

“FRANCESINHA” – A Case of Cultural Innovation Influenced by Social Media

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Abstract

This paper will present the case of a food recipe that went beyond being a simple regional cultural dish: “*the francesinha*”. The paper aims at interconnecting the process of innovation, in its technological and cultural dimensions, with the phenomenon of entrepreneurship around the innovative product, the *francesinha*, which led to regional impact throughout knowledge spillover and continuous innovation and, the later dissemination of the product, awareness through the Internet phenomenon, mainly the social media. On the lack of statistical data or other empirical studies on the subject, the paper will present a theoretical analysis based on folk and popular information. For that purpose, the literature review will focus on theoretical concepts on the subjects of innovation and entrepreneurship, and the case study will use information available from different public and non-public sources. This paper will contribute to the understanding of how a product can become part of a cultural innovation process, and the consequent impact of that innovation at the entrepreneurial and regional dimensions, and also how social media can contribute to the awareness of the product.

Keywords: Value, cultural innovation, entrepreneurship, social media.

1. Introduction

Innovation can be classified in different types, such as business, social and artistic innovation (Pol and Ville, 2009). The business innovation itself can be classified in other sub-levels, such as “*technological innovations (new or improved products or processes) or organizational innovation (changes to the firm’s strategies, structures and routines)*” (ibid., p.881), and it can have direct or indirect impact in other areas of our structured society, namely in the cultural and economic arenas.

This is the main issue of this paper. How changes in a product can have a direct impact on the culture of a given local market segment and how that can even be expanded to regional, or even national market dimension and, also, how social media can contribute to the dissemination of such phenomenon. Innovation positively affects customer choice and preference for new products and competitive market dynamics (King and Tucci, 2002; Marvel and Lumpkin, 2007). In fact, innovation is generally identified as a key strategic element for firms seeking sustained competitive advantage (Atuahene-Gima, 1996; Chen, Lai, and Wen, 2006; Dutta and Weiss, 1997; Hult 2002; Matthysens, Vandenbempt, and Berghman, 2006; Storey and Easingwood, 1999).

The new media phenomenon, social and inter-personal, has created the capability for a product to become known by many more potential consumers, increasing the interest of the market in learning and trying the product, leading to a faster dissemination waves (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2006, (in Akehurst, 2009)).

In this paper we will explore those issues of how innovation will contribute to cultural changes, through the adoption of new behaviors caused by a product, in this particular case a food product, and how social media can dramatically increase the dissemination of the product knowledge among potential consumers. Some products have a very fast adoption period by consumers. The mobile phones case is, possibly, the most evident example of such fast-innovative product adoption. However, some other products will take long time to become of general adoption by a large portion of the consumers population.

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We will try to explore the example of how that natural slow adoption of an innovative product can be turned into fast adoption as a consequence of social media, and present theoretical cause-effect relations that led to such event. Even more, we will present some empiric evidence of how such phenomenon had impacted the economy, locally and regionally.

2. Literature Revision

2.1. Innovation as a Whole

Despite many current different views and definitions of innovation, we still need to make some distinctions between business and social related innovations. To Hamalainen and Heisala (2007) there are five ideal types of innovation: “*Technological innovation are new and more efficient ways to transform the material reality, and economic innovation puts technological innovation to the service of the production of surplus value. Taken together those two classes form the sphere of technoeconomic innovations (...) Regulative innovations transform explicit regulations and/or the ways they are sanctioned. Normative innovations challenge established value commitments and/or the way values are specified into legitimate social norms. Finally, cultural innovations challenge the established ways to interpret reality by transforming mental paradigms, cognitive frames and habits of interpretation. Taken together these three classes form the sphere of social innovation*” (p. 59). Even if it is accepted that technoeconomic innovations are mostly business related and regulative, and that normative and cultural innovations are mostly social related, we cannot ignore the interconnections between all of them and the implications that those connections may have at the business level.

According to Cummings (1998), innovation refers to a successful first-time application in the market of a firm’s product or process. Abernathy and Clark (1985) agree with the concept and even connect the meaning of innovation to the creation of value added. Innovation is also “... *a firm’s tendency to engage in and support new ideas, experimentation, and creativity for the development of new processes*” (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996, p. 142). According to Piana (2003) “*innovation is the complex development of discoveries (eg. new physical laws) and inventions (eg. a new machinery) brought in the business and social environment (eg. introduced on the market), hopefully leading to diffusion (adoption by new users)*”. Schumpeter (1934) even considered innovation as “creative destruction” when new technologies substitute the old. Today, the most well accepted definition is in the Oslo Manual: “*An innovation is the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization or external relations*”(OECD 2005, p. 46).

Innovation has been studied at industry, firm, and individual levels. It can address the needs of existing customers or be designed for new or evolving markets (Christensen and Bower, 1996). Or it can focus mainly on the organization’s side. However, when we come to the scope for the application of innovation, that being in what innovation is applied or used, and despite some slightly different opinions (Schumpeter, 1934; Piana, 2003; Kingsland, 2007), it is widely accepted that there are four major types of innovation: “product innovation” – introduction of a new product (good or service) or major improvement of its characteristics; “process innovation” – implementation of new or significantly improved methods in production or distribution; “marketing innovation” – implementation of a new marketing method, evolving changes in design, packaging, placement, promotion or pricing; and, “organizational innovation” – implementation of a new organizational method in the firm’s business practices, organization of workplace or external relations (OECD, 2005).

To simplify our understanding of the scope for the application of innovation, Pol and Ville’s (op. cit.) understanding of innovation will be adopted, covering two levels: “*technological innovations (new or improved products or processes) or organizational innovation (changes to the firm’s strategies, structures and routines)*” (p. 881). This is in line with other similar views that set the product and the organization as the arenas where firms’ innovation is developed (Fernandes, 2008; Fernandes and Martins, 2011). Innovation at the product (good and service) level refers to the introduction of new functions or changes in existing products’ functions (related to product attributes/functionality demanded by consumers – thus, demand driven), the creation of new designs or adjustments in existing products’ designs (related to the aesthetic side of the product supplied by the inducer – thus, supply driven), and the usage of new or substitute input (related to resources’ offer – thus, context driven). Innovation at the processes level refers to the creation of new methods or adjustments in existing methods (related to applied technology – hardware and software – thus, process driven). Innovation at the organizational level refers to the introduction of new or changes in existing management systems (related to the organizational structure, the information and communication technologies (ICT), and institutional relations with stakeholders – thus, organization driven).

Innovation at the marketing level refers to new or changes in existing marketing strategies (related to promotional processes, image creation and development, and distribution network – thus, marketing driven) (ibid.). These last descriptions of innovation match extensively with the former definition in the Oslo Manual (op. cit.).

Innovation can also be seen in relation to its novelty or how it diffuses among firms and consumers. In relation to innovation adoption by firms, the Oslo Manual (op. cit.) classifies it at three levels: “new to the firm” – first time a firm adopts a given innovation; “new to the market” – first time a given innovation is introduced in a market (or industry); and, “new to the world” – first time that an innovation is introduced to all markets and industries, national and international. Regarding adoption by consumers, Rogers (1995) considers five levels of innovation diffusion: “innovators” – brave people, first to try; “early adopters” – opinion leader, try out new ideas; “early majority” – thoughtful people, accept changes more quickly; “late majority” – skeptic people, use only when majority is using; and “laggards” – traditional people, only accept new idea when it becomes mainstream. Innovation adoption may have consequences, being “public”, referring to entities other than the actor, or “private” when related to the actor itself (Wejnert, 2002).

The most well-known and used model to express and characterize innovation, mentioned by some different authors (Schumpeter, 1934; Sheikh and Oberholzver, 2002), includes two kinds of outcomes, “radical” and “incremental”: radical innovations being the creation of major disruptive changes, and incremental innovations the continuous advance of the process of change. Some authors found this simplistic approach insufficient and incomplete to characterize innovation (Henderson and Clack, 1990; Christensen, 1997; Abernathy and Clark, 1985; Markides and Geroski, 2005; Kingsland, 2007).

Christensen (2007) introduced another level of innovation to the continuous action of the “sustainable” innovation, the “disruptive” innovation, where the last represents a moment in time when, supported by new technology, a producer introduces in the market a product, potentially at a lower performance level but at a much lower price, which will replace an existing product in the long run, thus being destructive by nature.

At a more strategic level of business model definition, especially in the IT world, Kaplan (1999) used the identification of opportunities in the long run through innovation development and the need for firms to stay focused on the short term results to construct a matrix which leads to four types of innovation: “radical cannibalism” – substituting own successful products by new technologies and processes, forcing a turnaround in customer value; “competitive displacement” – displacing competitors by applying competences or industry characteristics to other markets or industries, forcing competitors to leave; “market invention” – some technological changes allied with a strong effort on market research and creativity creating new products with alternative customer value for existing markets; and “industry genesis” – introduction of new technology and new value for customers, potentially creating a new industry.

The previous modeling concepts can be seen, to a large extent, as based on scientific and technological development, initiated and supported by intensive R&D activities, in a kind of approach that Kline and Rosenberg (1986) called “linear model” of innovation where research, development, production and commercialization follow on in sequential order, as it has been understood for decades.

Historically we may find that the innovation process has suffered some evolution itself along the time. Dodgson and Rothwell (1994) presented five generations of innovation during the last half of the twentieth century: “technology push” – fifties to mid-sixties, due to fast economic growth and based on new scientific knowledge and technologies; “market pull” – mid sixties to beginning of the seventies, focusing on firms’ response to market needs through R&D; “coupling R&D and marketing” – mid seventies to mid-eighties, focusing on product portfolio in order to reduce costs; “integrated business processes” – mid-eighties to beginning of the nineties, focusing on integrated business processes in order to reduce time for products to enter the market; “system integration and system networking” – since mid-nineties, focusing on “business ecosystems” supported by business process automation using ICT and networking.

Currently, firms have a different approach to innovation as far as collaboration is concerned, being closer to the proposed “chain-linked model” of Kline and Rosenberg (1986), cutting the old linear approach and creating a much more dynamic approach, including multi-dimensions and multi-dynamics, encompassing knowledge, competences and capabilities from external and internal participants. Many other authors have defended these new dynamic innovation processes and knowledge diffusions, bringing value to other stakeholders excluded before (Edquist, 2004; Kusiak and Tang, 2006; Piana, 2006; Fernandes, 2011).

All previous modeling concepts of innovation, and many others not mentioned, provide us with a vast understanding of what innovation is, what are the results of innovative actions and consequent impacts on consumers, industry and economy, and how it happens in a market, an industry or a firm. However, there is still a need to understand the process that an industry or a firm develops and applies in order to generate innovation of different kinds and the relation between that and its final output or outcome. We may foresee in this evolution of the understanding of innovation a path to other areas of application or scope than products (goods and services) and organizations (processes, marketing methods, organizational systems). As we have seen, technology is present in most concepts and models, but we also found a lack of articulation of such variables with others that are related to the intangible side of innovation and peoples' lives, such as emotions and attitudes that innovation may generate and, consequently, cultural paths that may result from those.

2.2. Cultural Innovation

First, we need to understand what culture is and what it can mean to the business world. According to Hofstede (1994) culture is *“the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another”*. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values. To Schein (2004) culture is *“the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously and define in a basic ‘taken for granted’ fashion an organization’s view of its self and its environment”*. This looks more like an organization’s inside view of culture. We must even consider that, in accordance with the “spiral dynamics” concept: - in dealing with others, people reflect their own life conditions, which are bundled into “memes” – aggregation elements of cultural influence, attitudes, ways of doing things, etc. (Aguilar-Millan, 2005). Culture is, therefore, the human-made part of the environment (Herskovits, 1955), and it can be divided into objective culture (eg. roads, buildings, and tools) and subjective culture (eg. beliefs, attitudes, norms, values, role definitions) (Triandis, 1996). It is widely agreed that culture consists of “shared” elements (Shweder and LeVine, 1984) that provide the standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, communicating, and acting (I see the last two as behavioral forms) among those who share a language, a historic period and a geographic location (Triandis, op. cit.). The shared elements are transmitted from one generation to the next with modifications, encompassing unexamined assumptions and standard operation procedures that reflect “what was worked” at one point in history of a culture group (ibid.).

Postmodernism has had a major influence on culture and the way it manifests in our society. Baudrillard (1998, 101) defines culture as: *“(1) An inherited legacy of works, thought and tradition; and, (2) A continuous dimension of theoretical and critical reflection – critical transcendence and symbolic function”*. The author distinguishes between the High Culture and the Mass Media Culture or, as he calls it, the Lowest Common Culture. For him, the High Culture is available only to the elites of the society, as it has been for centuries. In this, and bringing the issue down to the level of culture products, which is of interest to this paper, he encompasses the true works of art that have passed the test of time, those unique and invaluable products that are irreplaceable and hold intrinsic value that grows as years, or even centuries, go by. The Lower Common Culture is the popular culture, the culture of the masses, as mass production, and mass communication has made it available to all social categories. The author argues that the mass production of that which is unique is the one reason for the downfall in culture and the apparition of the Lower Common Culture together with the mass media movement. The High Culture becomes subjected to the same competitive demand for signs as any other category of objects, forcing production to meet the demand. As culture becomes a commodity, the new objects are no longer seen as works of art but just as finite objects into themselves. The value has decreased to the point where they became mundane, *“part of the package, the constellation of accessories by which the socio-cultural standing of the average citizen is determined”* (ibid., 107).

Thus, we come to a point where one may understand culture as “a set of attitude patterns of a population towards a certain subject, expressed in an intangible or tangible (value) form, reflected in general and consistent/systematic behavior that can be transferred to or make use of objects” (Fernandes, 2014). We must remember that intangible value form relates to everything, output or not of an event or action, which cannot be exchanged (transacted against a compensation) as such and, therefore, it is not measurable and quantifiable inside close boundaries for most people, while tangible value form relates to everything or object, output of an action or event, such as products (goods or services) that can be exchanged, therefore measurable and quantifiable inside close boundaries for most people.

Some communal work has been developed on the concept of cultural innovation. According to wiki.answers.com discussion panel, *“cultural innovations are internal changes that depend (and are limited) upon the recombination of already existing elements in culture.*

They can occur independently in different times and places, however not all lead to change in culture.

They occur more frequently in technologically complex societies than in less developed ones.” This is more of a general society view that is also of interest to this paper.

Cultural innovation may be seen under two different perspectives: (1) as the creation of a collective common adopted behavior based on an idea with no materialization in any physical product (good or service) [e.g. part of the population start using long-hair, speaking a new dialect, start following specific custom or start grouping around some spiritual beliefs]; and, (2) as the creation of a collective common adopted behavior through the utilization of a product (good or service) that contributes to creating a preference, a meaning and a way of being and acting in a large portion of a population or of a region (e.g. people creating new rules to regulate peoples’ behaviors supported by a judging system, creating Internet social networks that allow users to create social/cultural ties, creating new music styles supported on the utilization of specific new musical instruments (eg. Jazz, Hip Hop), developing new fashion styles through the creation of specific cloths (eg. T-shirts and miniskirt), inducing certain life styles through the utilization of certain new products (eg. walkman, toaster, microwave, tattooing equipment), or still, creating a certain painting style or technique which has originated a different painting style). Thus, we may define cultural innovation as an “effectively adopted or changed collective behavior in a group of people” (Fernandes, 2014). Culture is intangible. Cultural innovation creates intangible value that cannot be measured in a quantitative form, but can be felt and lived in a qualitative manner.

3. The Innovation Process of Francesinha

3.1. From the French “Croque-Monsieur” to Francesinha

According to most available written information and oral descriptions of different sources, the *francesinha* is derived from the “croque-monsieur”. The Croque-Monsieur is a grilled sandwich with ham and cheese covered with béchamel, which becomes a “Madame” when a fried egg is placed on top of it. The popular theory about the origin of *francesinha* refers that Daniel David da Silva introduced in the year of 1952, as a Portuguese adaptation of the French croque-monsieur. Daniel David da Silva, born in a municipality north of Porto, Terras do Bouro, was an immigrant in Belgium and France, where he worked as a barman and had contact with the French croque-monsieur and croque-madame.

Well known in restaurants where he worked, visited by Portuguese tourists travelling in those countries, David da Silva was invited by the owner of the Restaurante A Regaleira in Porto, Jorge Abrantes, to work with him and make that extravagant delicacy Abrantes has experimented, which forced Silva to return to Portugal. Working at the A Regaleira, he became very famous for his experiments and inventions in the kitchen, where he took the inspirational “croque-madame”, “croque-monsieur” and “welsh rarebit sauce” into a new dimension, by adding some extra ingredients (Teixeira, 2010). Then, the *francesinha* became what is still today, and according to AOL Travel website, one of the 10 best sandwiches in the world, a 2.0 croque-monsieur “on steroids”: grilled pork, *linguiça* (smoke cured pork sausage), and sausage, between two slabs of bread, covered my melted cheese and immersed in a spicy beer and tomato sauce, often topped with a fried egg and surrounded by chips (Garcia, 2012).

David da Silva called this new snack “*francesinha*”, as it reminded him of the French women who, he used to say to clients and friend, were hot and spicy as no other women in the world, especially in contrast with the sulkiness of Portuguese women. This tribute to the French women became a symbol; first of Porto and later of the north of Portugal, as the original recipe turned into different versions, like in Povoá do Varzim (ScotDir.com, 2015).

In technological terms, the innovative product was the result of a process of *adaption/adoption* of existing knowledge, developed by others, based on the “imitation” of products (goods or services) attributes and of organizational processes. The process of this type of innovation is synthetic, engineering-based, applying or combining existing knowledge in new ways (know how), based upon problem solving capabilities and custom production, therefore being inductive, and supported by interactive learning with customers and suppliers, producing partially codified knowledge and strong tacit components which are very context-specific. (Fernandes, 2014). The easiness and the short time needed to make a *francesinha* may have helped the spreading of the offer in many restaurants and bars.

3.2 The Cultural Development of Francesinha

In the beginning, the *francesinha* was essentially a snack, served after hours when groups of friends gathered to have a bite to eat late at night.

Initially, only young men used to eat *francesinhas*, as older men were more conservative in their food choices, and women who dared to try it would get a bad reputation. According to tradition, spices induce changes in behavior, and it would be seen as a bad indication if a woman would be seen eating a “spicy” *francesinha* in public. Recent studies indicate that, despite spices may have some effect on men’s endogenous testosterone, there is no prove of similar effect on women (Bègue et al, 2015).

The initial spread of *francesinha* to other places around Porto gave the delicacy a regional cultural meaning. Perhaps due to the character of the *francesinha*, seen as heavy food, more adequate to be eaten in cold weather, it remained in the preferences of the people of the north of Portugal for some decades. A normal *francesinha* is calculated to have between 793,89 Kcal and 3305,32 KJ of energy, and 127 mg of cholesterol (Campos, 2015) and 1300 Kcal and 5439 KJ of energy, and 239 mg of cholesterol (fatsecret, 2016). That fact gave the recipe a clear meaning that led to the declaration of its regionalism.

Today, the *francesinha* is more of a full meal, served in most restaurants and bars, in many different formats and recipes, even at the gourmet level, mainly in the Porto and north of Portugal, but also in the south of the country. The dish fits mainly in the segment of fast food, competing directly with pizzas and hamburgers, targeting the younger segment of the consumer market. Some restaurants and bars have done consecutive attempts to take it to other segments of the upper consumer market. Its cultural meaning led to the creation of the “*Confraria da Francesinha*” - Brotherhood of *Francesinha* (TSF, 2000) to preserve its original recipe and disseminate and promote it as a cultural product. In the same way, the municipality of Porto and other cities in the north of Portugal, and even Lisbon for that purpose, promote annual gastronomic festivals dedicated to the recipe, normally covered by the media and heavily disseminated in the social media, and visited by many *francesinha* lovers.

The fame of *francesinha* has crossed borders and it appears in many websites as one of the top sandwiches in the world. Tourism agents and officers tell international tourists to try the delicacy if they visit Porto or the north of Portugal. Many national and international websites refer to lists of the most preferred restaurants and provide indications about recipes and their value for money.

The *francesinha* became part of the regional culture, almost at the same level of other very old and traditional regional recipes and products, being one of the words that are recognized as meaning the city of Porto (FEP, 2011; Moreira, 2010). We may say that the *francesinha* is part of a cultural innovation process, as it has impacted the intangible dimension of society, inducing new behaviors in a segment of the population. The impact of this type of innovation is manifested at the personal (individual) level, reflected in a moderate and slow capability for vast individual adoption. New knowledge, resulting in new attitudes, forces new behaviors at the individual level. Common social behaviors (e.g. drivers’ fairness on the roads), learning patterns (e.g. desire to learn cooking techniques), and life styles (e.g. jogging using an iPod) are outcomes of this type of cultural innovation, named as “gnosil” knowledge - from ancient Greek *gnosis*, investigation (Fernandes, 2014). The *francesinha* seems to fit-in this type of innovation. It is not yet a major preference to a large part of the local population, like barbequed sardines are to most of the Portuguese population, but it has a niche in the market that stays loyal to the product.

3.3 The Slow Cooking of Culture

The *francesinha* needed a long period of time to become culturally relevant. From its initial positioning of a snack, mainly eaten by young men when gathering after late night cultural and sports activities, to a current positioning of a real main meal to many locals and tourists in Portugal, recognized as a traditional and cultural product, it passed approximately fifty years. Along this period of time, the product had some ups and downs, like after the revolution of April 1974, until the time of entering the food habits of the regional population and being introduced to tourists as a novelty, around the year 2000.

The initial cultural prejudice, putting women away from eating the product, reduced the scope of potential consumers for the innovative delicacy. However, from the 1950’s to the 2000’s, mainly after 1974, Portugal went through a slow but lasting economic, social and educational growth and development, which brought many women to universities, to higher working ranking positions and top education levels, and also to a more open society without prejudice against women’s behaviors.

The *francesinha* became the fast food meal of many students and of many young working people, independently of the gender. As they became older, they carried that legacy with them and they also passed that to their children and to others of their age. It is plusive to say that a very large portion of the urban population in the north of Portugal under the age of sixty has eaten a *francesinha* at least once in their lives.

The *francesinha* is still a preferred delicacy of younger generations, but many other people refer their habit of eating it frequently (Pereira, 2011).

This long and slow process of adoption of this once innovative product is typically due to the type of cultural innovation involved. As previously mentioned, cultural innovation can be seen “as the creation of a [new] collective common adopted behavior”, supported or caused, or not, by the use of a product, that will lead to a new “effectively adopted or changed collective behavior in a group of people”. In some particular cases, the behavior change is initiated due to the slow vanishing of old stereotypes through the adoption of new knowledge, and how this new knowledge can be applied in our day-to-day lives. New knowledge, resulting in new attitudes, forces new “adapted” behaviors in some small pockets of the population.

4. The Entrepreneurial Process around the Francesinha

4.1. The Creator and the Entrepreneur

As we have seen in the existing bibliography, Daniel David da Silva was the creator of *francesinha*, and Jorge Abrantes was the owner of Restaurante A Regaleira, who invited the former to return to Portugal and become his employee. Later, Abrantes gave part of the business to da Silva, and they become business partners at A Regaleira. We may question the reasons for such altruistic move made by Abrantes, but maybe the risk of losing the creator of *francesinha* to the competition forced him to do so.

This brings up the question of entrepreneurship connected to the history of *francesinha* and of Restaurante A Regaleira. In fact, da Silva was the creator and he stood until late as the original holder of the recipe of the delicacy. However, the entrepreneurial facet seems to be on Abrantes' side. He foresaw the potential success of the recipe, and how it could provide extra advantage to his business, even if to benefit from it he had to take some risks associated to the admittance of da Silva, first as employee, and later as partner. In the opposite, the information provided by the different sources does not provide evidence of any entrepreneurial tendency in da Silva, but rather his preference and joy for the creation of recipes and for good life.

An entrepreneur is “*someone who exercises initiative by organizing a venture to take benefit of an opportunity and, as the decisionmaker, decides what, how, and how much of a good or service will be produced. An entrepreneur supplies risk capital as a risk taker, and monitors and controls the business activities. The entrepreneur is usually a sole proprietor, a partner, or the one who owns the majority of shares in an incorporated venture. (...) entrepreneurs are not necessarily motivated by profit but regard it as a standard for measuring achievement or success*”(businessdictionary.com).

An entrepreneur must be able to manage resources in a success way, using for that purpose specific skills (Schinck and Sarkar, 2012). Those skills, influencing the ability of the entrepreneur to achieve success, are: visioning, bootstrapping and social skills (Brush, 2008). The first skill relates to the entrepreneur's capability to create a vision for the future of the business, the second relates to the capacity of the entrepreneur to use the lowest possible number of resources, mainly money needed as investment, and the last relates to the capacity of the entrepreneur to establish good human relations with all interested parties around the business, mainly clients, suppliers, investors and labor.

This understanding takes Abrantes to the level of entrepreneur and da Silva to the level of creator, but working together to form a matching team. The visioning and bootstrapping skills of Abrantes and the social skills of da Silva, together with a new “product”, made A Regaleira a very famous restaurant, landmark of cultural pilgrimage now a day.

4.2. The Specialization Process

The *francesinha* spread very quickly out of Restaurante A Regaleira, suffering some changes introduced by the copiers to make it unique. In the 1960, at Povoá do Varzim, it became more of a toast sandwich, served without any sauce. Since then, the *francesinha* has suffered many adaptations, even in the seafood and vegetarian realms.

We can find some very unique variations of the recipe: a *francesinha* in pizza dough, by Restaurante o Mercado; a *francesinha* served on a wood chopping board, presented as a sandwich cut in two triangles, by restaurant Porta'OLado; a *francesinha* called “burguesinha”, served in a small cooper pan with no bread, by restaurant 1818 bbGourmet; a *francesinha* transformed into a small sandwich, called “*sandinha*”, which can even be vegetarian, in Mercado Bom Sucesso; a *francesinha* called “*bocado de francesinha*” served in bijou bread, by Restaurante Terminal 4450; a *francesinha* with meat and lobster served as an entrée, by Restaurant DOP; and, a *francesinha* made by Cantinho Avillez (a famous chef) à la mode of chef José Avillez (Coelho, 2016).

Nowadays we can visit many food festivals in the north of Portugal dedicated to the delicacy, where we can find a lot of different variations of the original recipe. However, despite the opinion of many people that some *francesinhas* in Braga, Povoá do Varzim, and other places are the best, Porto is still the national reference when someone wants to try a *francesinha* for the first time. The websites *Projecto Francesinha*, at www.projectofrancesinha.com, and *Irmandade da Francesinha*, at www.irmandadedafrancesinha.com, evaluate many restaurants offering the *francesinha* in their menu.

The vast spread of the recipe among restaurants may be considered as an application of the “knowledge spillover theory of entrepreneurship” (KSTE), that defines that one important source of entrepreneurship opportunities generates entrepreneurship through the utilization of commercially valuable but underexploited knowledge created by others (Acs et al, 2009; Agarwal et al, 2007; Audretsch and Keilbach, 2007, 2008; Braunerhjelm et al, 2010). Knowledge spillovers are “the external benefits from knowledge creation that is enjoyed by parties other than the party investing in the creation” (Agarwal et al., op cit., p. 272). According to the KSTE, labor mobility, namely the movement of human capital from knowledge-creating firms to entrepreneurial firms, allows knowledge created by the former to be commercialized by the latter without full compensation.

5. The Impact of Social Media in the Dissemination of Product Awareness

5.1. (Lack of) Numbers and Statistics

There is no available statistics to demonstrate the adoption of the *francesinha* by the population, in quantitative terms. The volume of sales and the number of *francesinhas* served by restaurants are not known. However, some studies indicate that the *francesinha* is clearly in the top list of preferred meals by some particular consumers, even Brazilian students studying in the University of Coimbra (Bácsfalusi, 2015).

Even without empirical studies to determine the dimension of the *francesinha* market in economic terms, population and folk data may indicate that more than 50% of the regional population of Porto and of national and foreign tourists and visitors have already eaten a *francesinha* at least once, and that almost every bar and a third of the restaurants in the region around Porto offer *francesinhas* in their menus (more than 240 in Porto, according to internal information of the governmental agency Turismo do Porto e Norte de Portugal). In the same way, it seems that there is a considerable number of bars and restaurants offering a different recipe, sometimes far apart from what was and still is the original recipe at A Regaleira. Despite some possible evidence of new and existing bars and restaurants dedicated to make “the best” *francesinhas*, as a result of targeted entrepreneurial ventures, there is no quantitative figures to help us understanding the phenomenon.

5.2. Non-Measurable Impact

Apart from the economic impact that *francesinha* may have brought to the Portuguese economy, and to its north region in particular, there is some other impacts that may not be easily measurable, such as brand recognition, culture awareness and happiness perception. Not only the population of Porto and surrounding places feel honored by proclaiming that *francesinha* is part of their life-style and culture, but also the tourist feel that there is a story behind the product and become curious to unveil everything about the recipe.

The fame of *francesinha* has travelled outside Portugal to great extent. We can find many travel and tourism websites referring *francesinha* as one of the best and unique sandwich in the world, putting it as one of the “7 great sandwiches from around the world” (bathroomreader.com, 2015), one of “the world’s 10 best sandwiches” (Shortlist, 2015; Revista Glamour, 2015), one of the “28 must-eat sandwiches from around the world” (Thrillist, 2014), and one of the “32 delicious sandwiches from around the world” (BuzzFeed, 2015). All these sites are putting Porto and the north of Portugal region in the map of tourists from all parts of the world, bringing many benefits to the local and national economies.

There is also an interesting specialization phenomenon around *francesinha*. We may find more restaurants in the Grand-Porto offering *francesinhas* in their menus than “tripes” (*tripas à moda do Porto*), a famous local and old dish that has been part of the local culture for hundreds of years. It is believed that more people eat “tripes” than *francesinhas* at home, but in terms of restaurant offer, it is easier for any local or tourist to find *francesinhas* in a restaurant menu than “tripes”.

5.3. Some Empirical Indicators

When searching on the Internet for “*francesinha*”, “*receita de francesinha*” (Portuguese for *francesinha* recipe), and some other related search queries we might find some interesting results.

Searching for “*francesinha*” (2019-04-02), Google returned about 4.790.000 links and 157.000 videos. For “*receita de francesinha*” (*francesinha* recipe), it returned about 699.000 links and 14.800 videos. When we used “*francesinha* recipe” (in English) as searching key, Google returned about 1.670.000 links and 25.300 videos.

More precise is the search for “festival de francesinha” (Portuguese for *Francesinha’s* festival), returning all first 100 links related to effective events promoting the delicacy, plus other 30 related events: Baixa-Porto; Felgueiras; Anfadega-Porto; Arcos de Valdeves; Lisboa; Arrifana; Feira; Sá da Bandeira-Porto; Condeixa; Pigueiros; Canidelo; Viseu; Matosinhos; Sabrosa; Figueira da Foz; Penafiel; Amares; Valongo; Caminha; Braga; Póvoa do Varzim; Gaia; Vila Real; Dragão-Porto; Castelo de Paiva; Paredes; Mirandela; Barcelos; Guimarães; Paris- França; and, Newark-USA. Apart from Lisbon, in the south of Portugal, and Paris and Newark, the last two being regions of heavy density of Portuguese migrants, all other festivals took place in the North Region of Portugal.

Some of those festivals have had annual editions, some since as far as the year 2000, like the Porto festival, when the “*Confraria da Francesinha*” (*Francesinha* Brotherhood) was founded (Teixeira, 2010). This also coincides with the spread on the Internet of information about the product and the festivals.

A study based on comments on blogs posted by Spanish tourists visiting Portugal (Gonçalves, 2012), presents 100% of the validated comments as positive, regarding the appreciation of the *francesinha*, being it one of the 10 most commented subjects in the gastronomic theme.

6. Conclusions

Despite the lack of empirical studies and of data to be used, in order to understand the real dimension of the *francesinha* phenomenon, and how social media has influenced the product awareness since the wide use of Internet, we can only come to some qualitative conclusions. It seems clear that *francesinha* is the result of two innovation processes. The first, at the technological level, where *francesinha* surges as an adaption of one or two existing products, but integrating new ingredients and taking a new form. The second, at the cultural level, being initially adopted by some specific consumers segment, composed of innovators and early adopters, and lately by other consumer segments, but mainly still in a narrow strip of the market, where *francesinha* is part of a behavior change. The *francesinha* success seems also to be the result of creativity and innovation combined with entrepreneurship, in the right proportion. The visionary understanding of the full potential of the product, when it was only an experiment for the creator, by someone with the characteristics of an entrepreneur, turned it into a very well succeed venture. The knowledge spillover of the recipe turned the product into a regional specialization, contributing to the individual and unique characteristics of a region. The continuous innovation of the recipe and the entrepreneurial activity of many people have made it a landmark of the Porto region.

The international dimension of the product was achieved mainly throughout and after the dissemination of information about it through the internet, mainly through social media, where the subject is widely discussed and referred in touristic and commune sites.

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