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*Discursive perspectives on knowledge dissemination in corporate and professional communication: focus on ethical and ideological aspects*

**Giuliana Elena Garzone**  
**Walter Giordano**  
**Sergio Pizziconi**  
**(eds.)**

***Discursive perspectives on knowledge dissemination***  
***in corporate and professional communication:***  
***focus on ethical and ideological aspects***



*Translation Studies Series*

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**DISCURSIVE PERSPECTIVES ON KNOWLEDGE  
DISSEMINATION IN CORPORATE AND  
PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION:  
FOCUS ON ETHICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

## Scientific reviewers

The process of managing and disseminating knowledge within and across enterprises is both complex and challenging. Yet the need to address such contexts is of crucial importance in today's interconnected global economy. Resources such as this one can play an invaluable role in helping organizational managers address these challenges and adapt practices to meet knowledge management and knowledge dissemination needs. The insightful nature of the ideas presented in the text, in combination with the well-structured discussions of strategies for addressing knowledge management practices, make this book an essential volume for anyone interested in knowledge creation and dissemination in the modern organization.

*Kirk St. Amant, Louisiana Tech University and University of Limerick*

The book "Discursive Perspectives on Knowledge Dissemination in Corporate and Professional Communication" is a great collection of studies focusing on the specifics of modern enterprise management and knowledge dissemination. In-depth research and analysis on a great variety of topics such as knowledge management, communication and language; an ethically-relevant genre on corporate websites; Promotion And Downplay In University Press Releases; Self-mention in academic job advertisements in humanities; American and British recruitment discourse; Corporate Knowledge Dissemination Through Digital Storytelling: Online Discourse Strategies In Italian Agri-Food Product Companies Selling Around The World; Corporate Marketing Through Legitimation And Identity Construction: Launching The Sputnik V Vaccine; disseminating Gender Mainstreaming; Corporate Environmental Pledges in response to activist pressure; climate change in intergovernmental documents and airlines' annual reports are brought to the surface by the authors in a systematic and consistent manner. The book apart from its theoretical value has a significant practical value owing to authors' expertise in the fields covered within the publication.

*Tamar Dolidze, Batumi State Maritime University, Georgia*

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CHAPTER FIVE

CORPORATE KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION THROUGH  
DIGITAL STORYTELLING: ONLINE DISCOURSE STRATEGIES  
IN ITALIAN AGRI-FOOD PRODUCT COMPANIES SELLING  
AROUND THE WORLD

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**1. Introduction**

It is commonly acknowledged that language cannot only be seen as a set of terms that allow human beings to communicate with each other. It is also a vehicle through which speakers have the chance to influence, convince, persuade and even manipulate their interlocutors. Sauer (1989) points out that language can be regarded as “the establishment of identity”, “an instrument of knowledge” and “a comparatively independent medium upon which different aspirations are (or may be) projected” (32).

The addresser chooses to convey information with a specific set of words, structures and use of register. The illocutionary force of messages (Austin 1962; Searle 1969) is interpreted and interiorized by the hearer, who cooperates in communication (Grice 1975) with the resolution to grasp what results in the pragmatic use of language and its implicatures. Much communication is meant to create specific perlocutionary effects on the listener, as to influence his/her way of this natural addresser-addressee process can be complicated by the language itself, because, due to its social function, whenever it is used, it implies more than the actual denotative meaning of the words. In fact, interlocutors include much more in their utterances than a superficial analysis might reveal, since the aim is to influence the participants’ way of thinking in the communicative exchange. Strategic use of lexis and morpho-syntactic structures permeates every-day communication both in private and public contexts. In this regard, the aforementioned influencing process can have certain consequences in the private sphere and it can lead to unforeseeable effects in the public dimension, where large audiences can be manipulated by one single person’s speech. People’s use of language has been studied for centuries examining the way in which discourse can positively or negatively influence interlocutors’ perception of the world around them (Milroy 1991; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Trudgill 2000; Thomas and Wareing 2012; Fairclough 2014). Exploring the relationship between language and society is pivotal for the



evaluation and contextualization of the hidden thoughts and beliefs underpinning official discourses, as well as the ideological processes that lie beyond these discourses and the role they can play in the given context

This is why interlocutors' linguistic choices have been studied in a varied range of contexts, such as the political, medical, scientific and pedagogical areas, to mention just a few. An ever-growing interest in the substantial repercussions that the use of language can have on audiences exposed to marketing communication has led linguists to delve into the strategies companies implement to create a successful producer/consumer relationship (Danesi 2015; Mihăeș and Epure 2018; Alli 2019). In fact, marketing communication is particularly complex to analyse, being tailored to the media used, the target community chosen and the level of exposure achieved by advertising. This complex scenario increases if we take international marketing communication into account, since this requires a careful analysis of the (prospective) customers' needs, habits and desires as well as a careful use of texts, which need to be carefully transcreated (de Mooij 2010; Hornikx and Meurs 2019). To make the concept clear without entering the world of economics, engaging with a foreign audience on an emotional level basically could mean using locally appropriate cultural references and language to convey the message. "Within marketing and advertising", to quote Pedersen (2014, 62), "texts usually have a persuasive character, and elements such as wordplay, assonance and alliteration are frequently applied. The focus is on ensuring cultural/local relevance, and commercial intent involved". To ensure this process of adaptation to the target audience, companies are asked to re-tell themselves by revising their "native" advertising campaigns to create a successful image suitable for their foreign customers. The process of adaptation of the promotional message can vary according to the target community. It may imply using a different language from the mother tongue, including different pictures and/or highlighting different qualities of the given products. Narrowing the focus onto the Italian context, it must be noted that not every Italian company selling abroad has readily available experts in this field to create and adapt advertising campaigns to international audiences. As the collected data<sup>17</sup> clarify, only big or corporate Italian companies are able to collaborate with teams of experts and take advantage of their specific competence and expertise.

Indeed, the majority of small or medium companies are forced to opt for "home-made" translations that, in many cases, are neither linguistically perfect nor created by a team of professionals aware of the cultural background of the target audience. These translations, however, aim to strike the right emotional chord with customers in the same way as the experts' work would.

Being aware of the many marketing strategies that are used to increase sales, this study focuses on the way in which storytelling is exploited to attract customers and promote the uniqueness of Italian products around the world.

Products need to be positioned and sold in an overly-automated and digitally-driven society, in which everyday businesses try to stand out from the crowd. For this reason, in a rapidly

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<sup>17</sup> The data herein presented were obtained through direct personal interviews with a group of Italian producers working in the agri-food sector.

changing world, where globalisation, digitalisation and competitiveness are constantly growing, it may not be easy to promote a product in such an appealing way as to convince customers to favour it over others. In this business context, companies can no longer afford to remain anonymous but need to strengthen their identity, finding convincing promotional strategies to enhance their values. The more a company manages to build an identity that will clearly make it stand out from its competitors, the more it will have a chance of success: (prospective) customers will choose to buy its products instead of others. Therefore, in order to survive in the modern overcrowded market, companies need to distinguish themselves. Companies have traditionally relied on advertising campaigns but this tactic now appears to be ineffective. As McKee and Gerage (2008) point out, “in a world of immediate, global information flow, exaggerated, underperforming claims backfire. Consumers compare marketing promises with their real-world experience, and when the two don’t line up, they mock the brands that played them with scathing product reviews, public tweets, and Facebook posts. Through decades of false promises, marketers have trained the consumers to distrust advertising” (10-20).

Contemporary customers, whose web mediated peer-to-peer communication has contributed to making them more aware of their needs, likes and dislikes, are no longer seduced by false promises and request authenticity and simplicity (Moin 2020). As a consequence, brands must be built on an honest and genuine story that recalls the personal values of the brand itself (Salmon 2008), and this is when storytelling starts to play a key role. It appears to bridge the gap caused by our increasingly virtual society, mainly characterised by a lack of face-to-face relationships, in which people are crying out for human connections, emotions and engagement.

But what does storytelling mean? Can customers actually be so involved that they buy the product? In Fontana’s opinion (2012), storytelling is not only about telling a story; it is about communicating through stories: “authentic storytelling does not exploit rational and emotional communication as a means of manipulation; instead, it uses the power of storytelling honestly and sincerely to connect with the customers at a deeper level” (Moin 2020, 9). Through storytelling, companies can create *representations*: they transform (un)real things or events into words and real perceptions, giving life to a narrative universe in which a subject-author (company, person) invites other subjects (consumers, readers) to take part (Fontana 2012, 8).

As suggested by research in this area (Papadatos 2006; Salmon 2008; Bettini 2015; Denning 2020; Moin 2020), people no longer buy products but rather the stories that the given products represent, just as they do not purchase brands but the myths and archetypes that the brands symbolise. The success of using this technique depends on how well the stories stick in the memory of the participants, who will not only be convinced to buy the product but will buy it over and over again. They like getting involved in the stories that companies are telling them and become active characters within the plot. The stories the companies tell recall reality as it is but, by adding further meanings, they give the audience the opportunity to turn it into a sort of personal tale where everything gains a special meaning (Fontana 2012).

The preliminary findings<sup>18</sup> of this study demonstrate that customers, by identifying themselves with the protagonists of the story, can share the values that characterise the company and which are also reflected in its products. Storytelling is a way of letting prospective clients know about the origin of the product they are buying, creating trust in that specific company and making them feel part of the family. The use of the aforementioned marketing technique is proof of the desire to highlight concepts typically associated with Italy and Italian products, such as Italian producers' passion for tradition, their glorification of the agricultural context and their love for family.

## 2. Corpus data and methodology

The purpose of this study is to add results to a larger investigation whose main aim is to analyse and understand how linguistic and socio-cultural traits – both of the source and the target linguistic-cultural panorama – operate and mix in the promotional discourse of Italian agri-food products sold to the international market. At the present stage, linguistic analyses of communicative strategies included in the English version of the websites of Italian companies selling oil, vinegar and wine abroad have been carried out, revealing the producers' decision to enhance one popular notion: the concept of Made-in-Italy. In line with previous research on the topic (Fortis 1998; Beccattini 2007; Bucci, Vanni, and Ferraresi 2011; Bertoli and Resciniti 2013a; Bertoli and Resciniti 2013b), linguistic investigation shows that lexical choices tend to focus on emphasising typical Italian characteristics (Corrizzato 2018 and 2019), that can roughly be summarised in three thematic macro-areas: passion, authenticity and tradition, quality and excellence. Taking the first theme into consideration, data analysis has proven that the importance of maintaining a profound connection with traditional roots is obtained by a focus on the detailed description of the natural areas of the peninsula. They are, in fact, always described as unspoilt places, where time stands still and people are able to live like the farming families of the past, in total harmony with the local natural scenery. This representation of Italian producers goes hand in hand with the special attention given to authenticity, for which the never-ending idea of Italy as a pastoral place of spiritual rebirth seems to contribute to promoting the uniqueness of the given products. The quality of the Italian agri-food products is ensured by producers' expertise, through which the uniqueness of the products is always maintained. Handing down knowledge and passion from generation to generation, Italy manages to offer products that summarise the peculiarities of the natural landscape and human know-how.

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<sup>18</sup> The present study is part of a larger project and comes after two previous publications (Corrizzato 2018 and 2019) aiming at analysing how promotional discourse is shaped by Italian producers in the English version of their website to promote their products worldwide. The project has included parallel mixed methods design involving both quantitative and qualitative approaches, as it combines the creation of the corpus (described in the following section) and the collection of data through semi-structured interviews. Mixed methods seemed relevant to gain holistic perspectives within the area of interest and to complement the data collected from each of the methods. Among the multifaceted aspects shared by the interviewees, they drew attention to the fact that foreign customers love to be informed about the history of the family, their predecessors and the local traditions.

In light of the aforementioned reflections, this study's research questions investigate two intertwined aspects: on the one hand, special interest will be given to the way in which storytelling has been used as a marketing tool to influence customer behaviour and guide their interests; on the other, the spotlight will be on the linguistic strategies used to tell producers' stories. Indeed, linguistic choices are of central importance in the creation of the message: in a nutshell, companies should select the words to include in their illustrative passages carefully as they can activate mental associations in people's minds. These associations should relate to symbols and/or images which represent Italy in the world and mirror the positive characteristics of Made in Italy.

Focussing on the discourse strategies of persuasion, Sornig (1989) identifies a number of linguistic devices that are commonly used in politics. Such strategies can be also identified in other fields, such as marketing communication, in which convincing, seducing and building costumers' loyalty is an essential part of the marketing programme. The focus was prevalently on lexical words - i.e., adjectives, nouns, verbs - which constituted a springboard on which to base the qualitative aspect of the study.

In order to pursue the objectives of the present study, the following categories have been taken into consideration (Sornig 1989, 95-114):

- Use of proper names and personal pronouns;
- Tense and aspect within the area of persuasive grammar (use of past tense);
- Choice of words within the area of lexicon of persuasion.

To analyse the linguistic features associated with storytelling, the author created a corpus of data. The corpus consisted of 269,546 tokens and was made up of selected sections from 629 Italian agri-food product websites. Specific introductory sections that could be related to the country-of-origin effect and the concept of Made in Italy were chosen from each website, i.e., the corpus included descriptive passages entitled "history", "family", "(our) company" and similar explanatory passages. Apart from being categorised according to the company for which they were created, the texts were also grouped according to each company's specialization. Thus, 11 subcorpora were formed and named according to what each subcorpus included: beer, coffee, dairy, fruit, grocery, meat, olive oil, pasta, sweet, vinegar and wine.

The following table summarises the subcorpora sizes, including the number of tokens and the percentage related to their total number in each subcorpus with the main corpus.

Although it is widely known that specific geographical areas are involved in the production process of specific products, and even more limited zones make Italian products unique, the Italian agri-food producers selected cover the whole peninsula, contributing to giving this study a national analytical perspective.

Every text within the corpus was coded, specifying the products sold (e.g., W for wine and P for pasta) together with the first three consonants of the name of the company. H stands for History, the hypernym chosen to refer to the introductory sessions taken into consideration. Given the number of texts, this classification proved to be really useful because both the product and the producer could immediately be recognized.

**Table 1 Subcorpora sizes**

<b>Subcorpus</b>	<b>Tokens</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Beer</b>	23,677	8.784
<b>Coffee</b>	27,585	10.234
<b>Dairy</b>	23,449	8.699
<b>Fruit</b>	16,730	6.207
<b>Grains</b>	25,990	9.642
<b>Meat</b>	18,492	6.86
<b>Olive oil</b>	25,130	9.323
<b>Pasta</b>	21,837	8.101
<b>Sweet</b>	26,999	10.016
<b>Vinegar</b>	28,605	10.612
<b>Wine</b>	30,753	11.409

For comparative and contrastive purposes, data were studied using the tools of Corpus linguistics and then contextualised and interpreted by adapting Critical Discourse Analysis approaches. The quantitative analysis resulted in the automatic creation of a wordlist aimed at generating a word frequency list. The list was then manually checked to eliminate any unwanted 'noise' (function words and numbers). The focus was prevalently on lexical keywords - i.e. adjectives, nouns, verbs, - which constituted a springboard on which to base the qualitative aspect of the analysis. This initial phase revealed which verbal elements contributed to enhancing storytelling effectiveness and identified which discourse strategies were key elements both for customers' emotional responses and for transmitting producers' knowledge of their working methods. In order to uncover linguistic patterns around the search words, studying how key words<sup>19</sup> were used within the marketing context seemed relevant. The concordances were sorted alphabetically and the descriptive clauses and phrases used to refer to the target words were then grouped into categories of similarity.

### **3. Storytelling and discursive strategies**

While exploring which linguistic context worked best in storytelling, in terms of advertising effectiveness and producers' transmission of values, three macro areas were recognized. Based on the assumption that a story cannot be remembered if the protagonists are not well outlined (Clara and Barbosa 2021; Santos and Espírito Santo 2021), the illustrative passages concerning the producers of Italian agri-food products overflow with details about the family and the company's origins. Italian companies, both at a local and national level, are often family-run, and therefore have more than one generation actively involved in the production process and in the expansion of their business.

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<sup>19</sup> Key words were then selected according to themes pertaining the Made-in-Italy area: passion, authenticity, tradition, quality and craftsmanship.

Data demonstrate that, along with the desire to share details of the family lives of the people involved in running the company and producing the given products, the extensive use of the past simple tense seems to be a strong element in reinforcing a story's creation. It begins as an indefinite fairy-tale past - in the style of "once upon a time" – and creates effective connections with engaging emotional and happy anecdotes featuring good characters, which generally occurred during childhood.

In order to strengthen informal interpersonal relationships with the story-readers, the use of proper names and first-person pronouns (and related possessive adjectives) is the most common choice.

Marketing narratives used by companies also include repeated allusions to their expertise, introduced through verbs of cognition, aiming at seducing the audience and convincing them to choose the company.

### **3.1. Proper names and family-related words: building an intimate context**

As Margolin (2002, 107) clarifies, “the constructive power of discourse in purely human circumstances is much more modest, and could be characterised as the ability to give rise to mental (cognitive) representations, discourse domains, or belief worlds in the minds of individuals, or to belief worlds shared by members of a group”. For this reason, including producers' proper names and family-related terms appears to be a popular strategy for getting closer to the reader. In fact, in order to stand out among many other companies and be remembered over time, family-run companies choose to give accurate descriptions of their families, how their businesses started and have developed over time.

- 1) And in Modica, in the business environment of the deep south of Sicily, **Mario, Angelo, Ignazio** and **Giuseppe** decide that the handmade coffee roasting can be a challenge to play with courage and a great deal of unconsciousness. (CBLH)
- 2) That's how passion has turned in the profession and in 1998 **Giovanni**, together with the **sisters Ivonne** and **Giovanna**, founded the “San Martino Winery”. (WSNMH)

As the examples demonstrate, the importance of family ties becomes even more relevant when the role of predecessors comes into play. Ancestors play a crucial role within the illustrative passages as they are authentic witnesses of two fundamental concepts of Made in Italy. On the one hand, they contribute to reinforcing the representation of a family-oriented society in which parent-child relationships always guide any kind of decision. Italian (grand)parents generally have a lot of authority over their children throughout their lives, influencing their lifestyle as well as their business choices. Elderly family members are respected and remembered as spiritual guides. This concept gains even more relevance in the presentation of the company as they are depicted as those from which everything stemmed, those who kept the secrets of production and transmitted expertise to the next generation.

- 3) Currently his sons **Domenico** and **Luca** and his **daughter Maria** are actively contributing to the company and brand success with a great commitment and passion, strengthened by the cultural and working legacies of their **grandfather Domenico** and **father Tiziano**. (WFRCH)
- 4) **Massimo Z.** is born into a merchants of coffee family; not only the tradition, but also the passion was transmitted by his **grandfather** and then by his **father**. (CZNTH)
- 5) In 1919 young **Giuseppe**, born into a family of farmers and olive growers in Oneglia, Western Liguria, having just returned from the First World War, decided to begin the business of retailing olive oil. (OCLAH)

In line with the lexical choices included in the examples, the two other words frequently found in the descriptive passages in English on Italian agri-food product websites are *ancestor(s)* and *generation(s)*. The connection with the past is constantly revived through the inclusion of ancestors, whose task is to bring back memories of “a nostalgic past where everything was associated with peaceful nature and uncontaminated countryside” (Corrizzato 2018, 153).

- 6) Therefore, he began feeding and quenching the thirst of travellers, seasonal workers and cart-drivers. Giuseppe came from the flat Formigine but his **ancestors** came down from the Apennines. Claudio succeeded his father Giuseppe and in 1871 the "Tavern" became even more a meeting place, also obtaining the authorisation to be a salt and tobacco shop. (WMNTH)
- 7) The long history of the Montresor family boasts illustrious **ancestors**, like the Count Claude de Montresor, the prime counsellor of Duke D'Orleans in France in 1600. At the beginning of 19th century, a branch of the family moved to Italy in the Veneto region near the lake of Garda, an area renowned for its moraine soils: here they found the proper environment where to continue and improve one of the main activities of the family: the viticulture. (WMNTH)

The ancestors take readers into an enchanted world where time seems to stand still: images of medieval carriages left outside taverns in the middle of rural areas, or of a more elegant short trip to France, where encounters with aristocrats conjure up in the reader's mind sumptuous costumes and dangerous intrigues.

This choice to depict the peninsula as enchanted and rural in which the readers can let their emotions guide them as if they were reading an authentic story, is confirmed by frequent allusions to typical architectural buildings and historical sites: castles, manors, churches and historical farms are the perfect setting for the protagonists of these stories.

- 8) In the year 1992, the Morini family bought a **historical farm** house from the early 1900's, surrounded by splendid vineyards in the heart of Val di Mezzane. (WMRNH)
- 9) It is a natural oasis of taste and beauty, amidst precious vineyards, old **hilltop villages**, **historic castles** and **charming small towns**. (SLBAH)
- 10) The Brewery The Mastio takes its name from the main tower of the **medieval castle** Urbisaglia, historical and cultural center of the Marche Region. (BNDNH)

Village(s) strongly collocates with the adjectives *ancient*, *historic*, *medieval* and *small*, as if the narrator wants to transport readers to a fantasy realm, where the hectic routine of daily life can become a simple, irritating memory.

11) Since ancient times, scholars and travellers have been charmed by this little **medieval village**: Asolo, a town with a thousand horizons. (SFRNH)

12) The wine estate boasts more than a century of history in Broni, an **ancient village** with a great wine-making tradition, situated in the center of one of the territories that produces universally esteemed red and white wines. (WMNAH)

The association family-landscape sheds light on another key concept of Made in Italy: the role that old and new generations play in the stories.

The word *generations* occurs 295 times within the corpus. Many phrases illustrate the number of generations that have been working to produce the given product, underlining the skill and passion typical of Italian producers.

The hard work, passion and devotion that families put into what they do and their efforts to maintain their ancestors' footprint is often highlighted through the description of typical Italian families whose deepest values are handed down from generation to generation.

**Table 2 Focus on generation involved in the family-run business**

At the moment 3	<b>generations</b>	of women cooperate for the good management of
We have been in this field for more than 3	<b>generations</b>	; consequently we arguable to offer our customers
nd quality have been guaranteed for at least 3	<b>generations</b>	... for now.
firm is headed up by his three sons of the 3rd	<b>generations</b>	and had become a major name in the Italian Olive
These concepts have been carried out for 4	<b>generations</b>	and have thus lead to great success.
Nowadays Beatrice and Alvise (Dal Colle 4th	<b>generation</b>	) are proudly taking forward the founder's busines
With the arrival of the 4th	<b>generation</b>	, the business was further expanded and the main
ning of the estate is now in our hands, the 4th	<b>generation</b>	: Sisto, agronomist graduated from the faculty of .
ae is Romolo Gentili and I'm the last heir of 5	<b>generations</b>	of olive-growers and the current owner of Frantoi
], as it has been producing wine-vinegar for 5	<b>generations</b>	.
Today Massimo, who represents the 5th	<b>generation</b>	of the family, is the current president of Acetaia A
itional durum wheat pasta, as it comes from 6	<b>generations</b>	of passion and experience within the art of pasta-1
The oldest Italian dairy, 8th	<b>generation</b>	family business continuously since 1784.

Family loyalty and closeness, stereotypical characteristics of Italian families portrayed in the websites, shape a rural world in which parental ties develop social cohesion and a sense of belonging. Such connections are of vital importance for the dissemination of knowledge and know-how.

A less common discourse construes *new* generations as being connected to innovation, both in terms of new production process technologies and in company management. This theme, however, is generally given less space in portraying the stereotypical representation of an agricultural country where a peaceful natural landscape is essential for ensuring the quality of the agri-food products.



**Table 3 From generation to generation: examples from the corpus**

based on traditional methods passed on from	<b>generation</b>	to generation.
an of an ancient art that has been handed from	<b>generation</b>	to generation for centuries.
are proud of their traditions passed down from	<b>generation</b>	to generations through experience and oral na
ellence and tradition that is handed down from	<b>generation</b>	to generation for over 100 years.
ry of an authentic passion, handed down from	<b>generation</b>	to generation to the present day, in a world in
se making know-how was handed down from	<b>generation</b>	to generation for decades, affecting Dario as v
in respecting knowledges transferred , from	<b>generation</b>	to generation, by local area farmers.
care for this age-old product from	<b>generation</b>	to generation.
experiences acquired over the years and from	<b>generation</b>	to generation are the basis of our technologica
duction tradition has been handed down from	<b>generation</b>	to generation.
passion for genuine tastes, handed down from	<b>generation</b>	to generation, that has always seen family me
and its secrets are handed down from	<b>generation</b>	to generation.
n of wine, which has been handed down from	<b>generation</b>	to generation until today.
ling to traditional methods handed down from	<b>generation</b>	to generation, which correspond to the traditic
lifestyle, like a gene which is transmitted from	<b>generation</b>	to generation, it keeps in its barrels all the cha
of experience and passion handed down from	<b>generation</b>	to generation set up the production of the "An
This tradition has been passed on from	<b>generation</b>	to generation, with a special emphasis on the
conserved in attics and lovingly attended from	<b>generation</b>	to generation, and it was considered as a sort
Consistency has been handed down from	<b>generation</b>	to generation, proud of the name I bear
ment to the art of winemaking passed on from	<b>generation</b>	to generation.
years of history, will continue to live on from	<b>generation</b>	to generation.
From	<b>generation</b>	to generation, the Montresors never stopped ti

13) This **new generation** is responsible, above all, for the transformation of a family firm into a modern, managerial Company that is the leading supplier of wheat flour to the most renowned pasta production companies in Italy and abroad. (GCSLH)

14) F. is a family business, joining old and **new generation** and the experience gained over many years in the confectionery market. With its large factory it has become an important company activity. Cutting-edge technology and innovative working techniques are perfectly combined, without neglecting the value of ancient tradition that has always characterized this brand. (SFMRH)

Within this lexical context, another highly frequent term that occurs 715 times in the corpus, putting it among the top-five list of nouns with the highest frequency, is *family* and its plural form. A closer look at the other four terms (*product(s)*: 1,304 times; *production*: 1,244 times, *company*: 1,058 and *quality*: 1,027) indicates that the Italian family is the key concept behind the narrative structure used to promote the intention to convince the customer to choose the product on the basis of “personal” knowledge of the family members.

15) All crafting processes are carefully followed by the **family** and their workers, sharing an inner passion for nature, its fruits and its care. (BDLGH)

16) Today, just as yesterday, the **family** business is an exciting place where you are immediately transported into a metaphysical dimension of beauty where rigour, loyalty, a sense of community in the work and the pursuit of good coffee are our core values. (CPSSH)

17) Our knowledge of the land, animals and the ability to raise them under the best conditions, forms the basis of a **family** art form, which over time the great masters of salumi have transformed into a profession. (MCSMH)

18) For over three generations our **family** has dedicated itself to the production of vinegar with passion and knowledge, in the tireless search for the best possible quality product. (VDNGH)

The family itself, whose members become clearly identifiable characters within the plot, is the ambassador of product quality and personally guarantees their genuineness. This promotion approach is also confirmed by the massive use of first-person pronouns showing the desire to play a star role in the story.

### 3.2 First-person pronouns and related possessive adjectives

“A central role of marketers is to manage the ‘speaking terms’ of the relationship between firms and their customers” (Packard, Moore, and McFerran 2018, 541), and recent research has confirmed that a customer-oriented approach can optimise client-company interaction (Brady and Cronin 2001; Chan and Sengupta 2010; Rust and Chung 2006).

Alongside the techniques illustrated in the previous paragraph, data show a frequent use of first-person pronouns (especially in the plural form) and their related possessive adjectives (*we*: 1,101 times; *our*: 1,586 times; *I*: 178 times, and *my*: 121 times).

The use of first-person pronouns creates intimacy and authenticity: when the owners of the companies choose the first person, they are taking ownership of their opinions and directly involving the (prospective) customers. Indeed, in this way passive thoughts and relying on someone else’s expertise are excluded and the readers are enticed into wanting to deal with those who actually produce the products they (would) want to buy. In choosing to continue reading about the local estates of Italian producers, they decide to entrust in what they are told. The objective is to substitute written words for face-to-face encounters. Meeting the family throughout the story and looking at their pictures while they work, evokes the readers’ sensation of being with them on a walk through the vineyard or sharing breakfast under an olive tree.

The preference is to use the collective pronoun *we*, aiming at sharing the family’s point of view as representative of a larger community of its employees (and loyal customers).

19) High quality ingredients, passion and all the crazy little things **we** did together: here is what you'll find in our beers! (BCHBH)

20) **We** have the experience and skill to choose the finest raw materials, to work them with flair and to turn them into that special touch of flavour for our customers' recipes. (FMLNH)

21) **We** still pick our olives by hand and press them cold in the ancient stone press. **Our** goal is always to make the finest Italian extra virgin oil, absolutely without compromise. (OMRGH)

22) Every day, **we** combine craftsmanship and tradition to make tasty and high-quality products completely free of gluten, artificial colors, and milk and milk byproducts – products with an incomparable aroma reminiscent of the "good old days." (MPFTH)

The inclusion of the first-pronoun *I* is less frequent and mainly occurs when the speakers want to describe the efforts made in their own life to succeed in carrying on the family business or to improve production techniques.

23) For **my** family's fields are there, and **I** worked there as a child, side by side with **my** parents. A passion for the earth, as the seasons unfold, became ever more deeply rooted, pushing **me** to study crop sciences. (WGSPH)

24) But **I** was convinced of **my** idea: to produce really fine wines one has to own vineyards, selecting the best terroirs and the most typical grape varieties. (WZNNH)

### 3.3 Verbs of cognition: producers show their expertise

Data demonstrate that the illustrative passages examined also use constructions which report producers' expertise and deep knowledge of the professional world around them. The verb *to know* has a strong collocational profile with the non-finite subordinate clause introduced by *how*, as the following examples show.

**Table 4 Concordance of the verb *to know*: some examples**

of art as unique as the taste of products that	<b>know</b>	how to distinguish themselves from the mass.
means talking about a company which	<b>knows</b>	how to combine both tradition and quality with modern tex
tain based on our solid family tradition has	<b>known</b>	how to blend state-of-the-art technology and the dexterity
custodian of the finest flavours, but we also	<b>know</b>	how to move forward with innovative solutions so that it c
that developed over the years also included	<b>knowing</b>	how to enjoy life to the fullest, especially when it comes to
They also	<b>knew</b>	how to get, from the olives, a kind of combustible paste us
aging - as transparent as our conviction that	<b>knowing</b>	how to make pasta is a centuries-old art, the upshot of a st
, who will then have to	<b>know</b>	how to transform them into wine with the same characteris
ed their manual vine management skills and	<b>know</b>	how to listen to the plants and interpret their needs.
links to the knowing recognition of one who	<b>knows</b>	how to infer, in a glass of wine, all the sacrifice and dedica

The examples explain the idea conveyed by the stories included in the websites: the owners of the family business deserve to be in charge of the company because they know all the production procedures, are familiar with the peculiarities of the local territory and have refined their skills over time thanks to the support of their predecessors.

Parallel to the use of the aforementioned verb, *to be able* is also strongly linked to the description of Italian producers' skills and those of their predecessors. Occurring 92 times in the corpus, it highlights their painstakingly gained expertise.

25) The young Napoleone S., at the age of twenty, **was able to** build up a modern and innovative activity, changing three generation's of a farming family's ways following his recruitment by a local noble, the farm owner. (GSTPH)

26) Another dream of mine is that my sons **will soon be able to** carry out along the same path, one in which I have always believed with pride and commitment. (OBSSH)

27) Son of farmers but with a wealth of ideas, Rolando **was able to** guess, the changes that would affect the world of wine and agriculture. (WRNOH)

28) With its strategic position, Rubino **is able to** source best raw and semi-processed materials in Southern Italy, which makes up their major supply market, then follow by Greece and Spain. (ORBNH)

The verb *to believe* occurs 57 times in the corpus, reinforcing the Italian families' philosophies: their passion for what they have been doing for generations and their customers' satisfaction urge them to work hard every day to refine their craftsmanship. Moreover, *to believe* is used several times in constructions which report their desire to always keep their tradition, origin and values in mind. As the concept of Made in Italy excellently summarises, Italian culture is strongly attached to traditions and the great variety of Italian agri-food products comes from the extraordinary raw materials that the Mediterranean peninsula offers.

29) We **believe** in Italian tradition as the custodian of the finest flavours, but we also know how to move forward with innovative solutions so that it can never cease to surprise in our customers' recipes. (FMLNH)

Furthermore, the verb *to believe* significantly co-occurs with the words *passion*, *enthusiasm*, *knowledge* and *quality*, as shown in the following extracts:

30) We **believe** in what we do and we do what we **believe** in, with **knowledge**, **enthusiasm** and **passion**. (MVLSH)

31) Respect our history means offering the highest **quality** and excellence to those who **believe** in our work and continue for years to give us their trust. (ORNRH)

32) We **believe** that **passion** gives us unique results. (DDDCH)

33) [...] puts a lot of effort, with the same **passion** of always, into **believing** in the elements of its essence: **quality**, service, reliability and transparency.

#### 4. Conclusions

The present study has demonstrated that storytelling is “an effective advertising format to deliver messages and promote communication” (Kang, Hong, and Hubbard 2020, 47). One of the reasons why storytelling may have been chosen as a format to enclose advertisement material is that it is particularly suited to enhance the emotional power of promotional discourse. Readers, as in the case of this analysis, are asked to read the story, thus becoming familiar with the protagonists and supporting them. The power of the narrative passages taken into account lies in evoking emotions in the readers and transmitting concepts related to Made in Italy: authenticity and craftsmanship contribute to distinguishing Italy from the rest of the world.

As Salmon (2008) clarifies, “the purpose of narrative marketing is no longer simply to convince the consumer to buy the product, but also to immerse it in a narrative universe, to involve it in an incredible story. It is no longer a question of seducing or convincing, but of producing an effect of belief” (35). Indeed, a well-constructed story is as memorable as the products that the given story is promoting. Specifically, the illustrative passages in the corpus rather than sell a product, sell a story in which a family is the main character.

The members of the family are all carefully described and contextualised in a microcosm in which hard work, passion and commitment merge with the natural treasures that Italy can offer.

Almost in every website, the narrative presents the mission of the company and its founders, the unforgettable keepers of territorial secrets and production processes.

The (prospective) customers' identification with the characters in the stories is encouraged by an accurate use of language strategies that guarantee a positive outcome, as proven by the results of the present analysis. The frequent use of proper names and family-related lexicon, references to natural resources and historical landmarks, an extensive inclusion of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives and the widespread presence of verbs of cognition make the stories gripping and fascinating, creating the illusion that the reader has moved into another time and place.

Narration in the promotional discourse of Italian agri-food product companies fights "against the indifference of the recipients" (Kang, Hong, and Hubbard 2020, 55), who can become emotionally engaged by the content of the stories and recognize the uniqueness of the Italian product.

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