

COMMUNICATION AND PACKAGING: THE CASE OF THE ORGANIC OLIVE GROVE CULTIVATION (Miriam Mastromauro, Università Degli Studi di Bari)

The packaging is playing a leading role with very strong impact on the behaviours and choices among the consumers. Those elements of this tool of marketing, that gains an increasing importance, are the aesthetic quality, the ability of giving information and seductions and the positive contribute hold by the prestige of the product.

At the first glance the packaging should be able to communicate not only the characteristics of the product but even its story, taking advantage of the emotional values.

The packaging is not considered a container anymore but it represents an instrument through which it is possible to communicate with the consumer, who is always greedier of information that can capture his curiosity and stimulate himself.

We cannot ignore that after the development of the e-commerce, often the consumer has to choose the product through the monitor on line, therefore it is important to look always for better graphic solutions able to arouse the consumer's interest. Because of those trends the communication on line has become really significant. Regarding to this aspect farms can invest always more.

The definition of packaging represents a particular moment of the life of the product, as it takes shape as important instrument of communication able to create an ever lasting relationship as long as particular colours, shapes, representations are identified through the image of quality attributed to the product.

Talking about organic olive oil we can say that the product is already able to show its special story, made by strong emotional contents.

Consequently the studium of communication contents does not stop at the analysis of the bottle itself, about that it is still important to analyse shape, colour, dimension but it is also necessary the studium of the label, the stopper, the capability to produce synestesy, which means to evoke the intrinsic philosophical values about organic olive grove cultivation.

These new tendencies among a fresh market such as that one of the organic agricultural products and of the organic olive oil justify the growing interest for this important marketing instrument.

Referring to the semiotics, matter that studies the distinctive characteristics of the signs as they appear, the packaging could be defined as the *paratext*, the site where a text has to be adequately presented.

If we think at the consumption as a language that needs units of communication (the different products) the impact expressed by the packaging is articulated into two levels of communication: the first one (denotative) refers to the function of use of the good; the second one (connotative) refers, on the contrary, to the emotional and psychological significate that the individuum gives to the good and that goes beyond the function of use.

Because of this reason goods assume symbolic values, which are usually connected to the recognized and accepted significate, and semantic values that derive from the synergy between the denotative and connotative signs.

According to this interpretation, products can be considered as "cultural units" and they can spread various messages.

Organic agriculture produces new cultural forms concerning products and communication, it creates a sort of segmentation of the market which is based properly on what the consumers attribute to the products.

Among BIOL, which is a competition that awards prizes to the best extra-vergin organic olive oil from all over the world and that has concerned a prize even for the best packaging, we have thought would have been interesting to analyse bottles of some of the participants to the prize, in order to estimate the communicative ability of this special tool of marketing.

The attention is focused not only on the shape, the dimension, the handling of the bottles but also on the communicative aspects of the labels in order to value the exhaustivity and the readability by the consumer. The methodology that has been adopted consists of two different levels: analysis of the packaging (shape, dimension, handling of the bottles) and analysis of the labels (colours, reference to landscapes, completeness of nutritional information).

This method has shown that farms has now understood the necessity to cure the packaging, therefore generally speaking bottles have very refined shape (usually rectangular); many of them have an hanging label that supports a better structured communication for the consumer.

Colours normally used are never loud nor too vivid but soft like pastels able to evoke a strong connection with nature, respect for environment, security and reassurance sensations, in order to express the feeling of trust for a product obtained according to processes of cultivation that intend to respect natural balance (synestesy).

This analysis has underlined the general absence of 1 litre bottles and the preference for the 0,75 cl bottles, and sometimes this size is accompanied by a smaller one (0,5 and 0,25 cl).

Nearly all farms use dark glass to better and longer preserve the characteristics of oil.

Another interesting element is the reference to the certification body (specially in italian farms) and its presence lets understand the importance of the certified quality. In this way they offer more guarantees to the consumer about the observance of the precepts of the law expected for organic products.

Only a few farms are explicit about nutritional content, in this way loosing a precious chance to better value their product.