

For Peru exports, specialize in tradition and authenticity

By [Beatrice Ciabatti](#)



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Last month I was in New York City and suddenly I felt the desire to walk into one of the huge supermarkets. Strolling down its aisles, I was astonished: Never before had I seen so much perfection in a single place: faultless round red apples all looked alike, evergreen vegetables, absolutely well shaped bread, products flawlessly stacked on the shelves, neat displays. Everything was perfect. But then I thought to myself, what about authenticity?

As a consumer I started to feel suspicious and started to wonder how much of what I was seeing was real. I couldn't stop thinking that all that food had been manipulated to look brighter and fresher, rounder, and yes, perfect. Nowadays we have an increasing need to know what's real and authentic. Nothing is ever perfect, and even when it appears to be so, we are subconsciously looking for the defect. This is because the world around us is imperfect and its beauty relies on its imperfection.

What happened to the irregular peaches or tomatoes, or the small worms we used to find in the apples, and what about the remains of soil in the lettuce? As far as I could see, there was no emotional connection between me and the products the supermarket was selling. Think about it: Imperfection usually forms a connection because we have an increasing need to know what's real. The thought of food being injected with additives that enhance the color and aroma, or irradiation processes that keep old fruit looking new, or gigantic factories baking millions of cookies; all these sophisticated processes seem to generate feelings of aversion and even terror in the mind of consumers. We are longing for homemade products; we are looking for products that look as if nature had just delivered them to us.

But then, like a bolt out of the blue, I realized the enormous opportunity Peru has. It seems that industrialization in consumption has led to a global search for the natural and consumers are willing to pay more for it. I became conscious of the huge potential Peruvian organic products have: cocoa, coffee, mangos, bananas, palm hearts and cotton, among others. These natural products are being exported and consumers are willing to pay 30% more compared to traditional products just because they were grown without pesticides, without fertilizers or chemicals and with the least intervention of modern technology.

And in Peru's sector of handcrafted goods, there is very little industrialization. In this fascinating world everything is rigorously handmade and there are never two identical products. Moreover, it is an art that gives rise to the rebirth of ancient traditions in order to be valued and appreciated by consumers since the techniques they use are passed down from father to son since Inca cultures. So, we're talking about exclusive handmade products that help us preserve the culture and tradition of Peru. Again, isn't this what consumers are looking for and therefore another big opportunity for Peru?

In conclusion, in our highly industrialized world Peru's greatest asset may be our small-scale industries. While it's true we are currently talking about a niche market, I think the demand for these products is a global trend, and a rather profitable one.

And yet it is not an easy task. There is a lot of hard work to be done, especially branding Peru in the consumer's mind as a country that produces unique products for the international market. Products like Peruvian-made textiles, ceramics or silverware will capture consumers with its beauty and tradition; Peru's organic mangoes, coffee, bananas meanwhile, will win over shoppers with their authenticity and minute imperfections.