

Saffron Needs Marketing

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Abstract-The Situation

All saffron producers in the European Union, also soon Turkey, suffer from increasing labour costs. Iran has increased its production to 180,000 kg. India will offer its Cashmere saffron to the world market in growing amounts. There is a project of saffron from Afghanistan. A grey market of saffron developed in some countries in the Caucasus, trading Iranian saffron through doubtful channels without quality control. Countries in North Africa are the primary origin of forged saffron, mostly *Carthamus tinctorius* or Curcuma.

What used to be the “King of Spices” suffers from a worldwide devaluation.

The “First International Symposium on Saffron Biology and Biotechnology” at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, Campus of Albacete, Spain, in October 2003 defined saffron by the large majority of contributors as colorant.

THE OBJECTIVES

Normally, if a business wants to increase production, the demand must be there first to maintain the level of the price. If not, the demand must be increased first by classical instruments of marketing, which involves total customer orientation, changing the product, defining the values and emotions of the product, defining the position of the product in the market and finally as the very last step communicating the values and emotions of the product by public relations and advertising.

Product Quality

Low quality saffron does not grow. Low quality saffron is the result of separating and selecting the stigmas from the flowers under the pressure on the workings coming from the management. The yellow and white parts of the flower have no value for the customer. Diamonds achieve the highest prices if the crystals have no particles enclosed; only, the all-red saffron yields the strongest color, taste and aroma. The purest saffron is the best. The only exception is the saffron tied in bundles, the lower white parts not separated.

Product Diversification

- 1. For Private Consumer.** Strongly smelling, long stigmas, providing a sensual experience
- 2. For Restaurants.** Strong taste, decorative parts
- 3. For Food Industry.** High content of picrocrocin, dried strongly for easy powdering, certificate declaring the year of harvest, content of picrocrocin and humidity, vacuum packed.
- 4. For Souvenir Industry.** Tied in bundles, the lower white parts not separated. Produce products with saffron and merchandising products.

Values and Emotions

BMW sells the joy of driving for the successful people. Mercedes-Benz sells prestige and safe, easy transportation and luxury. Ferrari sells machismo.

What do the saffron producers sell, when their customers buy saffron or consume products with saffron?

The taste is the unique and distinct reason to buy saffron. There are so many yellow food colorants. A colorant is an additive to give a mediocre product a better look. The taste of saffron cannot be replaced. There is nothing similar. Here I present a choice of possible values and emotions of the taste of saffron:

- Wealth. Prestige. Culture. Intelligence. Sensuality.
- The luxury of the simple.
- As rare as gold.
- The taste of the Orient.
- So precious it is even forged.
- Pure beauty: violet flowers, red stigmas, yellow.

Position on the Market

The ultimate top of spices on the level of champagne, truffles and caviar.

Public Relations

Connecting saffron with star chef.

Creating events: public burning of forged saffron, public auctions of the new crop, contest to identify the best saffron.

Advertising

Crossover marketing with fashion, jewellery, silverware, truffles, art, luxury travelling.

Priority: Europe, then far East, America last, where saffron is almost unknown.

Address the defined target group only.

Governance

An International Saffron Board creates a quality label. All saffron producers are urged to join.

A board of senior saffron experts controls the quality of the saffron of these producers. Like the diamond board the saffron board ban producers who not comply.

The largest saffron producing nation, Iran, is urged to take the initiative and prepare the creation of the saffron board as part of the 2nd International Saffron Symposium in Mashhad in October 2006.