



Managing the Global Economy

Abstracts of the Joint International Conference Organized by

- University of Primorska, Faculty of Management, Slovenia
- Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow School of Economics, Russian Federation
- Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Faculty of Economics and Tourism 'Dr. Mijo Mirkovic,' Croatia
- Association for the Study of East European Economies and Cultures, USA
- Society for the Study of Emerging Markets, USA

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Customer Perception on Made in Italy. A Survey Among Young People

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Made in Italy (MiI) characterizes those products that are manufactured in Italy so they can be recognized and appreciated within international markets. A high number of products and firms are involved in MiI development, mainly belonging to fashion, furniture and agrifood sectors.

Generally, a “made in” product acquires a *territorial dimension*, since designed in a specific area or country and thus imbued with its culture and traditions (Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002; Bucci, Coderre and Ferrara, 2011). In particular, the MiI brands raises people awareness to buy unique and high quality products (Bertoli and Resciniti, 2013). On the other hand, Italy is known worldwide for art, fashion, automotive and gastronomy and many products have contributed to making the country famous in the world over the years.

However, it would be misleading to claim that all MiI products are made *entirely* in Italy. It is known that most companies resort to outsourcing in order to reduce production costs and achieve economies of scale by subcontracting specific operation phases (Aquaro, 2013). This calls our attention to the importance of *tracing* and *tracking* products along their supply chain.

Current regulations on this issue is quite controversial. Italian legislators have defined some important guidelines in the course of time, establishing the limits within which a firm can adopt MiI etiquette for its products. There are still gaps, though. This makes more difficult both to regulate the different supply chain phases and to develop customer knowledge about MiI products (Busacca, 2005). In fact, MiI is able to affect product value and therefore customer expectations and propensity to purchasing (Zeithalm, 1988; De Marinis, 2014). Moreover, buyers do not know about operations and phases outsourced as well as about the specific legislation defining MiI products. So what drives consumers to buy MiI products?

This paper examines consumer perception on MiI products, with the aim at investigating the degree of knowledge about MiI, in terms of both product value perception and its influence in the purchasing process.

We have conducted a survey through multiple answers questionnaire to students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate business and management programs within the Department of Economics and Law of the University of Macerata. Although students are young and have low purchasing power, they are an interesting target, which could provide useful information on current and future propensity to MiI products consumption.

The survey results reveal some interesting issues. First, regulation on MiI highlights some gaps regarding the *control* of operation phases. Only the “100% Made in Italy” label guarantees that the product is created entirely in Italy. The majority of students (63.6%) prefer to buy MiI products (or products they *believe* are MiI). They state that MiI characterizes principally clothing and agrifood products, which stand out for handicraft, creativity and quality of materials.

Future research is certainly needed to refine the concept of MiI and test it within a broader sample of customers. Furthermore, even though students belong to homogeneous training programs, they could

differ significantly from a cultural, social and economic viewpoint and this might affect their perception of MiI products.

Keywords: customer perception, Made in Italy, Italian products, supply chain control

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