Language, being used daily in local contexts, reflects local knowledge (Geertz, 1983). This paper shows how translation/back-translation can be used as a joint discovery tool, along with depth interviews and checking of researchers interpretations by informants, to generate cognitive mapping of consumption and taste experiences. Local words, used as Emic signals, are combined into full portraits of the local experiences as narratives linking people to products and taste. Local portraits can then be merged to derive commonalities emergent from within the contexts studied. The comparative thick description framework is applied to the bitterness and crunchiness taste experiences in 9 countries (China, France, Germany, Japan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, El Salvador, Mexico) and 8 languages.

The Findings show that local experiences in several different languages and countries in different areas of the world can be surveyed, compared, and organized in cognitive maps, which highlight commonalities and differences between contexts. In essence, differences are qualitative, dealing with creolization patterns, local consumption experience, local preferences, perceptions, and associations. This approach can be considered as interpretive and, although driven by a systematic approach, depends on the researchers and informants expertise and rigor. Cognitive maps help evaluate cross-national differences and similarities in local markets. The emergent similarities and differences are highly meaningful for glocalizing marketing strategies, in terms of advertising, branding, or packaging.

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