who undertake long-distance travel with a clear interest and motivation to explore wine, preferred destinations that offered a broad variety of attractions that ranged from outdoor to cultural activities. López-Guzmán et al. (2014) focused on wine tourists from Spain, Germany and the rest of Europe along the Spanish sherry wine route to conclude that there is a great satisfaction among the tourists with this type of product specific tourism. Similar approach was applied by Garibaldi et al. (2017) in search for profiling the wine tourists and tours in the US wine tourism industry. The American wine tourists they studied were prone to investing into a good wine and food experience, and they desired experiences that gave them the feeling of local and authentic, for which they were willing to pay more. To take a look back at the consumer behaviour research done since 2003, Lockshin and Corsi (2012) wrote a thorough literature review on consumer behaviour in relation to wine. Looking at all the research approaches applied in that decade, they concluded that study areas such as on-site consumer behaviour research, evaluation of the wine tourism industry or consumer behaviour in the context of emerging markets needed more attention.

North of Sicily, Aeolian Islands and their wine tourism sector were studied by Nicolosi et al. (2016) with the accent on the perspective of wine growers and how the industry in the context of Aeolian Islands is organised in relation to wine tourism. Interestingly the findings showed that poor marketing and lack of management would represent quite

a challenge for the wine tourism to be developed there. [Santeramo et al. \(2017\)](#) wrote an overview of Italian wine industry and the synergy between wine and tourism sectors, since both are crucial to Italian economy. According to their results, protected denominations of origin and promotion of agri-tourism sector are positively beneficial to maintenance and development of Italian economy. However tourists are not the only ones involved, that is why [Xu et al. \(2016\)](#) studied the topic of wine tourism from the residents' perspective. They concluded that the positive attitude of locals is crucial for successful development of wine tourism in the region and therefore the people active in wineries management should make an effort to show locals all the positive effects of wine tourism.

### **2.1.3.2. Coffee and tea tourism**

Coffee and tea share the position of being two of the most consumed drinks worldwide ([Jolliffe 2003](#); [Cheng et al. 2010](#)). History of each of them dates back hundreds or even thousands years ago ([Cheng et al. 2010](#); [Yilmaz et al. 2017](#)). The question of who was the first to drink coffee is yet unclear, but it is believed that the first person ever to drink coffee was a Yemeni shepherd. This is estimated to have happened in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and by the 15<sup>th</sup> century coffee spread through the Ottoman Empire and eventually to the Mediterranean and through Italy to the rest of Europe ([Yilmaz et al. 2017](#)). Tea on the other hand dates back up to four thousand years ago, when the Chinese started to use it as medicine and beverage. Drinking tea became a pastime for the royalty and eventually spread among the rest of the population as well ([Cheng et al. 2010](#)). Since both of these beverages have a lot to offer thanks to their history, worldwide popularity and the fact that people frequently enjoy them both home and while traveling, they offer yet another possibility to fuse food and tourism ([Jolliffe 2014](#)). According to [Jolliffe \(2010\)](#), coffee tourism means exploring the history, customs and culture of coffee destination, and the destinations can be divided into three types. These would be the coffee-producing countries which attract by the sole image of being coffee countries, locations with pronounced coffee culture or areas which took part in the history of coffee. [Kleidas and Jolliffe \(2010\)](#) studied the possible attractions in coffee tourism development and gave a number of examples of how old coffee joints served for transition into coffee tourism attractions, such as the example of Vienna's old coffee houses that were turned to be a lure for tourist since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Tea tourism is described as an activity driven by one's interest in the history, heritage and consumption of tea itself (Jolliffe 2007). Tea as a tourism product offers a range of services, tours, attractions and most importantly the destinations as well, and it can easily offer the uniqueness and authenticity to the present-day tourists and promote the destination and image branding (Jolliffe 2003). Other research done by Jolliffe and Aslam (2009) explored the story of Sri Lanka's tea heritage tourism. The case of an island formerly called Ceylon is a great example of how tourism can contribute to saving and restoring the tradition of specific agricultural products and their history. This study highlighted the potential of tea tourism in enhancing the living standards of Sri Lanka's rural areas while preserving the whole tea industry. Accommodations, tea centres, retail businesses, all this contributes to the overall tea experience the tourist can get while visiting the region and makes the difference in adding the value to Sri Lanka's tea in the global context. Similarly to the rest of food tourism areas, tea has been subject to consumer behaviour studies as well. Cheng et al. (2010) researched the tourists' attitudes in relation to tea tourism in their case study in Xinyang (China), identifying the tea tourists to be middle aged people of both sexes with strong interest in tea and its culture who invest plenty of their time into tea related activities. The paper by Zhou et al. (2016) surveyed roughly 250 academics in the USA, China and Taiwan in search for their tea tourism experiences and expectations. According to their findings, demographic characteristics such as age, sex or cultural background define the tourists' particular interests in tea tourism and therefore should be taken into account by the tea tourism planners. Sigley (2010) on the other hand focused on the Ancient Tea Horse Road in China and how tourism can possibly help preserve this cultural heritage, but in the same time even menace its fragile existence. The author explains how succumbing to the globalised mass tourism can in fact manifest as a destructive force to the remnants of the formerly great tea trading route instead of saving it.

### **2.1.3.3. Beer tourism**

Similarly to food, wine or tea, beer tourism research focused on consumer behaviour and specialty trails as well. Plummer et al. (2005) studied the Waterloo-Wellington Ale Trail in Canada, in other terms beer route. This survey performed during 3 years among more than two thousand respondents revealed the profile of the typical beer tourist and their experience along this route in Canada and again, partnership among the

stakeholders involved in the beer route was advised. This paper also addressed the subtle difference of beer compared to the rest of the studied beverages. In branding wine, or tea for that matter, the place of origin is highly important, contrary to beer which can be brewed theoretically anywhere (Plummer et al. 2005). Consumer behaviour or preferences of beer tourists were studied mainly in the context of craft beer versus the industrial beer sector (Kraftchick et al. 2014; Aquilani et al. 2015; Gómez Corona et al. 2016; Donaldini & Porretta 2017). Four motivation factors were found to influence tourists while visiting breweries in North Carolina – their experience with craft beers, the joy of meeting other people and experiencing beer, and the consumption itself (Kraftchick et al. 2014), similarly to Donaldini and Porretta (2017) who searched for patterns in beer choices among men and women. Motivations among beer consumers were studied in Mexico as well, comparing the craft and industrial beer choices among visitors to beer festival in Mexico City (Gómez Corona et al. 2016).

#### **2.1.3.4. Tequila tourism**

Yet again on a similar note to all the beverages above, tequila has awakened the interest of scholars to study its possible implementation into tourism management planning in order to promote the traditional tequila regions and traditions (Gonzalez 2008; González-Torres 2010; Gómez 2010; Hernández-López 2009; Barajas & González 2008). In conformity with the rest of the similar product specific tourism fields, there exists a tequila tourist route in Jalisco, Mexico, which connects the stakeholders who participate in tequila manufacture, provides a competitive advantage for the whole region and presents the local culture (Venegas 2011). In agreement with the previous study, Millán et al. (2014) accents promoting cooperation and trust within the community in order to establish tourism routes in the region. This way tequila tourism is presented as a sustainable proposition for economic growth, increase in production and augment in the competitiveness compared to other regions.

#### **2.1.3.5. Olive oil tourism**

While majority of the literature focuses on beverages, there are studies that applied the food tourism optics on a culinary ingredient, despite the ingredient being also a liquid. Originally olive oil tourism research started in Australia with papers by Alonso and Northcote (2010) and Northcote and Alonso (2011), and later shifted towards the main

olive oil producing area – Europe. Millán and Pérez (2014) through their comparison of wine and olive oil tourist suggest that the three different economic sectors – wine, olive oil and tourism – could very well work together in supporting the rural development of the Spanish countryside. A useful motivation and socio-demographic profile of tourists was provided by López-Guzmán et al. (2016) in their consumer behaviour oriented study. Among the main motivations for tourists, “Learning about the world of olive oil” (López-Guzmán et al. 2016) ranked second in the category of what made them visit the given geographical area, similarly to the subsequent study by Moral et al. (2017), who identified that the main motive for both national and international tourists was the wish to learn about olive oil and the region. Millán et al. (2017) performed a study among the companies of the olive oil production chain in order to assess how much they participate in the development of olive oil-based tourist routes in the Spanish province of Andalusia. As the Spanish gastronomic tourism grew in popularity in the recent years, it received a wide support of the local authorities who endorse the development of gastronomic routes such as wine or in this case olive oil. However every story has two sides and the second side in this one are the residents, who benefit from the fruits of tourism development, but have to bear the consequences as well. That is why Campón et al. (2017) studied how residents and their attachment and quality of life contribute to olive oil tourism development. A strong relationship was found between the improvement of residents’ quality of life and how tangible it is for them and further tourism development, as well as the crucial role local people play in planning the future development of rural tourism.

## **2.2. *Vanilla planifolia* and its production**

Vanilla, a term we usually associate with a fragrant aroma or flavour portrayed by a beautiful yellow flower, is in majority of cases the cured fruit of the *Vanilla planifolia* Jacks., so called “Bourbon” or “Mexican” vanilla. This plant is a tropical hemi epiphyte vine which belongs to the *Orchidaceae* family (Soto Arenas 2009; Gigant et al. 2011) and is native mainly to the Eastern parts of Mexico (Correll 1953; Bory et al. 2008; Soto Arenas 2009; Gigant et al. 2011). It thrives in hot and humid tropical climate with temperatures ranging between 20-32°C and precipitations of up to 3,000mm. In times when precipitations exceed this amount, *Fusarium* sp. becomes an issue as the cause of stem and root rot (de Guzman & Zara 2012). On the other hand pronounced period of



water stress of approximately 50 days long, which stimulates the flowering, is highly advised (Kahane et al. 2008), however excessive drought represents a major problem for vanilla producers as well (Hernández-Hernández 2011). In natural conditions the plant climbs the trees in the nearest surroundings up to the height of 15 metres, however these days the cultural practice is to use tutors, commonly orange trees (Barrera-Rodríguez et al. 2011). They provide the optimal amount of shade between 40 (Kahane et al. 2008) to 50 per cent (Hernández-Hernández 2011) which are suitable for optimal growth of vanilla. When the plant reaches a certain point, the growers usually bend it down in order to maintain a height not higher than 2 metres (Hernández-Hernández 2011).

This single vanilla species accounts for up to 95% of the world's vanilla trade (Bory et al. 2008; Lubinsky et al. 2008). Among all the issues that make vanilla so delicate and therefore costly, reproduction is the most serious one as this crop is almost absolutely dependent on manual pollination performed by the farmer in order to achieve successful production. According to Lubinsky et al. (2006) it is the only crop in the world cultivated purely thanks to highly laborious and time consuming process of manual pollination. Natural reproduction occurs rather rarely, approximately in 1% of the cases due to the floral characteristics and lack of *Melipona* bees in the present day, who act as natural pollinators (Lubinsky et al. 2006) and can be found only in Central and South America (Bory et al. 2008).

Out of all the processes that are necessary to perform in vanilla production chain, curing is another crucial factor to consider. This process transforms the green vanilla fruit into the final product that exhibits the characteristic aroma, which would be non-existent without it (de Guzman & Zara 2012). Curing comprises of four main steps: so called killing, sweating, drying and conditioning (Kahane et al. 2008). The first stage, killing, is supposed to terminate vegetative life and induce changes in chemical composition of the fruit. Sweating comprises of keeping the beans in conditions of high temperature and humidity, which supports the enzymatic reactions, and represents the stage in which vanilla beans get their sensory characteristics such as aroma, flavour and colour. Drying and conditioning are the last steps of the curing process and have the purpose of preservative processes for the final product (Havkin-Frenkel & Frenkel 2006).



Since natural vanilla is costly to produce, chemical industry has taken advantage of the situation and nowadays, a number of chemical substituents with similar flavour like vanilla, such as synthetic vanillin, methyl vanillin and ethyl vanillin, take up nearly whole vanilla market in the US (de Guzman & Zara 2012). Raw materials used for synthetic vanillin production are usually eugenol, guaiacol, safrole and lignin (Correl 1953), as well as other chemicals such as coumarin, which has been banned by the food authorities in the US during the past century due to its toxicity (Marles et al. 1987).

Nowadays, the world production market is divided between Madagascar and Indonesia, the two major producing countries, followed by China, Papua New Guinea and Mexico (FAOSTAT 2017). In the context of the rest of the world, the average yield in Mexico is quite low, due to the lack of modern technologies, which unfortunately are not applicable in Mexico because of the environmental, socio-cultural and economic context of the Totonacapan region (Toussaint-Samat 2002).

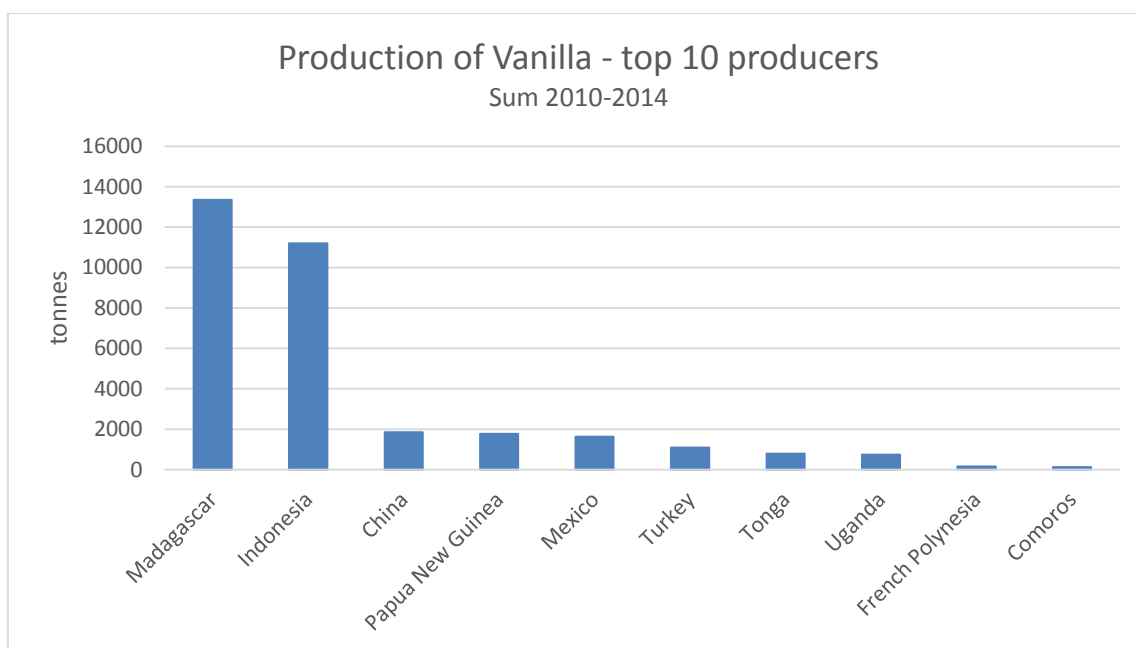


Figure 1 World's top 10 vanilla producers

Source: FAOSTAT (2017)

Most common use of vanilla can be found in the food flavouring industry, since vanilla represents the main and most popular flavour in many food products such as ice creams, drinks or sweets. Additionally it is vastly used in perfumery and it has also been reported that chemical compounds which form the vanilla flavour exhibit medical

properties. Except for these areas, vanilla beans are also processed into vanilla extract, oleoresin, sugar, and vanilla absolute (de Guzman & Zara 2012).

### 2.2.1. Vanilla in Mexico

As it was mentioned earlier in this text, the uniqueness of natural pollinators was the reason why vanilla used to be commercially exclusive to the East-Mexican region of Totonacapan for over 250 years (Kourí 2004). Papantla was the town which gained the leading position in vanilla trade and quickly became globally known as the “town that perfumed the world”. It managed to hold the monopoly until the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kourí 2004) when the hand pollination method, used until today, was established in Réunion (Correll 1953). This led to the export of cultivation towards the rest of the tropics and represented the beginning of the end of the Mexican reign in vanilla trade. In terms of vanilla production and trade, there are four major types of vanilla that are commercialized worldwide according the region of production: Mexican vanilla originating only in Mexico, Bourbon vanilla from the island of Reunion as well as Madagascar, Tahiti and Javanese vanilla. Additionally there are other vanilla species such as *Vanilla pompona*, so called vanillon, which are commercialised as vanilla bean in minor quantities (Correll 1953).

Even though there have been some polemics questioning how much of cultural value vanilla had for the Totonaca people (Lubinsky et al. 2008), there is no doubt that the above mentioned period lasting over 250 years formed an inseparable connection between Papantla and vanilla (Correll 1953; Kourí 2004; Lubinsky et al. 2008). However, even though historically linked to this region, several factors caused this iconic crop to become threatened with disappearing from its region of origin. These factors were major fluctuations in market prices as a result of the vanilla crisis in the beginning of the new millennia (Soto Arenas 2006; Barrera-Rodríguez et al. 2011), emergence of new producing rivals like China and Papua New Guinea, development of petrol industry which impacted the region as well as the 1941 presidential decree, which sets the fix date for harvesting the pods, resulting, among other things, in a production of unequal quality (Soto Arenas 2006; Hipólito 2011; Herrera-Cabrera et al. 2012). This set of circumstances caused the farmers to leave vanilla cultivation due to its low profitability.

On the other hand thanks to the history there is between Papantla and vanilla and the fact that it is one of the most famous aromas in the world, there is a potential to form a strong tourist attraction based on a unique brand. However, it is not being exploited as adequately as it could be. This could be attributed to the long term fall of world market importance of Mexican vanilla due to the emergence of other producing countries (FAOSTAT 2017). The questioned relationship of the actual Totonaca people to vanilla (Lubinsky et al. 2008) could also be a potential factor in the issue. Regardless of this, people come explore Papantla's history and they are interested in vanilla while doing so. To draw new ideas how to use tourism in favour of vanilla production in Mexico, let us present the field of food tourism and what it shares with the case of Mexican vanilla.

### **2.3. Vanilla and tourism**

Tourism has the potential to support economic development, however, this potential can reach out even further. Hall et al. (2003) suggested that the benefits can include preserving local fauna and flora, as well as local identity. In this context, combination of Mexican vanilla and tourism became our object of focus. Formerly very famous, today at a fraction of its past glory, vanilla is under the threat of disappearing from its place of origin (Soto Arenas 2006; Hipólito 2011). In the same time, vanilla tourism exists in some form already, even though arguably it is represented just by a small local effort of promoting vanilla souvenirs to the tourists as a secondary product while visiting an archaeology site. One might argue that vanilla does not qualify neither as food nor beverage, the two common objects of food tourism research, however, examples presented in the previous paragraphs show that there are more than enough similarities to try and see vanilla with the same perspective as cuisines, wine, tea, beer or any other specific product related to tourism. Vanilla is an ingredient, yet the number of studies regarding olive oil, also just an ingredient, and tourism (Alonso & Northcote 2010; Northcote & Alonso 2011; Millán & Pérez 2014; López-Guzmán et al. 2016; Moral et al. 2017; Millán et al. 2017; Campón et al. 2017) clearly show that this does not need to be an impediment for pointing our attention towards it. Similarly from the perspective of territory, the number of examples on tequila tourism in form of tequila routes and its promotion as a sustainable future for the region of Jalisco, Mexico demonstrates that geographically speaking, there are obvious links that could be applied at vanilla as well (González 2008; González-Torres 2010; Gómez 2010; Hernández-López 2009;

Venegas 2011; Millán et al. 2014). The historical origin of vanilla (Correll 1953; Kourí 2004; Lubinsky et al. 2008) is an asset no other place other than Papantla can claim and as Hall et al. (2003) pointed out, those who manage to contain the uniqueness of a product based on its origin will get a competitive advantage in the market that is turning more and more globalised every day. According to Bruwer (2003), it is essential to build up trust between the stakeholders in order to succeed in presenting any brand outside the community to the consumers. In order to do that, Bruwer (2003) formulated that “a better understanding of cellar-door visitors to a region would enable wineries to develop more appropriate and improved wine tourism products”. Bearing in mind how frequent the consumer behaviour approach is across all the food/beverage tourism study fields, we set out to search for the consumer behaviour of the vanilla tourist.

### **3. Aims of the Thesis**

Considering the extent of research done on various different kinds of foods, beverages and food ingredients, effects of this kinds of tourism on livelihood improvement, region and sector development and last but not least, preservation of such food products in the regions of origin, we decided to explore the tourist consumer behaviour in relation to Mexican vanilla and how the practical implications resulting from this study could potentially help in preserving this biocultural heritage. Additionally, this research aimed at describing the vendors' errors that prevent from developing a more profitable business. In accordance to [Henderson \(2009\)](#), our expectation was that the consumer behaviour data collected could be used to improve the sales, which would theoretically create higher demand for local vanilla and in turn, motivate local farmers to keep on cultivating the crop. In the long term, that could support maintaining vanilla in its region of origin.

Therefore, on a practical basis, the main objectives of this study were:

- to describe the tourists' profile in the region of Papantla;
- to identify the factors that influenced their decision on whether to purchase the local vanilla products or not;
- and to highlight the potential for improvement in promoting these products.

## **4. Material and methods**

### **4.1. Research approach**

The data were collected from September 2016 to January 2017, via structured questionnaire filled out by the researcher during the face-to-face dialogue. According to the language skills of each respondent, either Spanish or English version of the questionnaire was offered. Design of the questionnaire was based on studies by [Kilchling et al. \(2009\)](#), who performed a consumer and seller oriented survey regarding the Swiss non-timber forest products market, [Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei \(2013\)](#), who aimed at analysing the tourists' preference for traditional foods from Ghana and [López-Guzmán et al. \(2016\)](#) and [Moral et al. \(2017\)](#), two papers which focused on studying the olive oil tourist from consumer behaviour perspective. These studies gave us an inspiration for the basic structure of our survey, and the questionnaire was therefore designed to provide various data on respondents' socio-demographic profile, experience and suggestions.

In the first section, the questions aimed at learning the origin of tourists flowing towards the area, the most frequently used means of transport, time they spent in the area, primary reasons for visiting the area and what other points of interest the tourists had. Second part of the questions focused at tourists' knowledge about vanilla, its origin, substitutes and their effect on human health. Third part of the questions aimed at describing the tourists' experience with vanilla based products during their visit at the site, as well as their interest in other products that can contain vanilla and potentially could be used to broaden the portfolio of products offered at the site in the future. Lastly, the respondents were asked for any additional suggestions they might have had for the vendors in terms of possible improvements of marketing of the products, their organization or sales strategies. We gathered a total number of 301 questionnaires.

### **4.2. Study area**

Papantla is a town located in the northern parts of the state of Veracruz, Mexico (Figure 2), by the Gulf of Mexico. The state of Veracruz is one of the 32 states and administrative units that form the United Mexican States. It is largely defined by natural borders - the Gulf of Mexico in the east, and Sierra Madre Oriental, in the west. The

town of Papantla lies within the Totonacapan region, historically populated by the Totonaca indigenous people. In 2010, the whole Papantla municipality was inhabited by 158,599 people, out of which approximately 40% belonged to the indigenous population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática 2010).



Figure 2 Location of Papantla municipality within the state of Veracruz, Mexico

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Modified with consent of the author

Other than being the place of origin of vanilla, the region is known by two other major attractions. These are the (i) Danza de Los Voladores de Papantla, an indigenous ceremony, and (ii) El Tajín, a pre-colombian archaeological site. The latter was chosen for the purpose of this study as it is conveniently located near Papantla, as well as listed in the UNESCO World Heritage list, which promised the highest concentration of tourists in the neighbouring surroundings. Annually approximately 400,000 tourists, mostly nationals (98%), pay a visit to this site during the whole year according to Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (2017), which ranks it among Mexico's most influential archaeological sites. As it is a major touristic attraction, countless



souvenir stands are located by the entrance to the site, with the offer ranging from T-shirts or pottery to products made of vanilla (Figure 3).



Figure 3 Typical souvenir stand in front of the site

For the purpose of this study, we focused on the three most common vanilla based products offered in the area: extract, vanilla beans and artisanal craft products. Together with the souvenir stands, these products were also offered in the gift shop, situated just a few steps from the ticket desk, and by the individual vendors who were spread across the ruins. However, the vendors' offer varied from one to all three products, depending on each individual. Due to the characteristics of the site, where entrance and exit were situated at the same place, the non-random convenience sampling method was chosen for data collection. All the people entering the site had to pass through or next to all the above mentioned points – souvenir stands, gift shop and indigenous vendors – of possible encounter with the products before they were asked for their participation in the survey.



### 4.3. Data analysis

The collected data were processed in MS Excel 2016 for descriptive statistics and further on in IBM SPSS 24 (Robinson & Getz 2014; López-Guzmán et al. 2014; López-Guzmán et al. 2016; Moral et al. 2017). The  $\chi^2$  statistical method was applied (Amuquandoh & Asafo-Adjei 2013) in order to assess whether there was a statistically significant relationship between respondents' characteristics (age, sex, provenance, length of stay in the region, knowledge about vanilla, source of such knowledge and place of encounter with the products) and their decision making regarding the purchase of the vanilla products. That is to say whether one resulted to be a customer, potential customer or non-customer. Additionally, in order to summarize the main keywords regarding respondents' additional suggestions and therefore depict the drawbacks limiting the actual sales, word cloud method was used as an effective way of visualizing the most frequently used words (McNaught & Lam 2010).

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Respondents' profile

There were 151 males and 150 females among the respondents and their socio-demographic characteristics are shown in the Table 1. The age distribution of the sample was leaning towards rather younger age groups, with the ages 18-39 accounting for 69.4 % of all participants. The two major centres which the respondents stated as their last destination before arriving at Papantla region were the southern parts of the state of Veracruz and the central parts of Mexico, such as the capital Mexico City and the states of Hidalgo and Puebla, while the most prevalent type of transportation to the site was a private vehicle. Most of the respondents stated they had spent either only just a couple of hours or 2 to 3 days in the region. In terms of nationality composition of the study sample, the majority (83.1 %) of all the respondents were Mexicans. The rest of the respondents belonged to another 21 foreign nationalities (these included Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Great Britain, Austria, Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Poland, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Cuba, USA, Canada and Reunion), however consisted of only small part (16.9 %) of the sample.

Table 1 The socio-demographic profiles of the respondents

Characteristic	Total (%)	Customer (%)	Potential customer (%)	Non-customer (%)	$\chi^2$ (p value)*
<i>Sample</i>	100	27.2	51.5	21.3	
<i>Sex</i>					0.241
Male	50.2	46.3	48.4	59.4	
Female	49.8	53.7	51.6	40.6	
<i>Age</i>					0.365
<18	6.0	7.3	5.8	4.7	
19-29	38.2	28.0	40.0	46.9	
30-39	25.2	28.0	25.8	20.3	
40-49	15.6	15.9	16.8	12.5	
50-59	7.3	12.2	5.8	4.7	
>60	7.6	8.5	5.8	10.9	
<i>Provenance</i>					<b>0.014</b>
Southern Veracruz	32.9	43.9	25.8	35.9	
Central Mexico	38.5	31.7	44.5	32.8	
North of Papantla	8.6	13.4	6.5	7.8	
Poza Rica	15.9	8.5	20.0	15.6	
Other	4.0	2.4	3.2	7.8	
<i>Length of stay in the region</i>					0.277
<1 day	38.9	30.5	40.6	45.3	
1 day	19.9	18.3	22.6	15.6	

2-3 days	31.6	35.4	30.3	29.7	
4-7 days	3.7	4.9	2.6	4.7	
>7 days	6.0	11.0	3.9	4.7	
<i>Knowledge about vanilla<sup>a</sup></i>					
<i>Knew the products already</i>	77.4	91.5	73.5	68.8	<b>0.001</b>
<i>Knew how vanilla is being produced</i>	65.4	68.3	64.5	64.1	0.816
<i>Knew it is an orchid</i>	53.8	61.0	50.3	53.1	0.292
<i>Knew about its origin</i>	55.5	63.4	61.9	29.7	<b>0.000</b>
<i>Source of information</i>					
Friend	4.3	7.3	1.9	6.3	
Family member	30.9	39.0	25.8	32.8	
Vendor	39.2	26.8	50.3	28.1	
Promotional material	5.3	6.1	5.2	4.7	
Mass media	8.0	7.3	8.4	7.8	
Other	9.0	13.4	8.4	15.6	
<i>Place of encounter with the products</i>					
Local market	8.5	20.7	3.2	8.5	<b>0.000</b>
Souvenir stands	40.1	28.0	42.6	40.1	
Individual vendor	48.9	47.6	52.3	48.9	
Gift shop	1.8	2.4	1.9	1.8	
Other	0.7	1.2	0.0	0.7	

Note: most notable findings in bold; \*p level=0.05; a=percentage of those who answered “yes” to each question

The results shown above indicate that the common characteristics such as sex, age or length of stay in the region did not play such a significant role in our respondents’ decision making. Even though there were more women among the customers, and more men among the non-customers, this finding did not prove statistically significant enough ( $p>0.05$ ). According to our results, what made the difference in whether one decided to make the purchase or not turned out to be a combination of factors related to information about vanilla - previous knowledge of vanilla products ( $p=0.001$ ), the source of such knowledge ( $p=0.004$ ) and the place where the respondent had encountered them ( $p=0.000$ ) before coming to the study site. Having known the products prior to arriving at the site made the difference between an actual customer and a potential one, since those who had already known the products were more likely to buy them. Another significant relationship was found in the way the respondent learned about the products, given that the predominant source of knowledge about vanilla among the customers was a family member, while the first time the potential customers learned about it was from the vendors. The awareness of the fact that Papantla was vanilla’s place of origin proved to be another important factor ( $p=0.000$ ), since there was significantly lower awareness of such fact among the non-customers in comparison to the customers and potential customers. The last factor to be taken into consideration was the provenance of the respondents ( $p=0.014$ ). The customers were mostly coming

from southern parts of the Veracruz state, whereas potential customers mostly from the urban areas in the central Mexico. Such findings indicate the relative awareness of tourists native to the state of Veracruz regarding vanilla, and also show the potential to expand the promotion of such awareness in the capital.

## 5.2. The study site context

Even though all the visitors had to pass through at least four places where vanilla products were offered to them, not everybody seemed to notice. The easiest products to encounter and therefore the most visible ones were the extract and vanilla beans, mostly thanks to the indigenous vendor ladies who were stationed along the corridor following the entrance and exit points to the ruins (Figure 4), who also happened to be the main point of encounter with vanilla products for nearly half of the potential customers.



Figure 4 Indigenous vendor offering vanilla plants, cured beans and extract

However, the way they presented the products resulted in a great number of potential customers, who left only thinking about the purchase, but not actually making it. The usual display was a selection of products laid down on the ground or a bush, in a plastic

bag or container missing any indications that could attract one's attention and make him familiar with the offered product in advance. Among the souvenir stands, the usual display was an extreme amount of various different products, where the potential customer often found the vanilla extract hidden behind a set of Russian Matryoshkas, and the most illogical case of not using the potential value of vanilla was the one and only souvenir stand specialized in vanilla products. In the context of another dozens of souvenir stands that seemed exactly identical, this one that stood out of the metaphorical crowd was squeezed in between two ordinary souvenir stands of four times the size, which made it nearly invisible (Figure 5).



Figure 5 The only vanilla specialised souvenir stand at the site

The official gift shop, supposedly the best organized place to offer vanilla products, in fact did offer all the products in good quality, with labels and certifications and in great variety. However, even though situated just a few steps from the ticket counter, and on the way to the toilettes, it was missing any indications whatsoever (Figure 6) and therefore remained unnoticed for most of the respondents.





Figure 6 Official gift shop

### 5.3. Respondents' experience with vanilla products

We observed a great gap between those who came across the products and expressed their interest in them versus those who actually purchased them. The most notable difference (Figure 7) was observed in the case of vanilla beans and artisanal craft products, when only one fifth of those who expressed their interest in the product actually bought it, while in the case of the extract, it was one third.

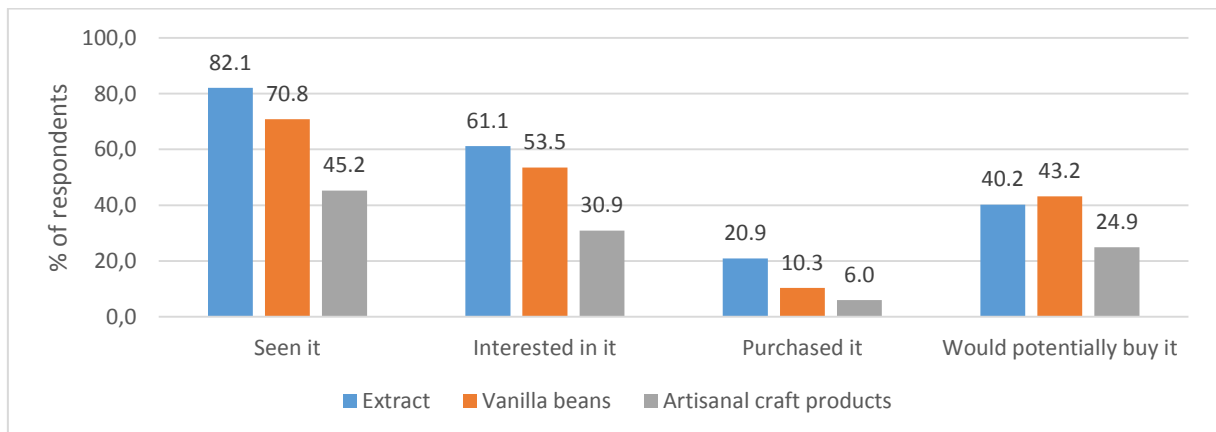


Figure 7 Respondents' experience with vanilla products

In general, out of all the respondents who expressed their interest in the products, only a modest number actually bought them. In total there were 82 customers who bought at least one or more of the vanilla products. The following motives were cited as the main reasons of purchase: home use (29.5 %); interest in local culture (18.9 %); aroma (18.9 %); out of pure liking (15.8 %); intention to give it as a present (5.3 %); curiosity (3.2 %); persistence of the vendor (3.2 %) and other reasons (5.3 %). In terms of the economic potential of each product, the respondents were buying mostly extract, however in terms of value per person it generated, it appeared the least promising product out of the three. On the other hand, vanilla beans, even though not so much sought after, generated nearly double the value per person compared to the extract. The artisanal craft products, despite generating more value per person than extract, turned out to be the least important product of the three as only few people went on to purchase it (Table 2).

Table 2 Spendings of the respondents

Products	Customers (n)	Total expenses (EUR)	Average spending per person (EUR)
<i>Total</i>	82	299.9	3.7
Extract	63	124.2	2.0
Vanilla beans	31	121.3	3.9
Artisanal craft products	18	54.4	3.0

Note: Exchange rate (05/05/2017) of 1 MXN = 0.04814 EUR / 1 EUR = 20.7726 MXN

The next part of the sample were the potential customers represented by 155 respondents who expressed their interest in at least one vanilla product and would consider the purchase, but under different circumstances. The motives for deciding not to make the purchase at that moment are shown in the Table 3.

Table 3 Reasons for not purchasing the products

Reason	n cited	%
Waiting with the purchase upon leaving the site	63	40.6
Is not convinced at the moment	30	19.4
Has no use for the product	11	7.1
Does not know how to use the product	10	6.5
Lack of money	10	6.5
Already has the product	8	5.2
Cannot take it into the airplane	8	5.2
Poor visual aspect of the product	7	4.5
Can get it easier at home	4	2.6
Price	3	1.9

At last, 262 keywords regarding the respondents' impression of the vanilla tourism business at the site were identified and organized into following groups: *Lack of information* (83), *Poor visual presentation of the products* (83), *Organization of the vendors* (46), *Product offer* (28) and *Selling strategies* (22). Even though just a few respondents (7) stated the visual aspect of the products as the reason for not making the purchase, looking at the individual keywords as shown below (Figure 8), we can say that it played a certain role in their decision making. Generally poor visual presentation of the souvenir stands and products, missing labels, contents and certificates, were mentioned the most. These were identified, together with overall lack of information, absent promotion or no information regarding the possible use for the products, as the most crucial issues preventing the vendors to successfully get more customers, as reported by the respondents.



Figure 8 Keywords regarding the vanilla products  
 Lack of information (light blue); Poor visual presentation of the products (red); Organization of the vendors (dark blue); Product offer (green); Selling strategies (orange)



## 6. Discussion

This study provides the first insight into the connection between tourism and vanilla, an essential part of many foods, yet not exactly a food product itself. Using the optics of searching for the usual food tourism experience, as in [Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei \(2013\)](#), [López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares \(2012\)](#) or [Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen \(2014\)](#), was not entirely possible, since vanilla itself represents an ingredient rather than a distinctive food product or food style. There exist no vanilla routes, in contrast to wine or tea, which would support the producers by providing an extra food tourism experience, as found in South Africa ([Bruwer 2003](#)), North America ([Plummer et al. 2005](#)), Europe ([Millán 2012](#); [López-Guzmán et al. 2014](#)) or Asia ([Jolliffe & Aslam 2009](#)). Furthermore it cannot be compared to certain dining practices, which form part of the food tourism experience ([López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares 2012](#)), or to distinguished national cuisines, which attract visitors for their far-famed name such as French or Italian, either.

Yet there are two comparisons that can be made, with tequila and olive oil, both of which share some aspects with vanilla tourism. Research done on tequila ([Venegas 2011](#), [Millán et al. 2014](#)), a product that has a very strong connection to the region of Jalisco, shows that geographically speaking, it is possible and very advisable to promote a genuine and original Mexican product that has a rich history bound to the region, and to develop a tourist route based on this product ([Venegas 2011](#)). Olive oil research on the other hand shares the important characteristic of being simply an ingredient to other food applications or cosmetics, similarly to vanilla ([Millán & Pérez 2014](#); [López-Guzmán et al. 2016](#); [Millán et al. 2017](#); [Moral et al. 2017](#)). In their comparative study of wine and olive oil tourist profiles, [Millán and Pérez \(2014\)](#) accented that wine, olive oil and tourism can easily work together in synergy to promote rural development, which would be especially beneficial for olive oil production since this sector was the least developed out of the three. Applied to the case of Papantla and vanilla, this synergy of archaeology, vanilla and tourism exists already, but as shown in our results, needs to be shaped and nurtured in order to boost the current vanilla production sector.

The results show that vanilla proved itself a very interesting and promising food related product which lures the tourists' interest and can provide a food experience in its own

way. It revealed the tendencies and preferences of the tourists, who travel to the by far most important tourist site in the region, in relation to vanilla - the region's genuinely local and original product (Correll 1953; Kourí 2004; Lubinsky et al. 2008). The origin and uniqueness of certain product has been pointed out as a crucial advantage in the market competition (Hall et al. 2003), therefore promoting and embracing these characteristics of Mexican vanilla is strongly recommended. It is the story behind which can make the difference when promoting the Papantla's vanilla. Despite the possibly inferior quality in comparison to the produce from the leading producing countries, this one can truly tell a legend accompanying its creation (Instituto Mexicano de la Propiedad Industrial 2016). Information is the key component for Mexican vanilla in the pursuit for customers, however, at the same time information was unfortunately one of the two strikingly lacking elements at the study site.

As Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2014) pointed out, the food experience largely comprises of “what, where and how” is offered to the traveller. Following this narrative, we can identify the main issues revealed in this study. The food experience offered here was mainly the extract and vanilla beans, the components primarily suitable for further use in home cookery, or artisanal craft products, such as earrings or wristbands, which do not qualify as food products. We documented quite a notable interest in the products, but the sales proved to be much lower than they could have been. For offering just the “raw” material such as extract or vanilla bean, there was a crucial lack of information accompanying these products. The respondents often either did not know what the products were, or how to use them, in case they knew. The results show that the previous knowledge of the products and source of such knowledge were the leading factors in converting a potential customer into an actual one. At the same time, for offering the visitors the memorable experience, specific food products, such as genuine vanilla ice cream, were missing at the site. When it comes to “where”, there were plenty of opportunities to get acquainted with the vanilla products. Countless of stands in front of the entrance, gift shop by the entrance and numerous indigenous vendors inside the site. Theoretically the visitor could not have gotten away without at least a small vanilla bracelet in his or her hands. Yet there was quite a number of respondents who did not even notice certain products. This brings us to the most problematic issue - how the products were presented. Even though van Herpen et al. (2016) discussed the benefits of

removing the primary packaging from products, our case turned out the opposite. It was the packaging and positioning of the products that reduced their impact on the tourists. Despite the low number of respondents citing the visual aspects as the motive for not purchasing the products, in the later part of the questionnaire the respondents themselves simultaneously identified these characteristics as equally important to them as information. It was not surprising as a similar observation was made by [Kilchling et al. \(2009\)](#), who came across the same behaviour in Swiss urban consumers regarding the sales of non-timber forest products. In contrast to [Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei \(2013\)](#), our results did not prove a statistically significant link between age, sex and the respondents' decision. [Millán et al. \(2017\)](#) suggested that in order to promote the olive oil tourism and therefore sales of the product, opening up the olive oil facilities to visitors is a must since such tourists would be highly likely to search for and demand these products in the shops of their hometowns. This is in accordance to other consumer behaviour studies related to olive oil ([López-Guzmán et al. 2016](#); [Moral et al. 2017](#)) which identified the interest in olive oil and its production as one of the main pull factors for tourists. We suggest that getting the potential vanilla tourists acquainted not only with the product, but farms and traditional processing facilities as well, could provide additional help for the sales of Mexican vanilla products and create higher demand for them. Additionally, more attention is advised to the promotion of vanilla products outside of the State of Veracruz, especially in large urban areas such as Mexico City because great amount of potential customers came from there.

There have been certain limitations to this study as well. In spite of vanilla not being an ordinary food product, which was a limitation itself, this study is the first to provide an insight into the combination of food tourism and vanilla, therefore further research is advised. We suggest that comparison at another sites, especially in urban areas, is done in the future. Additionally the survey did not cover the peak tourist season, which certainly influenced the amount of visitors at the site. Yet despite these limitations, our study provides the first insight into the consumer behaviour of tourists when it comes to promoting Mexican vanilla at one particular site. It offers valuable data which could be used by the authorities active in the tourism management planning, as well as vanilla marketers, producers or cooperatives. It also offers a new perspective into the research regarding vanilla, making an addition to the previous scientific literature focused mainly

on the taxonomy (Soto Arenas 2009; Gigant et al. 2011), genetics (Herrera-Cabrera et al. 2012) or agronomical practices and economics (Barrera-Rodríguez et al. 2011; Hernández-Hernández 2011). Finally, as Henderson (2009) suggests, food tourism can positively influence the employment in certain sectors and help maintain local farming. Together with the growing number of evidences from around the world, this supports our hypothesis that tourism can contribute to preserving Mexican vanilla in the region of its origin, and the consumer behaviour data provided show the first insight into how that could be achieved.

## **7. Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to provide a new perspective on current vanilla research by connecting it with food tourism field. A particular focus has been put on Mexican vanilla which is native to the town of Papantla. This consumer behaviour survey described the socio-demographic characteristics of tourists who visit El Tajín, the most important touristic archaeological site of the Papantla region. Tourists' profile was provided, as well as indications on their flow to the site and means of transport. It also revealed that mainly factors such as knowledge of vanilla products, the source of such knowledge and means of learning about them, together with awareness about the origin of vanilla and provenance of the individual played the largest part in tourists' decision making regarding purchases of vanilla products offered at the site. Contrary to some consumer behaviour studies of food tourists, our results showed that sex, age and length of stay in the region did not influence our respondents in relation to vanilla products in a statistically significant way. Respondents' feedback also identified the drawbacks of current vanilla tourism situation at the El Tajín archaeological site, and implied where lies the largest and most easily accessible potential for improvement of sales of the vanilla products. Our results also revealed that information is the key element that needs to be improved the most in order to help promote local vanilla to the tourists. Even though vanilla is not the usual object of food tourism research, we showed that this plant and its fruits should be in the place of interest of the researchers, since it is threatened with disappearing from its place of origin even though it provides an immense amount of potential at the same time. In accordance to a number of research studies, we conclude that food tourism research approach can positively influence the vanilla conservation efforts through improving sales of vanilla products to the tourists. Additionally, this research study is first of its kind and provides a new point of view on the field of vanilla research, however further research is recommended for deeper understanding of the phenomenon and therefore better application on the vanilla sector in Papantla, its region of origin, and the people whose lives have been bound to this plant for centuries.

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# **Appendices**

## **List of the Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Sample of the questionnaire

Appendix 2: Sample of the questionnaire with filled in data

## Appendix 1: Sample of the questionnaire



Czech University of Life Sciences Prague  
**Faculty of Tropical  
 AgriSciences**



Universidad Veracruzana



Centro de EcoAlfabetización  
 y Diálogo de Saberes  
 Universidad Veracruzana

1. Cómo llegó a la región de Papantla?
  - a) Autobús público    b) Autobús de agencia    c) Coche de alquiler    d) Coche particular
  - 1.1. Cuál fue el último lugar que visitó antes de llegar a Papantla?.....
  - 1.2. Cuanto tiempo va a pasar en la región de Papantla?
    - a) Menos de 1 día    b) 1 día    c) 2-3 días    d) 4-7 días    e) Más de 7 días
2. Por qué decidió visitar a la región de Papantla?
  - a) Vainilla    b) El Tajín    c) Los Voladores de Papantla    d) Otro:.....
  - 2.1. Qué más le gustaría conocer en la región de Papantla?.....
3. Conoce la vainilla?
  - 3.1. Sabe de donde se obtiene la vainilla?
  - 3.2. Sabe que la vainilla es una orquidea?
  - 3.3. Sabe que Papantla es el punto de origen del cultivo de vainilla?
  - 3.4. Sabe la diferencia entre la vainilla natural y saborizantes artificiales de sabor a vainilla?
  - 3.5. Sabe que los saborizantes artificiales pueden ser nocivos para la salud humana?
4. Cuál de los siguientes productos, que pueden llevar vainilla, usted consume y con cuál preferencia?

	Helados	Galletas	Pasteles	Lacteos	Refrescos	Batidos	Bebidas veg.	Jabones	Perfumes	Incienso	Crema
Uso											
Preferencia											

5. Durante su visita ha visto y/o comprado alguno de los productos de vainilla natural?

Nombre de producto	Lo vió	Le interesó	Lo compró	Lo compraría	El precio que pagó	Pagaría máximo
Extracto natural de vainilla						
Vainas de vainilla						
Artesanías						

6. Donde encontró (ha visto y/o comprado) estos productos de vainilla natural?
  - a) Mercado local    b) Puestos    c) Comerciante ambulante    d) Tienda de regalos    e) Otro:.....
7. Que le motivó a comprar alguno de los productos de vainilla natural?
  - a) Curiosidad    b) El deseo de regalarlo    c) Envase    d) Precio    e) Interés en cultura local
  - f) Persistencia del comerciante    g) Aroma    h) Gusto    i) Uso en casa    j) Otro:.....
8. Conocía estos productos antes de su llegada aquí?
9. Cómo/donde se enteró por la primera vez sobre estos productos de vainilla natural?
  - a) Conocido    b) Familia    c) Comerciante    d) Material de promoción (libro, folleto etc.)
  - e) Casualidad    f) Internet    g) Otro:.....
10. Si usted dijo que no había probado los productos de vainilla natural, porqué?
  - a) Precio    b) Baja atractividad visual    c) De momento no quiere    d) Al salir
  - e) No lo encontró    f) No tiene uso    g) No sabe como usar lo    h) Otro:.....
11. Cuantos años tiene?    a) <18    b) 19-29    c) 30-39    d) 40-49    e) 50-59    f) 60->
12. Cuál es su nacionalidad?.....
13. Tiene algunas sugerencias para los comerciantes como mejorar la venta?

## Appendix 2: Sample of the questionnaire with filled in data

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague  
**Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences**

Universidad Veracruzana  
 Centro de EcoAlimentación y Diálogo de Sabores  
 Universidad Veracruzana

#217  
 4/12/16  
 ♂

- Cómo llegó a la región de Papantla?

a) Autobús público **(b) Autobús de agencia** c) Coche de alquiler d) Coche particular

1.1. Cuál fue el último lugar que visitó antes de llegar a Papantla?..... **COAPOSA**.....

1.2. Cuanto tiempo va a pasar en la región de Papantla?

**(a) Menos de 1 día** b) 1 día c) 2-3 días d) 4-7 días e) Más de 7 días
- Por qué decidió visitar a la región de Papantla?

a) Vainilla b) El Tajín c) Los Voladores de Papantla d) Otro:..... **VAINILLA**.....

2.1. Qué más le gustaría conocer en la región de Papantla?..... **Ø**.....
- Conoce la vainilla?

3.1. Sabe de donde se obtiene la vainilla?

3.2. Sabe que la vainilla es una orquídea?

3.3. Sabe que Papantla es el punto de origen del cultivo de vainilla?

3.4. Sabe la diferencia entre la vainilla natural y saborizantes artificiales de sabor a vainilla?

3.5. Sabe que los saborizantes artificiales pueden ser nocivos para la salud humana?
- Cuál de los siguientes productos, que pueden llevar vainilla, usted consume y con cuál preferencia?

	Hielados	Galletas	Pastles	Lacteos	Refrescos	Batidos	Bebidas veg.	Jabones	Perfumes	Inciensos	Cremas
Uso											
Preferencia	9	7	9	7	6	9	8	8	8	8	9
- Durante su visita ha visto y/o comprado alguno de los productos de vainilla natural?

Nombre de producto	Lo vió	Le interesó	Lo comperó	Lo compraría	El precio que pagó	Pagaría máximo
Extracto natural de vainilla	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		25	50
Vainas de vainilla	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Artesanías	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		100
- Donde encontró (ha visto y/o comprado) estos productos de vainilla natural?

a) Mercado local b) Puestos **(c) Comerciante ambulante** d) Tienda de regalos e) Otro:.....
- Que le motivó a comprar alguno de los productos de vainilla natural?

a) Curiosidad b) El deseo de regalarlo c) Envase d) Precio e) Interés en cultura local  
 f) Persistencia del comerciante g) Aroma h) **Gusto** i) Uso en casa j) Otro:.....
- Conocía estos productos antes de su llegada aquí?
- Cómo/donde se enteró por la primera vez sobre estos productos de vainilla natural?

a) Conocido **(b) Familia** c) Comerciante d) Material de promoción (libro, folleto etc.)  
 e) Casualidad f) Internet g) Otro:.....
- Si usted dijo que no había probado los productos de vainilla natural, porqué?

a) Precio b) Baja atraktividad visual c) De momento no quiere **(d) Al salir**  
 e) No lo encontró f) No tiene uso g) No sabe como usar lo h) Otro:.....
- Cuantos años tiene? a) <18 **(b) 19-29** c) 30-39 d) 40-49 e) 50-59 f) 60->
- Cuál es su nacionalidad?..... **SALVADOR**.....
- Tiene algunas sugerencias para los comerciantes como mejorar la venta?

**Ø**