



Ca' Foscari  
University  
of Venice

Master's Degree  
in  
Management

Final Thesis

# Food Consumption and Consumer Behaviour

How socio-economic and political factors have shaped food  
advertising and consumers' approach to the food industry  
from 1900 to the present

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2020 / 2021



*To my grandmum*



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## INTRODUCTION

*“Along with sex and death, the production, elaboration and consumption of food is one of those processes that are common to all human beings. Just as we humans must procreate, and just as our bodies will all eventually pass from this state of living, we all must eat to sustain ourselves. Yet how we eat, what we eat, where we eat and with whom we eat, all uniquely vary from place to place, group to group, time to time - thanks to the longstanding geographic, economic, social and cosmological differences throughout the world”* (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014)<sup>1</sup>.

The quotation of M. A. Di Giovine and R. L. Brulotte from their work “Food and Foodways as a Cultural Heritage” is emblematic of the subject that this thesis aims at studying, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of the food consumption patterns that have characterized the Italian country from the 1900s to the current century. Changes in the economic, political and socio-cultural sphere have in fact contributed to remarkable changes not only in terms of nutritional habits and consumption patterns, but also in terms of advertising and communication strategies and approaches. Since history might be of great help in discovering the actors and factors shaping consumers’ approach towards food consumption, this research study relies on a historical overview of the main events that contributed to these mentioned changes.

The objective of this thesis is to integrate the research works of the contemporary historian Emanuela Scarpellini<sup>2</sup> concerning the changes in food consumption according to historical, political and economic changes that occurred in the Italian country throughout the 20th century, with more technical notions of marketing analysis basing on the examination of the famous food magazine *La Cucina Italiana*. In particular, this examination aimed at discovering the relationship between socio-cultural changes and magazine advertising, which, as it will be pointed out, seems to be tight. In addition to the description and reconstruction of the relationship between food consumption and socio-economic changes, a second objective was to compare past food consumption patterns

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<sup>1</sup> M. A. Di Giovine, R. L. Brulotte, *Food and Foodways as a Cultural Heritage*, 1st edition, pp. 1-27 (introduction), Routledge Imprint, 2014

<sup>2</sup> Emanuela Scarpellini is an Italian contemporary historian and professor at the Department of Historical Studies of Università degli Studi di Milano. Among the wide number of research and studies, in 2016 she published the volume “Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present” (Palgrave MacMillan), to which references will be made throughout this thesis

with present ones, as well as to investigate which are the external factors that today affect consumers' buying behaviour.

This thesis is articulated in two sections: in the first section (chapters 1, 2 and 3) reference is made to the existing literature on the influence of societal, economic and political changes on food consumption patterns of Italian consumers; in particular, the works of Emanuela Scarpellini in her volume "Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present" have represented a supporting tool that I adopted in order to reconstruct the changes in the historical, economic and political context that accompanied the shaping in dietary habits of Italian people from early 1900s to the end of the century.

Throughout these three chapters the focus of my study has been on: *i)* how the purchasing power of Italian consumers has shaped from one decade to another during the 20th century, as well as the changes in consumption patterns with reference to ISTAT data published over those years; *ii)* the changes in the organization, structure and function of the kitchen as an environment dedicated to the preparation and consumption of meals, with particular reference to the so-called "kitchen debate" and to its declination within the Italian country; *iii)* the shaping of the nutritional habits of Italian consumers, which witnessed several changes not only concerning the types of products purchased and consumed, but also concerning *where* and *how* they were consumed.

The purpose of this first part of the study was to underline the relationship between socio-political changes that interested the Italian country throughout the 1900s and food consumption habits, showing how the two Italian economic miracles (the first one during the 1950s and the second and more controversial one during the 1970s), have contributed in a slow but significant way not only to the economic and industrial modernization of the Italian country, but also to a real transformation of the relationship between Italian consumers and their nutrition and conviviality norms.

In this context, an element that emerged from this reconstruction that cannot be entirely negligible is connected to the second economic miracle (if it can be defined in these terms) started during the 1970s: the crisis and the decline under the industrial and economic sphere that threatened Italian society from the years 1970s did not hinder the cultural modernization and the growth of the Italian food industry, which on the contrary saw its global affirmation precisely during these years.

The second section of this thesis (chapters 4 and 5) has more analytic traits, since it deals on one hand with a research on the changes in magazine advertising throughout the 20th



century, on the other hand with a primary research (survey) applied on a sample Italian consumers with the aim of investigating the current influencing factors on food buying behaviour. With reference to my studies on advertising and communication and to some case studies analysed during the master course, I retraced the changes in food magazine advertising through the examination of the magazine *La Cucina Italiana* (from the first edition of 1929 to the edition of 1993)<sup>3</sup>. In fact, the aim of this analysis is to show how advertising represented a real carrier of political and societal transformations and coherently reflected the changes in the values, concerns and needs of food consumption for Italian society from the 1920s to the 1990s. Moreover, to investigate in depth which are the factors that nowadays influence Italian food consumption decisions and to what extent they do so, I carried out a survey that was submitted to a sample of 480 Italian people as primary research to collect fresh data and to make a comparison between past and present food consumption trends. The survey consisted in an online form, that was spread using the most common social platforms: Whatsapp, Instagram and Facebook, where followers were invited to participate and possibly forward the link to their friends, so as to enlarge the number of respondents and provide the survey's results with a higher reliability. Results of the survey will be commented according to the different themes they refer to, and they will be examined according to the changes that have occurred in the nutritional habits and preferences of Italian consumers, as well as to the changes in the socio-cultural and political environment that the Italian country witnessed from the early 1900s to the present landscape.

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<sup>3</sup> The analysis will be applied on the following editions: December 1929, January 1937, June 1940, January 1952, January 1961, January 1973, January 1983, October 1993. This research has been carried out consulting the original copies of the mentioned years by courtesy of "La Vigna" Library of Vicenza

# **Chapter 1. Food Innovations in the Age of the Industrial Development (1900-1914)**

## 1.1 The Italian Society and its relationship with food

History might be of great help in shedding light on the actors shaping consumers' approach towards food consumption and their preferences. Development and innovation processes are often unpredictable and uncertain, they involve multiple actors and factors, they are messy and difficult to decode for observers and practitioners. Historical research helps to frame these processes and the actors involved, reconstruct their origins and dynamics: contemporary phenomena are often the result of what has happened in the past, and sometimes phenomena that we label as "new" are, in fact, not "new". Going back to the history of consumption is thus essential to understand what has led Italian consumers to make the choices they make today.

As it will be pointed out in this first Chapter, the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century portrayed a period in which socio-political and economic factors significantly contributed to change the Italian people's behaviour, not only within the society but also within their private lives.

The early 1900 European general context showed a continent at the peak of its development. After the French-German conflict of 1870, Europe managed to avoid any kind of internal war, and the various European states started dedicating to colonial occupations to ensure themselves new market opportunities for a further scientific and technological development. Italy, on its part, tried to enter this appealing politics-economical context to benefit from the advantages of this flourishing, but its incapability to keep up with the other European powers did not wait for showing up. Despite this, the period that goes from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to the outset of the First World War had been significative under several fields for Italy, thanks also to the political figure of Giovanni Giolitti who demonstrated capable in understanding the needs of the country under the social, economic, and cultural profile. The political unification of 1861 on one hand ensured the increase of commerce within the country and a noteworthy economic development, while on the other hand gave rise to the problem of social stratification and economic distinctions, emphasizing the different conditions of the working class and the entrepreneurs. It is in this field that the role of Giolitti turned out to be decisive. With his

liberal principles, Giolitti committed to giving more importance to the masses, ensuring them more support and somehow limiting the intervention of the State in the working sphere. Indeed, he carried out important reforms that impacted in the public and private sphere of the citizens and, as it will be further underlined, also in their relationship with food. To mention some of the most peculiar ones, Giolitti tried to improve the conditions of the workers in factories, ensuring both the day of rest and limiting the working hours of women and young boys; in foreign politics, his aim was to create a vast colonial empire that could have hold its own to the other European powers.

When talking about the so-called *Età Giolittiana*, one must not forget that the above-mentioned reforms took place in the context of the Second Industrial Revolution, which involved the textile, electrical, mechanical and iron and steel industries. This may induce us to imagine Italy as a flourishing and well-developed country where everything seemed to start a process of amelioration and expansion. However, this was not completely the case. With reference to the nutritional sphere of Italian consumers of that time, in fact, the Italian reality was more underdeveloped compared to that of one of the other European powers: the most widespread foodstuffs were cereals and legumes; hence the typical diet lacked a sufficient supply of animal proteins. The results that came from the *Inchiesta Jacini (1877-1882)* showed how the key element in an everyday diet was bread, which was substituted with *polenta* in regions such as Veneto and Lombardy<sup>4</sup>. Another dish that was always present in Italian households of the time, especially at dinner, was legumes soup (a cheap but satiating food), sometimes accompanied by onion and potatoes, whereas “precious” food such as meat and fish were consumed only during special occasions. As it can be glimpsed, this situation of undernutrition entailed the spread - especially in the rural areas, of diseases such as *pellagra* and stomach disorders.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, a big issue bothering the Italy of that time was the existing dualism between the North and the South, that had become more accentuated because of the innovations of the Second Industrial Revolution. This revolutionary period, that had started around 1870, found the roots for its development in the most important European powers and although Italy tried to keep up with them, the country presented itself as a “second

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<sup>4</sup> The *Inchiesta Jacini* was a parliamentary investigation carried out between 1877 and 1886 with the scope of examining the conditions of agriculture of the Italian Country. It is named after Stefano Jacini, politician and economist who directed the study starting from 1877. The information so far introduced are the re-elaboration of data found in: V. Riccardi, *Centri e Periferie: la storia di un sistema globale*, Zanichelli 2016, V edizione

<sup>5</sup> Source: *La rivoluzione alimentare dell'Ottocento*, in *Breve storia dell'alimentazione*, enutritionmed.com

comer". In addition to this, the country could be considered as divided into two areas, one being Northern Italy and one being Southern Italy, that differed in terms of economic, social and working conditions. While in the Turin-Milan-Genoa triangle new automotive, chemical and metallurgical industries started to appear, and the cities of the Northern regions became more and more modernized with electricity, new means of transportations and new residences for the entrepreneurial middle class, the life conditions in the South were still dramatic. Southern Italy offered to its inhabitants low living standards, with agriculture and rural activities as the primary source of income. Extreme poverty, however, was not the unique wound afflicting the South. With a deeper study of the living conditions of the southerner, other important factors emerge, especially in the sphere of nutrition and personal hygiene, which had serious effects on consumption patterns. Considering, for example, water, the provision of this primary good was a service that the municipalities offered with some difficulties. As noticed by Emanuela Scapellini in her book *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the Present*, results of a 1885 inquiry on the hygiene conditions of the Italian Kingdom stated that sufficient water was available for only 6,700 municipalities, with over 22 Million inhabitants, of which 880 had water of mediocre quality, 350 had bad quality water and in addition to these other 1,500 municipalities had insufficient water<sup>6</sup>. This water, coming from springs, wells and lakes located in different parts of Italy, would eventually be transported and distributed to the inhabitants by 40% of municipalities, using tubes and pipes or simply through open canals. Then, with the beginning of the Century and above all with the Second Industrial Revolution, the Giolitti's Government and local administrations found it necessary to intervene with a greater control of such infrastructures with the aim of improving the service of the water system. The most effective outcome in this sense can be seen in the reactivation of ancient Roman aqueducts in the city of Naples with the Serino's aqueduct, which was able to provide around 500 Neapolitans with fresh and clean water costing 0,25 Euros per cubic meter<sup>7</sup>. These satisfactory outcomes were reached thank to the big innovations brought in by the Industrial Revolution, as will be better explained in paragraph 1.2, allowing the construction of a complex network of services, among which railways, to carry

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<sup>6</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Chapter 3, 2016, pp. 56-58

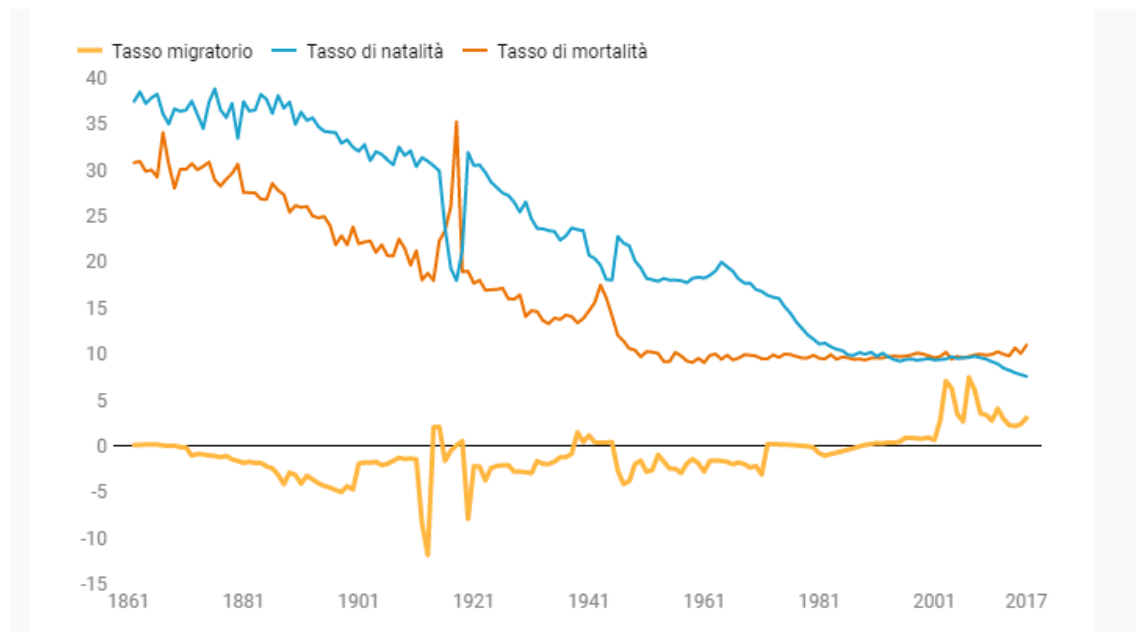
<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 6

significant quantities of goods from cities to the countryside and vice versa, and electricity, to improve the life conditions for everyone, especially for lower classes.

Coming back to the factors threatening living standards of the early 1900 Italy, another one worth noting is the consequent impossibility for the South to develop properly despite the helps coming from the Government: the South was nearly reduced to a “colony” of the North, to which the latter sold its products at a high price, giving rise to the so-called *Questione Meridionale*. In conclusion to this historical regression, it can be said that at the beginning of the 1900s the Country presented a heterogeneous landscape, where traits of development and innovations coexisted with traits of backwardness still affecting some areas and social classes.

To understand how the so far presented situation can be related to food consumption, it is first necessary to think about the direct consequence of the reforms undertaken in the water and sanitation systems and of the general increased quality of infrastructures: a better personal hygiene and wellbeing, which would in turn favoured longevity and unfavoured mortality. In fact, comparing this period to the previous Century, a significant improvement in this field can be noted, together with long-lived patterns and a consequent drop in mortality rates. As represented in *Graph 1*, at the moment of the Unification of the Italian Kingdom (1861), the annual birth rate was around 40% and the mortality rate was greater than 30%. Then, starting from 1880, mortality rate began its steady decrease, reaching less than 20% in 1914. At the same time an increase in emigration can be witnessed, not only abroad but also - and especially - within the Country itself, from the Southern Regions to the Northern ones, where life seemed to be more attractive and the economy gave more working opportunities.

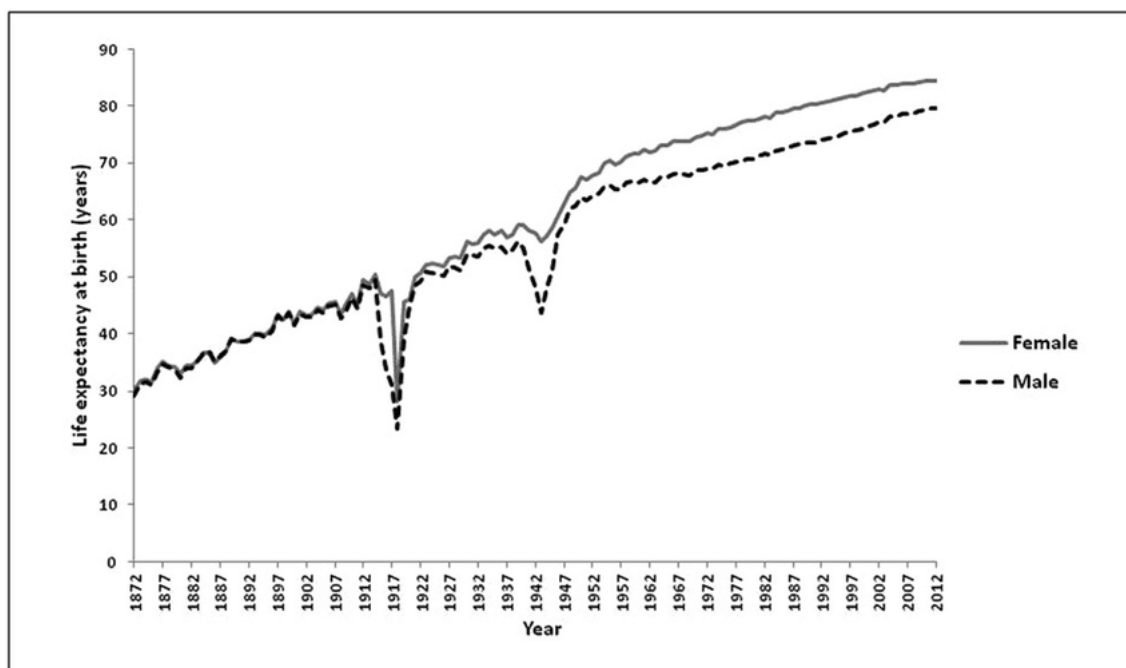
Graph 1: Natalità VS Mortalità (1861-2017)



Source: M. Avilia, “Demografia e pianificazione finanziaria: c’è un nesso?” and ISTAT, “Ricostruzione della popolazione residente e del bilancio demografico, rilevazione del movimento e calcolo della popolazione residente (dal 2012)” in [www.marcoavilia.it](http://www.marcoavilia.it)

The improved general well-being thus has been possible thanks to two factors: *i)* the reforms of the Giolitti’s Government in the field of public health (e.g. the creation of aqueducts and a higher cities’ cleanliness); *ii)* the advancements carried out in the field of science and medicine, that allowed innovations in health infrastructures and development of higher scientific knowledge for doctors and surgeons, offering people the chance to enjoy good health care. Consequently, also people’s mentality and attitude towards personal hygiene started to shape. The new culture of cleanliness in which they were embedded gave rise to the inward need to live under more adequate conditions. The following important step where to rest the attention is the increase of citizens’ incomes, thanks to the Country’s industrialization and the consequent demand of workforce in the industrial triangle. This allowed people to benefit from a higher income and thus raising their living standard also in terms of nutrition and food consumption. This is exactly what happened in the period preceding the First World War, as it is shown in *Graph 2*.

Graph 2: Evolution of life expectancy at birth in Italy (1872-2012)



Source: R.Ostan, D.Monti, P.Gueresi, "Gender, aging and longevity in humans", Journal of Clinical Science, Vol.130, pp. 1711-1725, October 2016 and Human Mortality Database ([www.mortality.org](http://www.mortality.org))

Even if the above graph and the considerations made so far demonstrate once again how the Italian Country was heading towards a flourishing renaissance, it must be stressed that this change has been gradual. Especially talking about improvements in health conditions, some scholars argued that while these were subjected to a steady and gradual increase, the mortality rate on the other side saw a quicker decline. At first glance, one must think about the decline of mortality rates as a direct consequence of the innovations undertaken in the field of medicine and medical infrastructures progress. Against this, the contemporary historian Emanuela Scarpellini, in her work "Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present"<sup>8</sup>, stressed how some scholars such as the British epidemiologist Thomas McKewon argued that the contribution of medicine to the drop in mortality rates that took place in the years before the Great War had not been so significant. Instead, patterns of a more longeval life seemed to be possible thanks to a decrease in the

<sup>8</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, Milan 2016. pp. 65-66

infectious diseases that occurred thanks to a significant improvement in hygiene and mostly in nutrition.

In fact, the analysis of the political context in which Italian people were embedded in this period and the understanding of the various reforms undertaken by the Giolitti's Government especially in the field of public health made it possible to see how the introduction of water sanitation systems brought to a better personal hygiene and wellbeing. At the same time, the innovations carried out by the Second Industrial Revolution covered many different sectors and positively influenced the life of Italian people both under an economic perspective and under a health perspective: concerning the former, a larger amount of job opportunities was offered – above all in the industrial triangle - and a consequent increase of citizens' income was possible; concerning the latter, medical treatments started to be more innovative and sophisticated, offering people a better-quality health system. Increased incomes would in turn lift the living standards and also change their attitude towards hygiene.

As it can be deduced from the so far presented heterogeneous Italian landscape, also the relationship that Italian people had with food was of the same variety. In other words, consumers' approach to food differed depending on the geographical context (North and South) and on social stratification (working class and peasants).

As per the remarking of Emanuela Scarpellini in her research, based on a number of studies that she carried out on documents on the Historical Archives of the Società Umanitaria of Milan, some features of the working-class diet were reconstructed. According to her findings, considering a working-class meal in a household of Milan, for example, meant firstly to consider the chaotic routines of businessmen and women. At dinner time, when families were finally reunited after an exhausting working day, the table was set with several types of food on it, available thanks to the so far mentioned improvements and innovations: clean vegetables that could be eaten in safety because they had been washed with running water, a hot soup because most thanks to the availability of cast-iron stoves for the majority of households<sup>9</sup>, coated meat with flour that could be fried in order to be more satiating, accompanied with drinks like water and also wine. On one hand, this was still poor-quality food (meat, for instance, is generally pork or other fat-but-low-cost meats) but on the other hand the fried food was a new introduction. In the regions of the

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<sup>9</sup> Paragraph 1.2 will analyse this innovation more in detail.



North olive oil was not very widespread, since it came from the olive groves of the South and it was expensive, and vegetable oils were not a possible substitute because its final taste was not pleasant if used in frying. Hence, in the Northern families it was common to replace olive oil with butter or, better still, lard.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, focusing on cheap animal proteins, we can also see the difference in meat consumption comparing the North and the South: at the beginning of 1900, in fact, a workman of a good living level from northern or central Italy would enjoy a meal with at least 350 grams per week of preserved meat while a southerner worker would have to settle for only 100 grams per week<sup>11</sup>. Another element introduced with the innovation process was preservation, not only for meat but also for fish, and this innovation touched almost all the Italian population with little difference in its geographical and social availability. The whole Italian Country offered several types of meat, each region proposing – at that time and still today - its typical cured meat. Northern regions such as Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia offered (among other meat-based products) respectively Bra sausages, *bresaola*, *soppressa* and San Daniele ham. Going on with Central regions we can mention many salami types: *coppa*, *culatello* and *mortadella* in Emilia-Romagna and lard from Colonnata in Tuscany. Arriving to the Southern regions and the islands, Latium was the homeland of *porchetta*, Apulia the one of *capocollo* and Sardinia the one of *mustela*. The same can be said for fish, one of the more primordial foods in the history of mankind. Being it a fresh food that must be eaten on the same day of the purchase or if anything the following day, preservation revealed useful also in this case. Rivers fishes such as mullet, trout or other freshwater fish were preserved, in salt or vinegar, so that households could have bigger quantities as provisions. Another food common in the majority of families all around Italy was wine. With its ancient origins, wine had widespread throughout the peninsula bringing with it a cultural meaning: it was not just an alcoholic beverage for adults who wanted to accompany their food courses with aromatic flavours, it was the symbol of conviviality and sharing, something that gave to the Italian heritage an added value. Meat, fish and wine were just three of the generally consumed foods in Italy of the early 1900s, because also butter, cheese, sugar and coffee

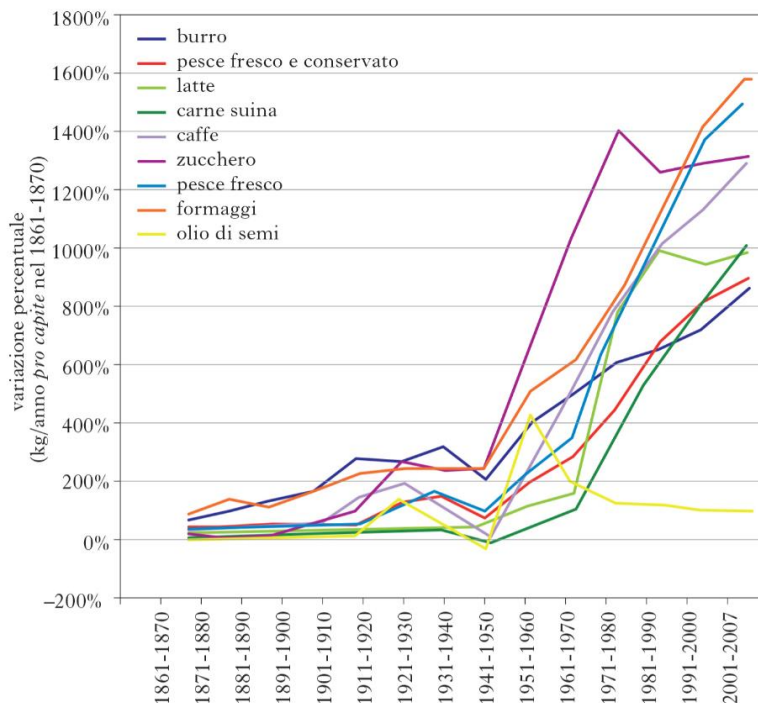
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<sup>10</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Chapter 3, pp. 59-62, Palgrave Macmillan Editori, 2016

<sup>11</sup> F. Paolini, *Breve storia dell'ambiente nel Novecento* (Rome, 2009)

consumption saw an increase in their percentual variation with respect to the previous Century (*Graph 3*).

*Graph 3: Consumi alimentari*



Source: A. De Bernardi, *L'Italia e le sue regioni (2015): i consumi alimentari in Italia, uno specchio del cambiamento*, Treccani Enciclopedia

In addition to these findings it has to be stressed that these data do not have to be generalised to every family and to every household: social stratification was still an issue affecting most workers, with only a restricted segment of them benefiting from an improved diet, and the overall landscape showed still as a poor one. The type of food that a family consumed and the quantity of it depended on several factors, above which income; and this in turn depended on the type of work one was doing, sector and gender. Women's salaries, indeed, were less profitable than men's: in the textile industry, a woman typically earned one lira a day, while a man in the same sector earned around twice as much<sup>12</sup> There was the preference for food of substance (e.g. fried food, bread,

<sup>12</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Chapter 3, 2016

etc.) able, even if eaten in small quantities, to satiate quickly, and hence the preference for food of lower quality but that was able to satiate instead of higher-quality food that required to be eaten in bigger quantities to give fullness.

Going on in analysing the complex relationship of Italian inhabitants with food, the Second Industrial Revolution brought in some important changes both in food consumption and in food culture that dealt mainly with science and industrialization and that will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

## 1.2 The Second Industrial Revolution: innovations and implications in food consumption

*“Disse l'uomo: e sia la rivoluzione industriale, si moltiplichino le fabbriche e si alzi il fumo delle ciminiere fino a oscurare i cieli di cenere di carbone e di gas di petrolio. E i cieli si annerirono. E l'uomo chiamò i cieli anneriti progresso. E l'uomo vide che il progresso era una bella cosa. E ci fu la luce e le tenebre” (Quino)<sup>13</sup>.*

The quote of Quino is emblematic in representing the period going from 1870 to 1914, better known as the Second Industrial Revolution, which had been one of the most important events seen in the history of mankind. Unlike the First Industrial Revolution, which first took place in Great Britain and touched the other European countries only after some years, this second phase of industrialization was not limited to one region, but it developed in several countries such as France, Germany and the US. With the Second Industrial Revolution new industrial sectors arose, first among everything the chemical industry, the electricity industry and iron and steel industry, as introduced in paragraph 1.1. Various have been the innovations developed during this period, and since they interested lots of sectors, this research will proceed in mentioning some of the key ones. Steam engine, the crucial innovation of the previous Industrial Revolution, started to be replaced by combustion engine coming from fossil fuels and electric power; production entered a mechanization process, as it can be seen in the industrial production plants of Henry Ford's factory<sup>14</sup>; the transport sector evolved, because electrical power allowed the construction of railways which started to become essential for a faster, cheaper and more

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<sup>13</sup> Quotation of Quino (pseudonym of Joaquín Salvador Lavado Tejón), illustrator and cartoonist, 1932-2020.

<sup>14</sup> T. K. McKrow, R. S. Tedlow, *Henry Ford, Alfred Sloan and the three phases of marketing*, Harvard Business School, August 1996 (revised January 1998)

reliable way of transportation, replacing the old slow service; new organizational models shaped the firm architecture and the birth of managerial enterprises implied a change in the inner nature of the firm: a separation between ownership and control took place, and even if it implied the rise of so-called *agency problems*<sup>15</sup>, it also entailed the need for specific coordination skills and a functional-specialization of management (e.g. R&D, finance, selling, operations, etc), which favoured the emergence of a new economy class, the one of managers<sup>16</sup>. Over the course of the Second Industrial Revolution potential markets for several products became bigger and bigger, with the proliferation of products and production running at an unseen rate. Continuous improvements both in processes and in outcomes were *on the agenda* and the rise of economies of scope and scale was the direct consequence of this innovative context. A key role was played by science, as it will be discussed throughout this paragraph, which carried some meaningful implications also for food culture and for the food industry. Being somehow a “science- and innovation driven” phenomenon for the reasons above, the Second Industrial Revolution contributed to the evolution of thoughts in many fields such as in the management of firms, transportation, food production and food culture. Innovations entered the everyday life of Italian consumers not only speaking about their workplace or their cities, they also became an integral part of the homes and living systems. One of the worth noting examples is the stove, which already started to achieve popularity during the previous Century, replacing the old open fireplace and representing a significant improvement both in terms of technology and product innovation, because it was a safer and more comfortable way to heat internal environments. Cast iron stoves began to appear in the nineteenth Century - something between 1810 and 1840 - revolutionizing the concept of heating and cooking, and the cooking stove began to be differentiated from the heating one. During the first half of the Twentieth century then, central heating diffused down the economic ladder, even though the poorer social classes could not benefit from this innovation, due to the so far mentioned differences in purchasing power and incomes. The advantages offered by the new cast iron stove were remarkable: first, a greater fuel

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<sup>15</sup> *Def.:* The agency problem is a conflict of interest inherent in any relationship where one party is expected to act in another's best interests. In corporate finance, the agency problem usually refers to a conflict of interest between a company's management and the company's stockholders. The manager, acting as the agent for the shareholders, or principals, is supposed to make decisions that will maximize shareholder wealth even though it is in the manager's best interest to maximize his own wealth. *Source:* [www.investopedia.com](http://www.investopedia.com)

<sup>16</sup> C. Bruland, D. Mowery, *Innovation through time*, The Oxford Handbook of Innovation, 2004

efficiency was provided thanks to the possibility to control the passage of air over the burning fuel (i.e. petroleum or kerosene, which replaced the traditional wood); secondly, the stove gave more comfort inside the houses, because it heated by convection rather than radiation and consequently could be placed in the middle of a room; thirdly, it was cleaner, because the fire was enclosed in it. Thus, the new kind of stove presented a different heating system together with a different aesthetic appearance, and also because of this their diffusion faced some difficulties<sup>17</sup>. This innovation also favoured part of the cooking system because it gave the possibility to keep the food warm thanks to the stove's second door where some of the generated heat remained holed up and allowed cookers to keep their food warm for a while. In the field of nutrition, stove innovations have not been the only factors affecting the changes in consumers' approach to food consumption. As introduced in paragraph 1.1, the development of scientific knowledge profoundly shaped the way in which people conceived nutrition. The Second Industrial Revolution, in fact, has been transforming Italy into an industrialized country where progress and rationalization became the two leading patterns for every field of development, including the food industry. Thanks to the improvements in the studies on nutrition and health and with the production processes becoming more and more industrialized, food began to be seen as a measurable item that could be rationalized and improved for production. In fact, medicine was beginning to study food components more in detail, analysing the human body and its needs, dividing the dietary components into proteins, carbohydrates etc; as a consequence, the importance of having a correct diet and a healthy behaviour were enhanced<sup>18</sup>. The new industrialized country needed a healthy human capital who could work hard in the factories to provide their families with an acceptable economic condition. Considering the importance that workers had in the industrialized Era at hand, some scholars dedicated efforts in studying to what extent such diets and nutritional habits could be improved and which services the State could offer to make their working lives more comfortable (e.g. canteens). One of them is Angelo Pugliese, a psychology scholar at Bologna University, who studied a suitable diet for the working class according to their body needs. In his research *Nozioni di alimentazione popolare*, he advised that

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<sup>17</sup> R. S. Cowan, *The Consumption Junction: a Proposal for Research Strategies in the Sociology of Technology*, 1987

<sup>18</sup> The study of dietary components of food started its diffusion already in the previous Century with some German scientists such as Justus Liebig and Max Rubner. H. Kamminga and A. Cunningham, in the work *Introduction: The Science and Culture of Nutrition, 1840-1940*, in *The Science and Culture of Nutrition, 1840-1940*, ed. H. Kamminga and A. Cunningham (Amsterdam, 1995)

workers should include in their daily diet foods like eggs, cheese and white meat (replacing the costly beef, for example), he stressed the importance of vegetables and fresh fruits in everyday meals, together with cereals and a lot of water, limiting the consumption of wine<sup>19</sup>. These investigations made on the working-class diets run in parallel with the introduction of household management courses offered to educate women in the management of food habits. As an example, in 1912 the *Società Umanitaria* gave the possibility to participate in courses to get additional experience in the domestic sphere and to encourage them to propose a sort of “rational cuisine”: once again, scientific knowledge was affecting and revolutionizing the lives of Italian people, and the nutritional sphere was not an exception. Hence, the pervasive role that science started to have in this period caused a cultural change in the perception of food, which moved from being an indispensable element needed in big quantities for the survival to a sum of various elements that had specific dietary properties and that should not be eaten randomly. It is in this period that the professional figure of nutritionists started to emerge, considered for all intents and purposes as scientific experts, and their lessons on food behaviour and food culture became part of the concept of “modern” Country. Food consumption, however, did not change its features only because of the above-mentioned dietary changes that scientific knowledge produced. It also changed thanks to technological innovations made possible by electricity, above all refrigeration. It must be noted that refrigeration was not really a new system, since it had been existing for centuries: from the Ancient Rome Era onwards, people used to keep the food preservable with ice, conserved in apposite locations - the so called *ghiacciaie* - and this, with the addition of some salt, allowed it to last for long periods of time. Characterized by several mountain chains that offered big quantities of snow and ice during the cold winters, the Italian Country could take advantage of the natural supply of such indispensable raw material and then using it as natural preservative<sup>20</sup>. Then, the only possible way to carry it from the mountains and successively distribute it to every region was to transport it with animals. Little by little this system saw an advancement under many points of view, arriving at the period in analysis, where we can witness the mechanization of refrigeration and the transportation of the product all over the Country with new means

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<sup>19</sup> A. Pugliese, *Nozioni di Alimentazione Popolare*, Società Umanitaria Historical Archive, 1916, in E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave Macmillan, Milan 2016, pp. 73-74

<sup>20</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016

such as railways, lowering both production times and transportations fees. To sum up, Italian patterns of economic growth of the Second Industrial Revolution were driven by technological improvements (thanks mostly to electricity, e.g. stoves, refrigeration) and scientific ones, consequently bringing sectors like chemicals and electricity to be the leading ones in the industrial production and suggesting the crucial role played by the new science-based industries in the Italian “catch-up” of the Giolitti’s Age.

### 1.3 The beginning of a food industry

Going deeper into the study of food production, the innovations of the Second Industrial Revolution caused an important transformation in how food was produced and consumed that this paragraph aims at underlining. To better understand this change, it is necessary to picture in mind which type of food was available in the Italian society of the first 10-15 years of the Twentieth Century and how much of it was available to the Italian consumers. Being the primary sector the major provisor, cereals were produced in large amounts, as well as legumes, wine, fruits and vegetables<sup>21</sup>. The engineer Giuseppe Orlando indicated the period going from 1897 to 1925 as “the first real remarkable development in the activity of the primary sector” (Orlando, 1969)<sup>22</sup>. As reconstructed by C. Pazzagli in the volume “Storia dell’Agricoltura Italiana”, these years saw an average rate of agricultural development of 1,8%, compared to the 0,4% of the previous decades. The gross production of this sector rose from 26,9 billion lire in the period 1895-1899 to 36,5 billion lire in the period 1909-1913. The same result can be obtained considering specific crops, especially cereals: rice average yearly production moved from 3,5 million quintals in the decade 1891-1900 to 6,5 million quintals in the first twenty years of 1900; corn production in turned moved from 19,4 to 25,3 million quintals (yearly average); wheat production has been able to maintain its strategic position within the Italian cultural system, thanks both to the high duty on this cereal and to the advancement of the agrarian

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<sup>21</sup> G. Federico, *Il valore aggiunto dell’agricoltura*, in G. M. Rey (ed.), *I conti economici dell’Italia, una stima del valore aggiunto per il 1911*, Collana Storica della Banca d’Italia, Serie “statistiche storiche” Vol.1, n.2, pp. 4-10, Laterza Editori, Rome, 1992

<sup>22</sup> G. Orlando in C. Pazzagli, *Colture, lavori, tecniche e rendimenti*, on the volume *Storia dell’agricoltura italiana*, Accademia dei Georgofili, Edizioni Polistampa, Florence 2002

techniques that characterized the first decade of the twentieth Century<sup>23</sup>. In support of technical development, Pazzagli stressed also that several institutes and specialized laboratories for agricultural learning were created by the State, among them the *Scuole di Agricoltura*, technical institutes, experimental agrarian stations and circulating agricultural libraries. The year 1909 counted 737 institutes under the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, thanks to the innovations in technologies, the mechanisation of some agricultural processes was possible, as well as the diffusion of chemical fertilizers for viticulture thanks to the advancements in the chemical industry. The so-far mentioned dynamic framework, however, does not have uniform character. Although all Italian regions were touched by these improvements, the extent to which they were favoured was very different, so much so that the gap between the North and the South exacerbated once again, despite the general growth in absolute terms. To give a synthetic representation of this gap, *Table 1* illustrates a rank of wheat productivity during the years 1909-1914, which appears flourishing in the North and less abundant in the South. The mentioned quantities are related to the unitary production per hectare in each region and are expressed in quintals.

*Table 1: Frumento. Produzione unitaria per ettaro nelle regioni italiane (quintali)*

**FRUMENTO. PRODUZIONE UNITARIA PER ETTARO  
NELLE REGIONI ITALIANE (quintali)**

Regioni	1909-14	Regioni	1909-14	Regioni	1909-14
Piemonte	12,7	Toscana	10,0	Campania	8,7
Lombardia	15,7	Marche	9,6	Puglie	8,4
Liguria	9,1	Umbria	8,4	Calabria	8,5
Emilia	15,4	Lazio	8,4	Sicilia	6,8
Veneto	14,9	Abruzzi	8,5	Sardegna	8,3

*Source:* C. Pazzagli, *Colture, lavori, tecniche e rendimenti*, on the volume *Storia dell'agricoltura italiana*, Accademia dei Georgofili, Ed. Polistampa, Florence 2002.

As it can be noted, the role played by the agricultural sector in families food consumption was remarkable. At the same time, it supplied only “poor” products (cereals, legumes, etc) and for this reason “luxury” food was imported from abroad. Primary sector was not the only nutritional source provider for the Italian population. In fact, with the Second

<sup>23</sup> C. Pazzagli, *Colture, lavori, tecniche e rendimenti*, on the volume *Storia dell'agricoltura italiana*, Accademia dei Georgofili, Edizioni Polistampa, Florence 2002

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 23



Industrial Revolution and the development of the secondary sector, some food also started to be industrialized. According to the contemporary historian Scarpellini, although the key players in the Italian industrial landscape were still chemical and electricity, the food sector saw a pattern of growth during these years; it was composed of several small businesses and plants and in 1911 it reached the 35% of Italian industrial production<sup>25</sup>. Some specific food sectors such as the milling industry can be considered as mostly industrial, seeing a considerable growth that permitted them also to be exported in many countries. Many businesses benefited from the mechanization of the production, which led to an increase in productivity rates and allow them also to expand in foreign markets, and at the same time the advancements in the chemical industries, which enlarged the usage of preservatives, favoured the firms that wanted to invest in long-life products. Some of them are here mentioned, varying from type and sector: wine businesses, such as *Campari* and *Chianti*; pasta businesses, such as *Barilla* and *De Cecco*; chocolate business and sweets industry in general, such as *Perugina* and *Venchi*; cheese businesses like *Galbani*, *Locatelli* and *Invernizzi*; and well-known businessmen such as the entrepreneur Francesco Cirio, who managed to establish a wide food empire already in the late Nineteenth Century<sup>26</sup>. In other words, the Italian Country of the early 1900 was witnessing a steady but consistent process of food production due to factors that were all interconnected with each other, albeit they affected it in different weights: from mechanization of production chains in the newly born food firms, that was possible thanks to the advancement in the field of electricity and technology brought in by the Second Industrial Revolution, to the mass production for the industrialized foods, that allowed to lower unitary production costs and to increase the profit margins for firms. In this context, what made the difference in terms of innovation were not really the products themselves but rather innovations in the production processes. In fact, while product technology is generally related to how a product is created, production - or process - technology is related to how to produce a new product and it usually involves machines and processes. And this was the case of many businesses of that time. A noteworthy example is the process innovation that took place within the Ford plants, where the visionary entrepreneur Henry Ford, who committed to a standardization of the production process of the famous Model T car. The decision to focus on just the T Model

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<sup>25</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, 2016

<sup>26</sup> L. Agnello, *Cirio Francesco*, in the *Dizionario Biografico degli italiani*, Volume 25, 1981

made it possible to generate a cycle of ever-improving product at ever-higher volume and ever-lower price<sup>27</sup>. Being a standardized machine, the Model T was simple, small, light and strong and could be repaired easily with a smattering of mechanical sense. Another example, that is specifically related to the food industry of that time, was the improvement of the “Appert method”, which had been devised already in the Nineteenth Century with the boiling of glass bottles containing food to make it preservable for weeks<sup>28</sup>, and then continued with the replacement of the glass bottles with iron cans; this process of canned food production then began to diffuse for many food types and continued perfecting thanks to mechanization of production, which favoured its dissemination among society. Going on with the factors that interchangeably influenced the advancements in the food sector, science and the chemical industry performed as key players, especially for the influence they had in shaping the Italian food culture towards new concepts of diet and “correct” nutritional habits. Moreover, it is in this context that the first forms of advertising started to appear, pushing the newly industrialized products towards consumers. The basic strategy of advertising campaigns was to take advantage of the easily influenced mass market of that period, made of consumers who were seeing a variety of new products for the first time and were willing to try them, in order to ideate precise advertising campaigns that would have boosted the sales. Thinking about Campari, the red apéritif ideated by Gaspare Campari in 1860, the first decade of the Twentieth Century proved to be fundamental in terms of advertising strategy, because the artists of the *Belle Epoque* understood the importance of the link between art and advertising and started to develop a relation between the brand and the designers’ world<sup>29</sup>. In conclusion, the factors affecting the food production transformation of the early 1900s were many. However, it is noteworthy to remember that these industrialized changes in the food industry had to face some difficulties in being largely accepted by society and being quickly perceived by end consumers. The “problem” of tradition and rooted culture habits represented a barrier to innovation, and this contributed to picture a Country where both newness and oldness coexisted. At the same time, willing or not,

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<sup>27</sup> T. K. McCraw, R. S. Tedlow, *Henry Ford, Alfred Sloan and the three phases of marketing*, Harvard Business School, August 1996 (revised January 1998)

<sup>28</sup> Nicolas Appert was a French inventor, famous for the creation of the method of the hermetic preservation of foods (1749-1841).

<sup>29</sup> *Story of Campari’s advertising boards*, on *Vintage Design* section of the page *The Vintage Culture*, 2019.

the Italian society would have to accept these new patterns of innovation and adapt to changes that would have become more and more significant in every aspect of their lives.

## Chapter 2. Food Consumption and the Two World Wars (1915-1949)

### 2.1 Economic uncertainty and transformation during World War I

The situation in which the Italian Country was embedded during the first years of the Twentieth Century, with an emerging flourishing economy and patterns of industrialization in several sectors that were enhancing the commerce of the State, was eventually about to end starting from 1914. Italian economy and society suffered from a dramatic downfall when the Country found itself committed in the First World War, although in the first period of “neutrality” (1914-1915) the Government decided to take some precautionary measures to face in advance the forthcoming conflict. Among these, the call of as many soldiers as the Country could count on, a ban on the exportation of specific products that were considered essential for the Italian society, and also some regulatory measures for the production of bread, that became limited only to “rough” bread, barely digestible and particularly unpleasant because it was made of wet crumbs and was practically raw. As the author and researcher Maria Concetta Dentoni pointed out in her work “*Annona e Consenso in Italia 1914-1919*”, at the beginning of this period of neutrality, the problem of wheat supply was initially neglected, because the common thought of the Country was that the War would not have lasted long. However, as early as 1914, such supply had accumulated remarkable delays<sup>30</sup>. This issue had to be in part related to the Government of that time, presided by Antonio Salandra (1853-1931), who had, with the duty on foreign wheat, caused a reduction of the private sector and eventually the abandonment of imports<sup>31</sup>. To worsen the situation, the loss of the common channels of supply from Russia and from Romania after the closure of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles represented another disadvantage, as well as the refusal of the Government to purchase from America because its products were considered too expensive. As a consequence, in December 1914 Italian society had to face the first wheat shortage, which would have been followed by shortages of many other agricultural goods, causing the dramatic result of insufficient provisions for the Italian population. As Italy entered the War on 24th May 1915, another important issue arose: the necessity to provide enough food to millions of Italian soldiers in their call to the front. These soldiers were just men coming from the agricultural sector, used to work hard in fields for many

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<sup>30</sup> M. C. Dentoni, *Annona e consenso in Italia 1914-1919*, Milano 1995, pp. 15-25

<sup>31</sup> R. Bachi, *L'alimentazione e la politica annonaria in Italia*, Bari 1926, p. 152.

hours a day, who had to leave everything from one day to the next in order to serve their homeland. The number of soldiers coming from the countryside was significant: the data collected by Maria Concetta Dentoni in her article "Food and Nutrition in Italy", showed how out of a total of 4.200.000 men engaged in conflicts operation, more than 2.5000.000 were peasants<sup>32</sup>. In this context, however, a particular situation arose concerning food consumption, namely an improvement in the dietary habits of militaries favoured by the "discovery" of meat. Recalling that in the period preceding the War meat consumption was reserved - especially among working class families - for special occasions and was limited to low-quality cuts, with the beginning of the War period this habit would change. The diet of millions of soldiers shifted from a carbohydrates-based diet with some fruits and vegetables to a protein-based diet with meat entering men's lives, to sustain the high physical effort required to the front. In this sense, men started to include in their consumption habits also big quantities of frozen meat provided from allied Countries, together with other meat-based foodstuffs. This new diet, on the other hand, implied the supply of high quantities of meat and hence higher costs for its purchase. According to some studies, the daily ration of meat for soldiers was around 375 grams, which would later be lowered to 250 grams also under advice of psychologists who considered the army's diet as too "luxurious". This choice was made after the defeat of Caporetto in 1917, which had brought dramatic consequences not only in military and economic terms, but indeed also on food consumption. In fact, in another article titled "L'arte di viver bene mangiando poco. Signore e contadine di fronte ai problemi alimentari", Dentoni stressed how the reduction of meat provisions was not the only one to be subjected to a reduction in the offer: bread, for example, lowered from 750 to 600 grams and the overall protein intake moved from the initial 4.000 calories to 3.000 calories. Drawing closer to the end of the War, the Government turned out to play actively in this field with a reorganization of the commercial decrees in effect at that time, especially concerning food exportations. At the same time, citizens started to raise their voices against the War, because the living conditions - especially concerning food shortages - were no longer acceptable. Used to be ignored by the authorities, consumers tried with many efforts to make their voices heard with protests that, although with some difficulties, established them as more active players on the socio-economic and political context. On one hand the circulation of

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<sup>32</sup> M. C. Dentoni, *Food and Nutrition (Italy)*, International Encyclopedia of the First World War, December 2014.

popular protests against the War became more marked, while on the other hand a campaign to spread the principles of “living well by eating little” among working classes started to be carried out especially by women and various organizations<sup>33</sup>. Active protests in favour of savings and against the high cost of living took place also in big cities such as Milan and Turin and went on till the end of the War. The situation began to improve around the last year of the War, when a new food policy was introduced with the Government of Vittorio Emanuele Orlando (1860-1952), who gave to the industrialist Silvio Crespi (1868-1944) the management of public affairs, with the purpose of overcoming the situation left by the tremendous defeat of Caporetto conflict. The role that Crespi played during these years proved essential in terms of food culture, because his measures in this field managed to shape the perception of food and nutrition not only for soldiers, but for every type of consumer. Hence, it is worth mentioning some of the most important ones. Firstly, the industrialist and businessman recognized the uselessness of price plugging and to provide for this he gave rise to a complex legal system for food production, which headed towards a food-control policy. In the meanwhile, he worked for the monopolization of meat, the creation of consortia for products such as cheese, milk and also fruits and vegetables, coffee and frozen food. He went on establishing new penalties against hoarders by instituting a real food-control police, whose role was to check on eventual illegal practices in the shops. In this way, Crespi “turned the food issue from a serious problem of police control, as it had been up to that point, into the patriotic centrepiece of the economic policy of the nation at War”, as written by Maria Concetta Dentoni in her article “Food and Nutrition in Italy”. Recalling the defeat of Caporetto of 1917, the industrialist took the serious consequences of this event as an additional incentive to change the soldiers’ diet. He stated the increase of their diet to 350 grams per day, eliciting a new increase in meat consumption after the decrease occurred in the previous years. Another issue in which Crespi committed was food imports. Purchasing meat from abroad not only required high costs but was also a difficult problem to manage in terms of transportation and conservation, since refrigeration systems were at an early stage of development. Dentoni’s article “Refrigeration and the Italian meat crisis during the First World War” stated that to picture that context it is sufficient to know that in 1915 there were only 250 refrigeration plants in Italy, despite the expansion of the refrigeration

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<sup>33</sup>M.C. Dentoni, *L'arte di viver bene mangiando poco. Signore e contadine di fronte ai problemi alimentari*, Annali Cervi, XIII, Bologna 1991, pp. 133-147

industry that took place thanks to the Second Industrial Revolution, and most of them lacked proper hygienic conditions and of system quality<sup>34</sup>. To improve the situation, after Caporetto, Crespi stated a decree in 1918 denying the free market on meat with the imposition of many new controls and took up the Government program to re-establish the imports of frozen meat. The effects that political and economic measures undertaken for the Italian society had on the citizens' food culture are once again remarkable, supporting the initial purpose that this thesis wants to pursue: consumers' approach to food and their nutritional habits strictly depend on political and socio-economic conditions, which are always active players regardless of the time passing by. At the end of the global conflict, Italy found itself defeated and suffering: the Great War had left nothing but poverty and an economic regression took place, although it would not have lasted so long.

## 2.2 The rise of Fascism: towards an alimentary sovereignty

A turning point in the history of both the political sphere and the food culture sphere came during the 1920s, when Fascism established itself as the ruling regime, giving rise to an era of new provisions, rules, and culture. Despite the economic recovery that Italy witnessed under the Fascist regime, it must not be forgotten that the daily life of Italian people continued to deal with issues of restrained budgets and consumption, as it will be discussed. The interwar years were in fact characterized by political uncertainty and by patterns of transformation, where consumers started to conceive food as an identity model, representing the only root that kept them linked to Italian tradition in a context of political and economic changes. Moreover, the political sphere did recognize the upcoming and increasing importance of the role of consumers in the society and took advantage of this in favour of its political purposes in several ways, first among everything propaganda.

Before entering deeper in the socio-political landscape of the 1920s Italy to see how it have affected consumers' choices in food consumption, it is first necessary to give some insights about the nutritional conditions of citizens, depending as always from their economic conditions and consequently their purchasing power (which had still to deal

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<sup>34</sup>M.C. Dentoni, *Refrigeration and the Italian meat crisis during the First World War*, in *The Landscape of Food. The Food relationship Town and Country in Modern Times*, Helsinki 2003, pp.157-170.

with food availability, though). Even though the Italian colonization of some African regions, e.g Ethiopia, had brought in the diet of Italians more exotic products like bananas and different types of coffee, whose connection with the African Continent was empathized through advertising, the nutritional level of Italian people did not see a significant improvement during the interwar period, also because of the controversial fascist influence in dietary habits of Italians<sup>35</sup>. In addition, Chiapparino and Corvino studied in their volume “Consumi e Industria alimentare in Italia dall’Unità a oggi: lineamenti per una storia” to what extent the dietary reality revealed by people’s budgets and incomes, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, proves that even if consumption was restrained it is difficult to picture a direct correlation between consumption and families’ income. This difficulty lays in the fact that geographical factors once again played an important role in defining consumers’ nutritional habits. For example, the highest consumption of cereals was found in the area of the Po Valley and in Sicily, whereas it was significantly lower in the Alto Adige area; concerning meat consumption, on the other hand, it was low almost in every region, similarly to the one of coffee and oil<sup>36</sup>. Consequently, this shows the still current dietary discrepancy between Italians of the North and Italians of the South, affected not only by the just-mentioned geographical factors, but also by differences in incomes, availability of certain types of food and the type of work that family members did<sup>37</sup>. In the early 1920s, just three years after the Great War, the Italian economy started to witness a moderate increase in consumption levels that the recovering national industry, however, was still unable to satisfy because of the deep wounds left by the War. Focusing in particular on the food industry, it was made of small businesses that continued their activity steadily, also because the deflation and the economic crisis effects were still present. It is in this context of economic “ups and downs” that Fascism made its appearance, representing a turning point not only in the political history of 1920s and 30s Italy, but also in the food culture, which experienced one of the most significant shakes in its development.

While for the general European landscape the interwar period had been a critical one for state interventions to manage food production and consumption, Fascist government on

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<sup>35</sup> As it will be discussed in this paragraph, the aim of fascist active role in the food culture and habits of Italian people was to establish an “alimentary sovereignty”

<sup>36</sup> F. Chiapparino, R. Covino, *Consumi e industria alimentare in Italia dall’Unità a oggi: Lineamenti per una storia*, Perugia 2002.

<sup>37</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Pangrave MacMillan, 2016.



the contrary showed as committed to food policies as it had never been before, even if such commitment carried the secondary scope of giving rise to what will be defined as an alimentary sovereignty. As the paper of J. S. Cohen "Fascism and Agriculture in Italy: Policies and Consequences" points out, the first measure undertaken by the Regime led by Benito Mussolini (1922-1943) was the famous declaration of war against grain imports, namely the Battle of Wheat (1925), which represented one of the major pieces of fascist agricultural legislation that wanted to free Italy from the "slavery" of foreign bread<sup>38</sup>. In addition to this, the Regime, as soon as it established in 1921 with the name of Partito Nazionale Fascista, started to replace many foodstuffs with substitutes of a lower quality, with the purpose of saving money and of encouraging the population to leave aside foods that were too "luxurious". To mention some of them, coffee was replaced with chicory, and tea imports coming from England were replaced with tea supplied by African colonies. These two examples are explicative of the basic idea of the fascist government: firstly, to hold down imports as much as possible, keeping modest living standards based on foods that the Nation could offer; secondly, the consequent encouragement to adopt an austere diet based mostly on bread, polenta, pasta and wine. These measures, supported by a general propaganda, would have led to the establishment of a real alimentary sovereignty on consumers. In fact, as it has been proved by a number of historical studies concerning Fascist Italy, the constant presence of food in fascist activities has to be explained by strategic motives. The control of food production, distribution and consumption was the intermediary to guarantee popular health and political stability and to reach Mussolini's goal of shared mass consensus and imperial expansion. In order to understand how the Fascist Regime managed to meet this goal, a more detailed analysis will follow, which will touch not only the political sphere, but also - and especially - the social sphere. Introducing itself as a modernizing and forward-looking government, Fascism promised to Italian citizens an improvement of economic conditions damaged by the First World War, for example the reduction of post-war inflation and rising food prices. The factor that made the Party gain popular public trust was that it presented itself as a party who engaged forcefully in economic concerns to provide tangible solutions: in June 1921, the National Fascist Party demonstrated in the squares of Rome handing out leaflets that asked for higher vigilance over merchants to

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<sup>38</sup> J. S. Cohen, *Fascism and Agriculture in Italy: Policies and Consequences*, on *The Economic History Review*, Wiley 1979.

ensure low prices and then marched across the streets to ensure that the products sold by Italian shops were all made within the Country<sup>39</sup>, as it has been reconstructed by A. Guasco in the paper “L’avvento del fascismo e le prime reazioni vaticane (1921-1922)”. Few years later, as previously mentioned, the Battle for Grain (i.e. Battle for Wheat) impacted significantly on the agricultural society, because with regard to food production it distorted the Nation’s productive capacities favouring the so called *granarizzazione*, namely the prohibition of export crops. The paper “Fascist Food Politics: Mussolini’s policy of Alimentary Sovereignty” of C. Helstosky shed light on the reason behind this choice of self-sufficiency in food production, which was strategic: national production was easier to control and to manipulate, and fascism’s success in meeting the inhabitants’ basic nutritional needs let it control them as a valuable and strategic resource. This food production policy was supported also by the administration of other types of policies, e.g. demographic and economic ones, which would have helped the Regime to control what and how much Italian people ate<sup>40</sup>. A key factor that hardly contributed to this success and to the establishment of a food autarky has been the dissemination of propaganda, which can be seen as a particular distortion of advertising, and which will be better discussed in paragraph 2.4. Food propaganda, together with the Battle for Grain, were nothing but the attempt to manipulate consumers’ habits and Italian cuisine. To this it has to be added also the scientific influence that weighed on the food culture. Recalling Chapter 1, scientific knowledge saw a boost during the Second Industrial Revolution period, where it began to affect daily lives of the population also in the field of nutrition, especially with the statement of minimum nutritional standards that the diet of a population should have met. During the Fascist Era, scientific knowledge played an important role, too, although in different terms, because it reversed the situation concerning acceptable nutritional standards. With the aim of coordinating a propaganda program on rational diet in support of the idea of “eating less and eating national” for the preservation of the Italian race, some committees were founded (the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche in 1923 and the Commissione per lo Studio dei Problemi dell’Alimentazione in 1928)<sup>41</sup>. The scientific research in support of this program studied

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<sup>39</sup> A. Guasco, *L’avvento del fascismo e le prime reazioni vaticane (1921-1922)*, in Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Publications, January-June 2012, Vol. 66, no.1, pp. 97-113

<sup>40</sup> C. Helstosky, *Fascist Food Politics: Mussolini’s policy of Alimentary Sovereignty*, Journal of Modern Italian Studies, 2010, pp. 1-26

<sup>41</sup> M. Graziosi, *La donna e la storia: identità di genere e identità collettiva nell’Italia liberale e Fascista*, Liguori, Napoli 2000.

the nutritional value of internally produced foods and carried out a national dietary inquest. As a result, in 1929 magazines such as *La Cucina Italiana* and *Sapere* published the findings: the body's minimal nutritional requirements were met and for this reason Italy's alimentary status was seen under a positive light, since it was coherent with the ideals of austere lifestyle to which the Regime was devoted. Therefore, it is clear how food policies managed to melt together the biological and the social sphere, on one hand because they were committed to improving the health condition of people, and on the other hand because they managed to provide popular support for the Regime. Hence, in this sense the concept of alimentary sovereignty is explained: a group of initiatives and measures that, one by one, would have led the Country to self-sufficiency in food production, remarking with the term sovereignty the food's symbolic importance in the path towards Italian independence. The discourse that has been carried out so far until now concerning the willingness of the Regime to ban food imports, however, must not be associated with a consequent recovery of the domestic production. According to the scientific studies of that time, indeed, a simple fact is remarkable: since agricultural imports declined and domestic production fell because of the high costs implied by the internal provision of food (especially wheat), someone for sure had to eat less, and this someone was, for the most part, the working-class. As it is shown in *Table 2*, the amount of most food produced by Italians declined between 1920 and 1925, and between 1935 and 1940. For example, beef provision lowered slightly from 8.8 kg to 8.6 kg; also the provision of fruits, vegetables, wheat, and corn followed the same decrease, even with a higher rate. On the other hand, the production of other foodstuffs such as fish, milk and cheese saw a little increase, but it was still not sufficient to recover and compensate for the other declines.

*Table 2: Annual Per Capita Availability of Selected Foods and Daily Per Capita Availability of Nutritive Substances and Calories, Italy, 1920-26 and 1935-40*

	<i>1921-6</i>	<i>1935-40</i>
(Foods in kilograms, nutritive substances in grams, calories in number)		
Wheat	177·6	166·4
Corn	30·3	30·2
Potatoes	30·7	39·4
Tomatoes	21·8	16·9
Vegetables	74·4	54·5
Fresh fruits	30·7	23·6
Beef	8·8	8·6
Pork	5·1	5·3
Lamb	1·4	1·1
Fish	7·3	8·4
Milk and cheese	37·3	43·3
Proteins	96·5	92·6
Carbohydrates	444·0	417·1
Fats	65·9	60·8
Calories	2,816	2,643

*Source:* J. S. Cohen, *Fascism and Agriculture in Italy: Policies and Consequences*, *The Economic History Review*, Wiley publications, 1979, pp. 70-87 (Table 5)

Focusing on the general calories and nutritive elements, there is an evident downfall comparing the periods at hand. The cause of this downfall in calories intake has been for long investigated by a number of historians of the Fascist Regime; nevertheless, there seems to be a gap in this matter, and historians have not managed to find tangible data proving how fascist policies affected, for example, income distribution and living conditions of the working-class. Having considered this, however, according to some studies it seems reasonable to assume that the changes in food consumption (i.e. lower nutritional intake) were strictly related to changes in incomes, which added to the already-discussed promotion of an austere diet made of few basic foodstuffs. The historian and economist Jon S. Cohen in his paper “Fascism and Agriculture in Italy: Policies and Consequences, a study on industrial salaries of the Fascist Era” showed how the entire period was characterized by an overall decline in real wages. More precisely, comparing the ones of 1921 with those of 1930, it is possible to note a decrease from 15 to 40%, which would last also in the years after 1930. An interesting thing that came up

from the study is that, given the general decline in wages of the working-class, industrial workers turned out to suffer less for this issue compared to agricultural workers<sup>42</sup>. The reason might be deducible: the agricultural sector was the most hit by Fascist food policies, and the costs for production were extremely high, while industrial employment on the other side kept positive levels, although with some ups and downs. Despite this, it is clear that domestic food production was not at all favoured by the various prohibitions of imports performed by the Fascist Government, and to aggravate the situation there was also the low-quality of foodstuffs provided. The direct consequence of low-quality nutritional goods was that Italians' diet suffered from a lack of proteins and vitamins, which meant a real deterioration of the nutritional habits.

### 2.3 The key role of women in food advertising and consumption choices

The journey towards the establishment of a food autarky progressively strengthened as Fascism gained political acceptance. And it branched out into two subjects whose importance has almost always been underestimated until that moment: women and advertising. The intent of this paragraph is to analyse the role played by both of them in the Fascist era to understand how they contributed in shaping food culture and consumption habits. As it will be discussed, these two players seemed to be strictly interdependent from each other and they would have become two more pawns manipulated by Mussolini and its Government to reach its goal of empire creation. Before going into detail of how fascist policies deeply affected the women's role in Italian society through advertising and propaganda, it is necessary to look at the general condition of women in the 1920s and 30s, so as to better understand to what extent they used to fit the socio-political environment. During this period, women saw the disappointment of their socio-political emancipation expectations for many reasons, one among others the promise made by the Government of ensuring them higher attention and importance within the society, which eventually turned out to be ephemeral. Despite the rise of some activist organizations and associations promoting the social action of women and fighting

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<sup>42</sup> J. S. Cohen, *Fascism and Agriculture in Italy: Policies and Consequences*, on *The Economic History Review*, Wiley 1979.

for rights equality (e.g. the CNDI<sup>43</sup>, the Unione Donne Cattoliche Italiane, the Unione Femminile, and the FILDIS<sup>44</sup>), the Regime discriminated against women under every possible point of view, from the working one to the legal- and political one, denying the so craved universal suffrage. Juridically speaking, it was the father, namely the patriarch, who held the entire power and freedom, while his wife, sons and daughters were strictly subordinated to him and his decisions<sup>45</sup>. Under the working profile, with the Sacchi Law in 1919<sup>46</sup> a dismissal process of women from the labour market started, followed by several other provisions neglecting every kind of working right. The process of exclusion from the job market went on throughout the 20s: women were forbidden the teaching of history, philosophy and literature, and several other laws were set up with the purpose of putting women a step behind men. Mussolini itself clearly identified women's employment in the society as a factor which could instigate a sense of independency, something that women had no right to feel: "*l'occupazione femminile distrae dalla generazione, fomenta una indipendenza e conseguenti mode fisico-morali contrarie al parto*" (Bock, 1986:145)<sup>47</sup>. In this landscape of submission under almost every aspect of the daily life, the discrimination of women under the sphere of their political rights proved an easy thing to manage. To better understand how the Mussolini dictatorship had been able to control women's attempts of fighting for their political rights, it is useful to take a step back in the first years of the twentieth century to see what brought the female political condition to be like it was in the 1920s. Without entering too deep in this field, it suffices to mention some of the worth-noting events that made up the journey towards the yearned female universal suffrage: in 1908 the first CNDI took place in Rome with the participation of around 1,500 women, where the problem of women's vote was for the first time discussed<sup>48</sup>. According to E. Scarpellini's research, other associations also started to grow and dedicated with propaganda programs to themes such as the safeguard

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<sup>43</sup> CNDI is the acronym for *Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne Italiane*, a group of associations founded in 1903 which aimed at committing in the improvement of the social condition of women. It was open with no differences to women of any political and religious orientation. ([www.cndi.it](http://www.cndi.it))

<sup>44</sup> FILDIS is the acronym for *Federazione Italiana fra Laureate e Diplomate degli Istituti Superiori*

<sup>45</sup> M. Graziosi, *La donna e la storia: identità di genere e identità collettiva nell'Italia liberale e Fascista*, Liguori, Napoli 2000.

<sup>46</sup> On 17th July 1919, the deputy Ettore Sacchi proposed the homonymous law during a Parliament reunion, which denied women the hiring in any kind of public administration workplace.

<sup>47</sup> Bock, 1986 quoted by R. Sassano, *Camicette Nere: le Donne nel Ventennio Fascista*, Università degli Studi di Foggia, 2015, 253-280

<sup>48</sup> R. Sassano, *Camicette Nere: le Donne nel Ventennio Fascista*, Università degli Studi di Foggia, 2015

of children work, women's education and universal suffrage<sup>49</sup>. In this context some female figures were hardly committed, among others Anna Kulishoff, who managed to argue against the low commitment of the leader of the Partito Socialista Italiano, Filippo Turati, convincing him about the importance of the extension of voting rights to women. The first results came in 1912, when Turati shared with the Chamber a new order of business declaring that voting rights should be extended to all Italians regardless of gender, but this initiative proved useless, since the so-called universal suffrage was established, but this "universality" did not include women. During the Second World War this subject was left aside, because women were called to replace men in the factories and in the agricultural works, entering in the labour market and representing a key contribution for the Italian country of the years 1915-1918. As the Great War came to an end, women's perception of their role in the society had changed: they started to realize the great contribution they provided during the War, and they seemed no longer willing to accept their submission within society. From that moment onwards, some parity proposal (e.g. suffrage and equal salaries) were resubmitted and were resumed by the Partito Socialista Italiano and the CGL, recognizing somehow the potential of Italian women. Hence, women not only under the economic sphere, but also under the social and political one. Arriving at the Fascist period under analysis it is evident that actually the gain of such rights was not so easy as it seemed. The Party showed in favour of this provision only at the beginning, because as the years passed by, Mussolini intensified his aversion against the extension of the voting rights to women. In some moments, his position proved very ambiguous and controversial, for example when he made society believe that he wanted instead to favour women's rights: in 1923, during the International Alliance Congress for the Extension of Voting Rights to Women he confirmed and declared in public that the Fascist Regime would have committed in granting the right to vote to several categories of women, keeping acclaim them for having represented a support to the Country during the World conflict. This two-faced behaviour went on for years, touching one of the highest points in 1923, when the extension of the voting rights to women in the administrative elections was proposed in Parliament and became an official law in 1925: not by chance, in 1926 the Regime abrogated such elections, consequently denying women their chance to employ their newly gained right. Indeed, the ultimate purpose of

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<sup>49</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, Milan 2016

Fascist Government concealed behind a fake open-mindedness towards women's rights was one: keeping female political power low, relegating them to the role of mothers and housekeepers with the only scope of taking care of their families. However, to reach this goal and to keep women voices unheard Mussolini had to find a clever way to convince them that their commitment to this role was indispensable for the Nation and that they should focus on this instead of wasting efforts towards the political sphere. And the tool used to meet the goal was one that had never been taken in so high consideration until that moment: advertising. Women, in fact, were the main target of fascist propaganda programs, especially those related to food, because in Italian households they were the people who decided what to buy, what to prepare and cook every day. At the same time, however, food advertising policies were particularly contradictory with reference to the role of women: on one hand they promoted modernity and innovative national development, on the other hand keeping the traditional food model as the only ideal model to follow, alighting the well-known culture of austere diet and food culture. Generally speaking, the Regime's food policies were oriented towards women (and to society in general) through a lot of propaganda channels: from periodicals to press releases, from radio transmissions to domestic economic literature, with the aim of promoting an ideal diet based mainly on carbohydrates, legumes, olive oil, fruits and wine, namely products that were produced within Italian country. Once again, to convince his citizens that a simple and austere diet together with modest living standards would have provided many benefits for their health, Mussolini undertook a series of propaganda initiatives to promote this concept, above all food festivals and periodicals' advertising. As regards food festivals and celebrations, the food that was mainly promoted was, undoubtedly, wheat. In order to highlight the importance of saving wheat supplies, propaganda programs translated, for example, in Festa del Pane, where bread makers distributed and offered free sandwiches to people, always stressing the benefits of whole-wheat bread rather than white bread; another example can be the "Festa Nazionale dell'Uva" instituted in 1929, which promoted the consumption of grape as an alternative cheaper product to wine. If the above-mentioned food celebrations were directed to the entire population, propaganda and advertising in periodicals and cookbooks had as main strategic targets the figures who were in charge of the consumption choices: women. Being the target audience of advertisements, female gender started to become the subject of advertisements themselves, to promote an ideal of perfect "Fascist Woman"; in 1936,



for example, the illustrator Gino Boccasile realized a colourful poster advertising Ramazzotti bitter where, in the background, there were two women: one was an Italian woman with a healthy silhouette, a happy expression and a helmet on her head who represented an explorer, the other one was an African woman wearing clothes only on the lower part of her body and who was holding a tray with the advertised product on it, as it has been reconstructed by Scarpellini in her volume<sup>50</sup>.

But the strategic programs oriented to women were not restricted to advertising campaigns. Another tool used especially in the period preceding the Second World War were cookbooks. From “Le massaie contro le sanzioni” (1935), to “Per mangiar bene...e spender poco” (1936), and “Economia in cucina senza sacrificio a tavola” (1939), all the books published in this period had as their *fil rouge* the promotion of an austere and modest diet and they were made up of recipes for a “simple” cuisine (using bread, polenta, rice, vegetables)<sup>51</sup>. Comparing the Fascist Era to the early 1900s period analysed in Chapter 1, there are some differences in the Italian food culture and literature that are worth noting. Firstly, the value of food witnessed a significant boost: it moved from being merely a survival factor to being the representation of strength and unity of the Italian population which had to be seen as a real identity model, linking consumers behaviour to the fate of Italian Nation. Secondly, while in the years preceding Fascist Government the writings about Italian food consumption referred to a context of crisis, in the 1920s and 30s those writings were instructing readers to be proud of the country's unique cooking culture and were reinforcing the concept that Italian food culture was a national heritage that had to be protected. In this sense, food habits proclaimed by the literature were a source of national pride and somehow a resistance to eventual threats to Fascism, because food availability was linked with the capacity of the Italian Nation to face and overcome a trade embargo and, eventually, a war<sup>52</sup>. Thirdly, but not less important, food literature of Mussolini's Fascism started to link food consumption with race. During the 30s, scientific experts noted that the diet of Italians severely lacked proteins and calories intake in general. As it can be easily deduced, though, these warnings were hushed up by Fascist authorities and instead of linking the problem of demographics and poor diet with

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.: 49

<sup>51</sup> Literature's references found in M. P. Moroni Salvatori, *Novecento in cucina: Bibliografia gastronomica italiana 1900-1950*, Pendragon 2014, and E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, Milan 2016

<sup>52</sup> C. Helstosky, *Fascist Food Politics: Mussolini's policy of alimentary sovereignty*, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 2004, 1-26

reprehensible socio-political measures, it was seen as a matter of race. In particular, in the periodical “L'alimentazione italiana” various articles connecting food with national character can be found, along with discourses linking the consumption of specific foodstuffs with specific races<sup>53</sup>. Publications on these themes did not come only from magazines, but also from figures belonging to the scientific community: Giuseppe Tallarico, scientist and Parliamentary Deputy involved in the CNR's Food Commission<sup>54</sup>, in some of his publishing explored the link between food and race, precisely between wheat bread and fertility, supposing that the wheat germ inside the whole-wheat bread could have in some way favoured human fertility<sup>55</sup>.

Coming back to the main point that this paragraph wants to support, namely the tight relation between women and food advertising, it is now clear how the Regime's strategy had developed, at the same time disseminating ideals of a modest food culture that should have reflected the inner nature of the Italian country, enhancing the importance of being connected to tradition, and taking advantage of propaganda to manipulate housewives towards food consumption choices that would have met the strategic intention of food production control desired by the Regime. In this context, another factor that emerges is the contribution that propaganda and food literature had in shaping consumers' attitude towards the food industry, representing the major influence on consumption choices. But was propaganda the only factor that influenced consumption? And more specifically, which were the products bought by Italian women when they went to the food shops? These answers can be glimpsed in the following paragraph, which recalls the years from the late 1930s to the Second World War.

#### 2.4 Factors influencing consumption and the dramatic food shortages World War II

As many studies on consumer behaviour have been concluding many times, human consumption choices are affected by lots of stimuli coming from the external environment. The extent to which these stimuli influence the final buying behaviour then

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<sup>53</sup> In 1938, for example, an article titled “Il pane e la razza” was published.

<sup>54</sup> Giuseppe Tallarico's (1880-1965) main life events and publications are described on the website of ICSAIC (Istituto Calabrese per la Storia dell'Antifascismo e dell'Italia Contemporanea), in an article published on November 2020

<sup>55</sup> G. Tallarico, *Grano e pane*, Ramo Editoriale degli Agricoltori, Rome 1933

are consumer-specific and depend on a multitude of factors that are often uneasy to identify.

Considering the interwar period and the imminent Second World War and recalling that Fascist policies of inhibition of trade markets caused a weakening of the economic conditions of the Country and its inhabitants, consumers' preferences in food consumption had to, willing or not, contrast with incomes availability, technology development and eventually also with social stratification. Some factors have the power to influence in the long-term, while others in the short-term; considering a couple of examples that have been made so far, advertising and thus propaganda can be outlined as a short-term influencing factor, together with price levels. Considering price levels, in particular from the 1920s onwards, Italian food industry witnessed different price trends among the different food products, and even more between wholesale and retail. For example, in a relatively "simple" market the price of a certain food product is related to the raw material of which it is made and consequently the final price would not be so different to the wholesale one, whereas in a more "advanced" and "sophisticated" market, the food at hand would be subjected to a number of services before reaching the final consumer, hence a more significant difference from the wholesale and the final price can arise. *Table 3* shows more in detail this phenomenon: in the period 1890-1913, namely the Giolitti era, the difference between wholesale and retail was minimal, while in the period 1920-1939, namely the Fascist Era, a remarkable drop in wholesale prices occurred, and eventually in the 1950-1970 period, after the Second World War, the situation would turn again with stable wholesale prices and increasing retail ones. Considering the Fascist period, however, an important aspect has to be stressed: even if the wholesale prices coherently reflected the fall in agricultural prices, excluding of course wheat, as discussed in this chapter, it never reached the end consumers. This means that Italian families never concretely benefited from any kind of advantage related to prices. On the contrary, they found themselves unable to afford the purchase of the most basic food products such as bread, pasta or rice<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> G.M. Rey, *I conti economici dell'Italia*, vol. I, *Una sintesi delle fonti ufficiali 1890-1970*, Rome 1991

*Table 3: Percentage variation in wholesale and retail prices of food*

	1890–1913		1920–1939		1950–1970	
	Wholesale	Retail	Wholesale	Retail	Wholesale	Retail
General price index	0.8	0.4	2.3	0.4	1.1	3.5
Flour	0.8	...	0.8	...	0.3	–
Bread	...	0.1	...	2.3	...	2.0
Pasta	1.3	0.1	0.3	2.1	1.3	1.8
Rice	0.1	0.3	2.4	0.4	1.8	2.3
Potatoes	...	1.7	...	2.3	...	3.9
Butter	0.7	0.7	3.1	2.6	1.6	1.9
Sugar	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.9	0.8
Beef	...	0.9	...	0.8	...	4.1
Pork	...	1.4	...	1.4	...	4.4
Milk	...	0.5	...	2.4	...	3.3
Wine	...	0.1	...	2.1	...	2.4

*Source:* G. M. Rey, *I Conti economici dell'Italia*, vol.1, *Una Sintesi delle Fonti Ufficiali 1890-1970* (Rome-Bari, 1961).

Despite the fact that in the 1930s there were several factors that could have favoured consumption (e.g. urbanization, advertising, prices) there were some discrepancies in the actual purchase results. A suitable example is rice. ISTAT data of that time showed that even if the price of rice did not witness significant changes and even if the Regime kept its propaganda in favour of rice consumption high, the consumption of this product lowered from an average of 13.5 kilograms per person in 1920 to an average of only 11 kilograms in 1930. The reason for this discrepancy is related to the concept that has been discussed at the beginning of this paragraph: factors influencing consumers' consumption behaviour not only are very differentiated from one another, but also they are often unpredictable. In the case of rice, a factor that could have somehow limited its consumption boost was that the consumer remembered this foodstuff as the "wartime rice", namely the rice that Italian inhabitants and soldiers had to eat every day during the hard times of the First World War, when food shortages and poor-quality food were a constant. And hence Italian people continued to prefer the consumption of pasta as a substitute of rice, supplied from almost every region of the country and of a wide range of types (e.g. spaghetti, bigoli, orecchiette, etc). Once again, consumers showed not to be passive receivers of the food policies carried out by the Government, and their approach towards food consumption is the result of a group of factors that came from every imaginable sphere of the living conditions, from the economic (income availability), to the

political (propaganda and food autarky) and the social one (connection of the food consumption habit with a related period).

From 1940 to the following five years, consumers' approach to food consumption would then withstand another dramatic shake, aroused by the Second World War which was more and more imminent. One of the most influencing factors in the buying behaviour of an Italian citizen at the beginning of the War was something that had shown up already during the First World War, but this time it occurred in an even more dramatic weight: inflation. In fact, if in the period of the Great War the problem of increase in average inflation rate was significant (around 26 percent), in the period 1942-1947 Italian economy witnessed the worst rise in inflation ever seen before (99 percent), causing a real shock that would impede any possible recovery<sup>57</sup>. Reporting an example of the food industry, the authors V. Daniele and R. Ghezzi, in "The impact of World War II on nutrition and children's health in Italy", in 1944 one kilogram of bread cost 48 times more than in 1940, one kilogram of pasta cost 95 times more and one kilogram of beef cost 30 times more with respect to the years before the War<sup>58</sup>. Per capita GDP dropped by 57%, being the largest output fall in Italian history: it reached its lowest peak in 1945, and it managed to recover - returning to the pre-war level - only by 1950. The same trend happened for household consumption, because while public consumption witnessed an increase because of the war effort, on the opposite side private consumption fell dramatically: as shown in *Graph 4*, in the years 1944-1945 private consumption level was around half that of 1920<sup>59</sup>.

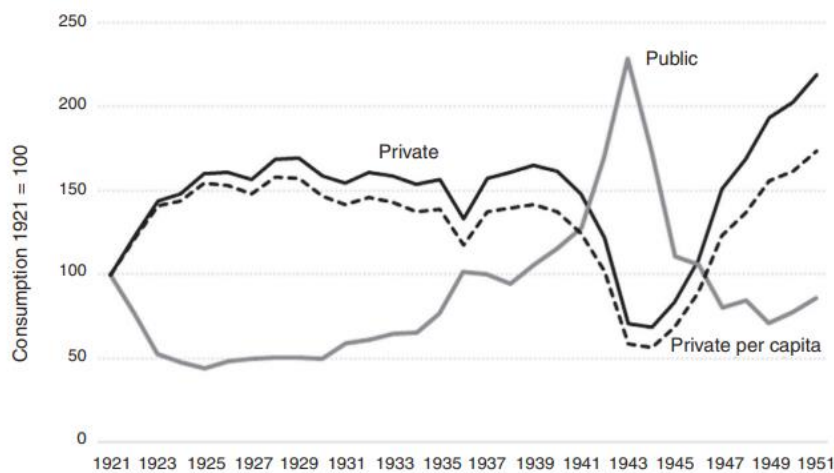
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<sup>57</sup> G. M. Rey, *I conti economici dell'Italia*, vol. I, *Una sintesi delle fonti ufficiali 1890-1970*, Rome 1991

<sup>58</sup> V. Daniele, R. Ghezzi, *The impact of World War II on nutrition and children's health in Italy*, on *Investigaciones de Historia Económica*, 2017, pp. 1-13

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*: 58

Graph 4: Private, public and private per capita consumption in Italy 1921–51 (1921 = 100). Note: Consumption in constant prices (1938 Italian liras)



Source: V. Daniele, R. Ghezzi, The impact of World War II on nutrition and children’s health in Italy, on *Investigaciones de Historia Económica*, June 2019. Data from Baffigi (2015)

This time, compared to the situation of the First World War, food shortages involved every kind of product, especially meat, cereals and butter, and they were worsened by the inefficiency of the rationing system. They became evident in 1942 and the conditions worsened year by year: nutritional standards deteriorated and the average calorie intake fell dramatically. Data from ISTAT (2012) showed how during this second world conflict a dramatic drop in foodstuffs availability occurred, and how the country was able to return to “normality” only in 1951, six years from the end of the War: above all, in 1945 meat and fish were consumed in a half and legumes in three quarters compared to five years earlier. As introduced before, a factor that definitely did not help was the Italian rationing system. In the paper of V. Ronchi, F. Ghiretti and G. Tagliacarne, “Approvvigionamenti e consumi alimentari”, it is stressed how both national and local institutions, indeed, were inefficient and ineffective in the organization and distribution of food provisions, and the distributed food rations managed to cover barely 60% of the daily nutritional needs of an individual<sup>60</sup>. This policy of rationing established by the Regime revealed useless, also because from the side of the producers, there was the effort of circumventing the law so as to sell their products on the black market at a higher price.

<sup>60</sup> V. Ronchi, F. Ghiretti, G. Tagliacarne, *Approvvigionamenti e consumi alimentari*, 1948, *Enciclopedia Italiana* Treccani (<http://www.treccani.it>)

Trying to reinforce this weak system, the Government introduced some other initiatives that were once again pointed towards women. Not only a number of manuals on how to cook and use available foodstuffs were produced, but other initiatives such as the war garden (i.e. giardino di guerra) were developed: the basic idea under this initiative was to use every possible available space as a vegetable garden, where to plant several seeds that would have become food products. In this way, women were called again to contribute in recovering the situation with their role of housekeepers, mothers and cooks.

Looking around to the other European countries, however, the landscape concerning food rationing seemed not so similar to the Italian one, because in our homeland the total calories provided were among the lowest of all the other European countries. For example, in the period 1940-44, while in Italy a normal consumer used to take barely 1000 calories a day, in Germany he or she used to take 2000, in the Netherlands 1800, in Belgium around 1500 and in France 1200<sup>61</sup>. Also the role of the black market was more significant in Italy compared to the other countries, since Italy presented one of the most difficult situations concerning rations availability; its widespread became so remarkable that the Fascist Government was not able to suppress it anymore and instead started in some way, if not to officially accept it, at least to tolerate it. P. F. Luzzato, in his research "Alimentazione e prezzi in tempo di Guerra (1942-1943)", enhanced that, according to the USA Department of Labour, in 1945 only one-twelfth of the budget of a household came from the ration card, while the remaining percentage came from the black market. Additionally, the black market was the purchase platform especially for the employees whose wages and living standards had progressively declined and deteriorated: in year 1942, employees with an income of 400 Liras consumed an average of 62% of their caloric requirements, while employees with a higher income (around 1500 Liras) could buy foodstuffs on the black market and thus increase their level of caloric requirement up to 90%.<sup>62</sup>

Moving towards the last years of the Second World War, a small improvement in the nutritional sphere took place thanks to the help of the USA. Nevertheless, this help in food imports showed as a drop of water upon the sea, because the Italian country and its population were almost razed to the ground, especially during the last winter of the War,

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<sup>61</sup> Source: League of Nations, 1944, *Food rationing and supply 1943/1944*. Economic Financial and Transit Department of the League of Nations, Geneva, in E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, Milan 2016

<sup>62</sup> P. F. Luzzato, *Alimentazione e prezzi in tempo di Guerra (1942-1943)*, Università di Trieste, 1948

when the lack of food provisions, fuel for heating and job opportunities prevented people to imagine any possible way out. Recalling the development gap dividing Northern Italy from Southern Italy that has been analyzed throughout Chapter 1, at the end of the Second World War this gap showed even deeper, since the “underdevelopment” of the Southern regions sharpened and the North-South divide in GDP per capita reached its highest level in 1951, when it was up to 50%. Italian socio-economic and political landscape was devastated. According to a Parliamentary inquiry in the first years after the end of the war, around 12% of inhabitants lived in a miserable life condition, another 12% lived under difficulty and overall around 45% of Italian families could not afford the consumption of a sufficient quantity of foodstuffs such as meat and sugar<sup>63</sup>.

Eventually, the War came to an end, but the Italian condition was far away from recovery and the state of emergency especially as regards food availability was going to last for the following five to seven years. Moreover, the secondary sector, which had started a process of growth during the period of the Second Industrial Revolution<sup>64</sup> becoming one of the main resources for the Italian economy, found itself severely devastated from these years, both in terms of infrastructures and in terms of workforce, which reduced significantly because of the War (the necessity to have a high presence of men at the front implied that many people temporarily abandoned their workplace).

The first signs of recovery started to appear in 1950-51, when the political landscape was revolutionized, with the Nazi Germany definitely defeated, as well as the Fascist Regime, and two new superpowers entering the game: the USA and the Soviet Union. To try to cancel this terrible historical period and to turn the page into a new decade, autarky policies made way for a new liberalized market, internationally extended, where the driving force for a possible economic growth would become individual consumption and different consumer preferences.

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<sup>63</sup> V. Daniele, R. Ghezzi, *The impact of World War II on nutrition and children's health in Italy*, on *Investigaciones de Historia Económica*, June 2019

<sup>64</sup> Reference is made to Chapter I, paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3



## Chapter 3. After the Wars: Turning Point in the Food Industry (1950-1973)

### 3.1 A difficult recovery

In the aftermath of the Second World War, European countries had to face enormous difficulties due to both the considerable war damages and the need to find resources to rebuild their economy. Italy was not an exception: the political landscape was fragmented, and the economy was suffering. And yet after a few years, the country witnessed the so-called *economic miracle* which led not only to a total economic recovery but also to profound social and cultural changes. These societal and economic processes deeply affected the development of the food industry as well as the consumer behaviour of Italian citizens towards food.

In order to understand how the food industry and the consumer's approach to it changed during the *economic miracle* (1950-1970), it is necessary at first to offer the reader a picture of the general historical framework that contributed to shaping consumption choices.

The political system from 1946, and for the following forty years, was dominated by the Christian Democratic Party (Democrazia Cristiana, DC), which, with Alcide De Gasperi at the lead, won the first post-war elections in 1948, defeating its main competitor, the Italian Communist Party (PCI).

In general, the post-war years saw significant political changes, such as the formal abdication of the king Vittorio Emanuele III in 1946, and the referendum establishing the Italian Republic (June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1946).<sup>65</sup> Together with the Referendum, Italians also elected the "Assemblea Costituente", which finalized the Italian Constitution, establishing a Parliamentary Government system, with two elected houses (Camera and Senato), guaranteeing civil and political rights to Italian citizens. For the first time in the history of the Republic Italian women took part in the 1946 elections having finally received the right to vote after more than twenty years of fighting for the acknowledgement of their political rights. Italian domestic politics were also influenced by the deterioration of

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<sup>65</sup> 2nd June 1946: on this date, Italian men and women were called to vote between Monarchy and Republic, with a voting affluence rate of 89,08%, one of the highest ever occurred.  
Source: [www.quirinale.it](http://www.quirinale.it)

international relations and the later onset of the Cold War in 1961<sup>66</sup>. As it has been discussed by L. Elia in his work “Alcide De Gasperi e l’Assemblea Costituente”, De Gasperi was certain about the requirement for an Italian political and economic recovery, namely the establishment of a democracy that has its roots in the cornerstone of liberty<sup>67</sup>.

With this purpose, activities of internal politics merged with ventures of external relationships: in 1947, De Gasperi came back from a visit to the US with 150 million dollars in granted aids which Italy would have received at the condition that De Gasperi barred both the Communist and the Socialist Party from the Italian government, as it has been underlined in the article “The Cold War political order” of P. E. Signoretta. US economic and financial support to Italian Governments (including funds for the propaganda activities of the Christian Democrats) was in fact intended to prevent that Communists and Socialists could gain further mass political support and eventually take the power<sup>68</sup>.

At the time, due to the crucial contribution that PCI and PSI had given to the Resistance movement, both parties had representatives at the Governo di Fronte Nazionale and the Assemblea Costituente. The rupture with PCI and PSI, which took place in 1948, was also an instrument for the DC to ingratiate the Vatican and the conservative southern Italian regions who had voted for the Monarchy and not for the Republic.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, part of the Italian industrial districts that had grown and developed during the years of the Second Industrial Revolution found themselves severely devastated because of the War, in particular with reference to the food industry that had to find a way to provide for the dramatic food shortages caused by the conflict; not to mention the agricultural sector, which had to recover the losses of its plantations, and in general the loss of workforce that the secondary sector witnessed because of the high number of men committed at the front<sup>69</sup>.

Rationing policies in food consumption favoured the spread of the black market, and even though the USA managed to help the Italian economy significantly with the *Marshall Plan*

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<sup>66</sup> The Cold War is the political, social, military, and ideological contraposition between the two powers that came out as winners from the Second World War: the USA and the Soviet Union

<sup>67</sup> L. Elia, *Alcide De Gasperi e l’Assemblea Costituente*, Fondazione Trentina Alcide De Gasperi, Pieve Tesino, August 2005

<sup>68</sup> P. E. Signoretta et al, section titled *The Cold War Political Order*, in the article *Italy*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2021. [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)

<sup>69</sup> Reference is made to Chapter 2, paragraph 2.4

(1948), the effects could not be seen until 1952-53. In other words, this period of social and political tension was led by a deep desire for recovery and change.

### 3.2 New lifestyles and cultures of food

The Italian economy, despite all those difficulties, could rely on some resources that proved essential for the recovery. As a document published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1947 recalled, Italy, was finally “released from the burden of disproportionate armaments and of unproductive colonies”,<sup>70</sup> and could count on a larger working population than before the War. According to Scarpellini’s research in her volume “Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present”, starting from the early 1950s, Italy managed to turn the dramatic page of the War, witnessing a period of economic flourishing that reflected also on citizens’ lifestyles and, as a consequence, on their food culture. In the Northern Regions, factories started expanding and increasing their productivity, and the agricultural sector became slowly surpassed by the manufacturing and the services ones; exports increased, as well as investment rates and domestic consumption<sup>71</sup>. However, the Southern regions were still lagging behind.

The development and wealth gap between Northern and Southern Italy remained almost untouched by the reconstruction and economic recovery. As Scarpellini pointed out, a parliamentary inquiry carried out in the early 1950s concerning the level of poverty in Italy, divided households into “average” families and “poor families” (the former living with modest standards and a modest daily diet of 520 grams of meat and 240 grams of sugar; the latter living with lower standards, eating daily 150 grams of meat and 125 grams of sugar) and showed that geography was an important variable in income distribution: while in the North poverty rates were around 1.2 - 1.4%, in the South such rates were significantly higher, from 23% to 38%<sup>72</sup>.

The 1950s brought other significant transformations which impacted Italian households and ways of living. The extension of the right to vote to women of all social classes in 1946

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<sup>70</sup> A. C. *Italian Economic Trends in 1946*, on *The World Today* (vol.3, no.1), Royal Institute of International Affairs, January 1947

<sup>71</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016

<sup>72</sup> Reference is made to the large-scale parliamentary inquiry that was carried out in the years 1951-1953 concerning poverty in Italy, that has been presented in E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 121-122

was only the first one of a series of changes involving the role of women in Italian society who while keeping their role of careful mothers, cooking for their families and dealing with the grocery shopping, had massively entered the labour market. Their changing role in the society was reflected also in the sector of advertising, which pictured the ambivalent figure of the woman as embedded in a context characterized by elements of progress and innovation and at the same time tradition.

As presented in the article *La Donna d'Oggi*, published in 1958 in the magazine *La Cucina Italiana*, the role of women was defined as changed forever: "even while staying at home, a woman cannot escape from the requirements of modern life. There are progress and evolution, which even the woman who is most attached to tradition cannot ignore, and modern economic life is based on new foundations to which a person has to adapt"<sup>73</sup>.

As per the studies of Balbo, May and Vale in the paper "Woman's Condition: the case of postwar Italy", women had more access to formal education and this changed their attitude towards employment: asking for full time jobs and salary raises, and were supported in their claims by trade unions.<sup>74</sup> Women and men of the 1950s Italy, thus, started to approach new lifestyles thanks to this economic recovery, which once again reflected on their food culture.

If one looks at a graph of food consumption in the Twentieth century, he would notice the difference in data before and after the year 1950. Before 1950, food consumption (as well as calories intake) can be represented as an almost continuous and steady line up until the Second World War, when the diet of the Italian population suffered from dramatic food shortages, and then after 1950 a sudden boost will occur and persist throughout all the second half of the century. For example, looking at *Graph 5* below, the Italian daily calories intake per capita shifted from less than 2500 kcal in 1950 to 3000 kcal in 1960 and reached even 3500 kcal in the 1970s. The consumption of almost every kind of foodstuffs increased sharply: pasta, oil, fruits and vegetables, meat, dairy products, etc.

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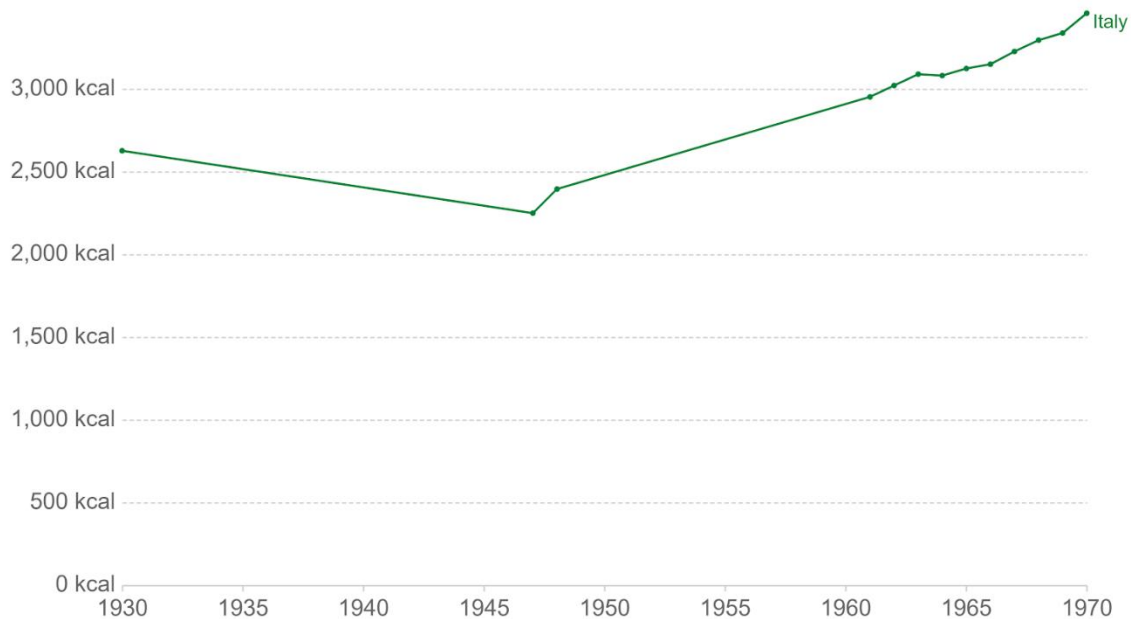
<sup>73</sup> *La donna d'oggi*, on *La Cucina Italiana*, November 1958

<sup>74</sup> L. Balbo, M.P. May, M. Vale, *Woman's Condition: The Case of Postwar Italy*, in *International Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 5, No. 4, Published by Taylor & Francis, Ltd. (1975-76)

Graph 5: Daily per capita caloric supply, 1930 to 1970

### Daily per capita caloric supply, 1930 to 1970

Average daily per capita caloric supply, measured in kilocalories per person per day. Note that this indicates the caloric availability delivered to households but does not necessarily indicate the number of calories actually consumed (food may be wasted at the consumer level).



Source: FAO (2017) & Various historical sources

OurWorldInData.org/food-per-person/ • CC BY

Note: Historical data for the USSR is highly uncertain – it likely gives an overestimate of caloric supply

Source: FAO (2017) and [www.ourworldindata.com](http://www.ourworldindata.com)

In particular, two were the foods that saw a boost in their purchase: meat and sugar. As far as the first one is concerned, the most significant result concerned beef. The author F. Cipriani, in his work “Temperal trends in wine and food consumption in Italy”, stressed that around 7 kg per year of beef were eaten per capita in the early 1950s, doubling in 1960s and exceeding 25 kg per year in 1971. Observing the different types of meat consumed from 1950 onwards, there has been an increase in pork consumption, as well as poultry, while other types of meat such as rabbit, lamb, horse and goat were still consumed in low quantities. During this period, also the consumption of meat-derived products (milk, cheese, eggs...) grew considerably, though not as much as the meat itself<sup>75</sup>. Over the same period, the second important foodstuff that was subjected to an unimaginable boost was sugar. Its consumption trebled, moving from 7-8 kg per capita in

<sup>75</sup> F. Cipriani, *Temperal trends in wine and food consumption in Italy*, Federal Legal Publications Inc, 2007

the 1920s to 12 kg in the 50s, 20 kg in the 60s and almost 30 kg in the 70s<sup>76</sup>. The first reason that one might think about to explain these new consumption patterns is an increase in the living conditions thanks to the economic recovery that was taking place, and consequently an increase in income and the adoption of a different lifestyle. This is in part true, since according to the basic microeconomics theories the aim of any consumer is the maximization of his/her own wealth, and hence he or she will take advantage of the resources at his/her disposal to benefit as much as possible. But there were also other factors that contributed to the change of the diet of Italians during the economic boom. The contemporary historian Scarpellini, in fact, shed some light on the fact that during these years, consumers started to realize that they could benefit from a higher purchasing power and that they could play a real important role in the market for the first time. The increased awareness of what they were eating, and which types of food were more suitable for their bodies and wellbeing was supported and enhanced by improvements in scientific knowledge and its dissemination. In other words, consumption choices were no more led by the mere purpose of surviving, as it had been during the Wars and during the interwar period, but were beginning to be influenced by a group of various and different factors that, even if they may be seen as unrelated, were all together actually contributing in defining the new lifestyle of the Italian people of the second half of the Century. For example, let's consider sugar. Basing on the above-mentioned data concerning the consumption revolution that involved sugar, some scholars have been trying to explain this trend by providing more than one explanation. Scholars like Adam Beardsworth and Thomas Keil connected this trend with the preference of human beings for sweet tastes instead of bitter ones, and this is particularly true for children and younger people; thus, it can be easily glimpsed that as economic obstacles are overcome and other restraints lower, the sugar consumption would for sure increase<sup>77</sup>. A. James provided another explanation, which is more sociological: sweet food plays a dual role, because on one side they represent ordinary foods contained in everyday diet (e.g. fruit, carbohydrates, cakes, etc)<sup>78</sup>, but on the other side they represent the food eaten in social interaction (e.g. when one goes out with friends or family for an ice-cream, when one brings them as a gift when he or she goes to a friend's home, etc). A study of P. Rozin went even deeper into the

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 75

<sup>77</sup> A. Beardsworth, T. Keil, *Sociology of the Menu*, London 1997, pp. 242-253

<sup>78</sup> A. James, *The Good, the Bad and the Delicious: The Role of Confectionery in British Society*, in *The Sociological Review* 38, no. 4, November 1990, pp. 666-688

cultural meaning of sugar and sweet things, in particular that on chocolate: culturally associated with sensuality and transgression, chocolate would be given a meaning of attraction<sup>79</sup>. Finally, but not less important, there was the commercial factor, as reconstructed by Scarpellini. Sugar production already played a central role in the colonial empires, where slaves worked hard on wide sugar plantations, and then with the end of the War and the beginning of the commercialization of different foodstuffs among countries, sugar purchase enlarged to every developed country. In conclusion, the case of sugar is emblematic for a number of other foodstuffs. All those changes in consumption patterns brought about a remarkable breakthrough in food industry and had positive consequences on the Italian economic and productive landscape during the years of the economic miracle.

### 3.3 The growth of the food industry: towards an industrialized process

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Italian economy was flourishing, and Italians profited from the new economic opportunities to improve their lifestyle. A little at a time, the secondary sector overcame the primary sector in terms of productivity, and the reason can be easily glimpsed. The business environment was entering a new phase: the two World Wars had entailed the indirect consequence of bringing together different cultures for the first time, giving people the possibility to get to know lifestyles and habits that were different from theirs and bringing also a variety of different foodstuffs that entered Italian people's diet, shaping consumers' preferences; as said, after the wars consumers became more aware both of their purchasing power (in terms of income availability and of independence in their consumption choices) and of their dietary needs (thanks to the improvements in scientific knowledge that allowed people to be more informed about the human body's needs and requirements); According to Scarpellini's research, the high inflation rate that threatened the economic landscape in the first years after the end of the Second World War was starting to decrease, allowing the economy to recover little by little, bringing positive effects also on citizens' incomes. Consequently, businesses started to change, too. In order to meet the consumers' needs and to keep up-to-date with the new growing economic environment, firms had to adapt by offering products and services that the

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<sup>79</sup> P. Rozin, *Sweetness, Sensuality, Sin, Safety and Socialization: some speculations*, editions J. Dobbing, London 1987, pp. 99-111

society was requesting. Consumers came to use self-produced products (e.g. fruits and vegetables that used to be self-produced in the house's garden, as discussed in Chapter 2 with the *giardini di guerra*), as well as semi processed ones (e.g. flour). On the contrary, they were beginning to increase their purchase of processed food such as packaged fruits and vegetables, bread and pasta, and last but not least, packaged sweets. According to data of that period, presented by G.M. Rey in his volume "I Conti Economici dell'Italia", the percentage of goods supplied by agriculture was around 16%, while the percentage of processed products supplied by the food industry accounted for more than 33% of the total amount of foodstuffs available on the market<sup>80</sup>. And this was the result of the group of above-mentioned factors that altogether contributed to this change. This rapid industrial expansion hence had some important effects on the food industry, leading it towards an industrialization process, where a remarkable expansion coexisted with patterns of fragmentation, becoming a key player within the economic sphere. The development of the food industries varied according to different regions and types of products, and although some big firms were founded (e.g. Star, Perugina, Ferrero, Carapelli) and some important multinationals such as Coca-Cola, Unilever and Nestlé were continuing their growing path, the food market was composed mainly of firms of smaller dimensions that concurred in impacting on the food sector.

Entering more in depth into this subject, there are some reasons that can be pointed out to explain this increased impact and growth of the food industry on the Italian economy, which has been summarized by Scarpellini in her volume "Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present" and which we are now going to discuss more in depth. One of the most important reasons is connected to the relative low cost that the food industry managed to offer to its customers thanks to the changes in production, which shifted to a mass production, giving customers the opportunity to undertake large-scale purchases. The second reason that can explain the success of the processed food industry is reflected in its ability to respond properly to the needs of the consumers, fitting and adapting to the social and cultural landscape in which it found itself embedded<sup>81</sup>. With reference to the

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<sup>80</sup> G. M. Rey, *I conti economici dell'Italia*, vol. 1, Una sintesi delle fonti ufficiali 1890-1970 (Rome, 1991), pp. 20-22, 31-36

<sup>81</sup> Much research has been conducted on this subject also by a number of scholars and economists, among others Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950), who recognized the importance of adaptation in every innovation process. Economic growth was outlined as a long-cycle process of qualitative change driven by innovation, which can become destructive if firms do not innovate to preserve their position in the market. Reference is made to J. Fagerberg, *Innovation. A guide to Literature*, on *The Oxford Handbook of Innovation*, 2003, pp. 1-22



food industry of the period at hand, what happened for some food firms was that they managed to understand how to respond to the signals that society was emitting, for example the changes in the rhythms and in the ways of eating and cooking driven by the rapid urbanization process. A meaningful example for these changes can be seen in the study of Carole Counihan, which analysed how in the city of Bosa (OR) women stopped making handmade bread for their families in just five years (1960-65) because their husbands did not grow wheat anymore. Instead, they started to buy it in supermarkets<sup>82</sup>. The same can be noted in the confectionary industry, since cookies, cakes and many other sweet foodstuffs were increasingly produced industrially. The transformation of the food sector then touched a number of alimentary firms and products. *Findus* entered the Italian market in 1961, with its first factory in Cisterna di Latina; even if its development was at an early stage, throughout the years the company managed to supply a wide range of frozen products, from ready-to-eat meals to vegetables, fish and meat, becoming leader in its sector in Italy<sup>83</sup>. *Knorr* ready-to-eat soups and other bouillons rapidly expand in the Italian market and in 1957 they were sold in eight countries<sup>84</sup>. *Cirio* ready-to-eat tomato sauces continued the growth that had already started in the previous decades, and through the years the management undertook several changes in the logo in order to fit the market in the most suitable way<sup>85</sup>. This ability of adaptation proved essential for the survival of the food industry, and it is still today at the basis of any business strategy that a firm should implement if it wants to survive in the business system.

A third motive behind the successful development of the food industry was related to advertising and communications. In 1954 Italian families got to know a tool that would have revolutionized the world of information: television. According to G. E. Belch and M. A. Belch in their volume “Advertising and Promotion. An integrated marketing communications perspective”, television is the advertising *medium* with the highest number of advantages in order to meet mass communication goals, especially thanks to its ability to combine visual images, sounds, motions and colour that allow the advertiser to develop the most creative appeal of any other medium.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>C. M. Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power* (London, 1999), pp. 25–42

<sup>83</sup> Reference is made to the website of Museo del Marchio Italiano, which is a registered trademark of property of the MUMIT (Museo Marchio Italiano). [www.museodelmarchioitaliano.com](http://www.museodelmarchioitaliano.com)

<sup>84</sup> Data have been found on Knorr’s official website [www.knorr.com](http://www.knorr.com)

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*: 85

<sup>86</sup> G. E. Belch, M. A. Belch, *Advertising and Promotion. An integrated marketing communications perspective*, MacGraw-Hill Education, 2018, pp.379-382

Therefore, there started to be a mutual relationship between the food industry and advertising, where the former was giving to the latter importance and economic opportunities, while the latter was giving back to the former more visibility within the market, exposing it to a higher number of potential customers. According to Scarpellini, and to many other scholars, little by little advertising started to become a real “science”, marking a new era where the buying behaviour was becoming quicker thanks to the connection between producers and consumers favoured by the dynamic and advanced world of television. With the spread of Italian and American advertising agencies, such as Armando Testa, Young and Rubicam and many others, the Italian market took advantage of advertising and communications for launching both brands that were already well-known and brands that were less known who wanted to explore potential new markets. In parallel to the boom of communications, another factor started to become of higher importance for firms who wanted to keep their competitiveness inside the market of the economic miracle period: packaging. Defined as the wrapping material around a consumer item that serves to contain, identify, describe, protect, display, promote and otherwise make the product marketable and keep it clean, a product package has several meanings hidden behind the mere logistic function. Through its package, a product - and a brand - acquire shapes, colours and most importantly, an identity. Being the first visual expression of a brand, packaging is an important tool to communicate value and to reinforce the message that a firm wants to spread with its consumers, and for this reason packaging is also connected with emotions. Recalling the need of adaptation to the society’s needs and desires for a firm that wanted to survive, the tool of packaging started to become included in this strategic intent.<sup>87</sup> In other words, firms of that time realized that their link and connection with consumers could be reinforced if the package in which the product was contained was reflecting the consumption and production trends of the time.

An example can be seen in the world of biscuits and, in general, in the sweet industry. Most cookies of that time was massively produced industrially, as mentioned throughout the chapter, and their package was generally of squared shapes and made of industrial material like plastic or tin, reflecting the industrial process of which it was the outcome. Therefore, when consumers went to supermarkets to buy cookies, they always felt the

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<sup>87</sup> The notions on the role of packaging are a personal elaboration of the courses of Branding and Communication that I have attended during the master’s degree

relationship with the industrialization process that had entered their lives changing their consumption habits forever. Whether this was perceived positively or negatively by consumers is a different subject, which is going to be discussed after having finalized the list of reasons affecting the growth of the food industry. Another example of changes in packaging was that of Coca-Cola, which during the early Twentieth Century consisted in glass bottles that were subjected to some changes in their shapes and colours with the decades passing by, with the aim of being recognizable among other drinks' bottles and of discouraging competitors from selling imitations; in order to increase convenience and sales, then during the 1920s Coca-Cola bottles were for the first time sold in six-packs and by the 50s the bottle evolved into the "Contour bottle" that we know nowadays, and in the same years the Coke Contour Bottle appeared on the cover of TIME magazine in 1950, becoming the first product to do so, and thus establishing the brand's dominance. In the 60s, an alternative packaging was introduced, the Coca-Cola can, and in 1977 the glass packaging witnessed a rare event for that time: the Contour Bottle was trademarked. During the 80s, as it will be discussed, trends of dieting would become more marked, and as a consequence the firm would create the line of *Diet Coke*<sup>88</sup>.

Finally, the fourth reason pointed out also by Scarpellini to explain this unprecedented growth of the food industry in Italy was linked to distribution. Distribution costs for the small factories that composed the Italian industrial environment used to be pretty high with respect to their European competitors, since that had always relied on revenues coming from goods that were sold locally or regionally, thus until that moment they did not really need big distribution channels to sell their products. However, the changes that were taking place in the sector asked for consequent changes in the distribution process, in terms of efficiency and cost-savings, and they should be analysed more in detail. Few years after the appearance of the revolutionizing media tool of television, more precisely in 1957, there was the appearance of another subject that would have changed forever the life of Italian people: the supermarket, which became emblematic for a real retail revolution that had already begun in the USA during the interwar period. In the United States a meaningful example of this retail revolution can be seen in the supermarket chain *Seven Eleven*, which was born first in Japan under the lead of the chairman Toshifumi Suzuki, who proposed the start of a convenience-store franchise chain, and then was

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<sup>88</sup> The reconstruction of Coca-Cola brand and packaging history is based on the data in the article of G. Shaw, *Here's how Coca-Cola has changed over the past*, Insider, May 2018

established in the USA in 1946 by Joe Thompson, who was a member of Southland's<sup>89</sup> board of directors, which under his lead became the world's first convenience store chain. This chain is a clear example of "innovative firm" since it sought to transform technological and market conditions with the aim of generating higher quality and lower cost products.

As it has been so far understood, the growth of the food industry and its journey towards industrialization that started in the 1950s shook profoundly the business landscape of the Italian (and in general the European) country and it will be continuing at least for the following twenty years. It is essential to remember that in this flourishing environment, however, firms did not act alone. Consumers, the other key counterpart of the market, were deeply affected by the industrialized process of food production both in economic terms and in terms of diet (people's nutritional habits, as previously mentioned, had been subjected to a great change). At this point, though, the question that might arise is: how did consumers react to these changes? Have they been passive receivers of the output of the food industry, neither with nutritional preferences nor with any kind of suspiciousness towards the new industrialized foodstuffs that the industry was offering? Or were they raising their voices in terms of autonomy in consumption choices? The answer to this question is very precious for this thesis and in general for the socio-economic consumption patterns that will establish in the years to follow, because the Italian society of the 50s and 60s proved to finally have got rid from the political constraints that had been manipulating their lives and consumption choices during the two World Wars. At the same time, however, the reaction of consumers' behaviour to the innovations brought in during these recovery years has not been linear and without some controversy. What is indisputable is that the everyday life of the new consumer, who now was more and more embedded in a working environment made of businesses firms in cities, started to be more frenetic and hence his or her short-time for eating had to translate into ready-to-eat foodstuffs that could allow a faster meal (and, hence, less waste of time). This frenetic life reflected itself also in households, especially in the kitchen, which was still the place where a family reunited every evening for dinner to share a

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<sup>89</sup> Southland was a convenience store chain founded in 1927, which managed to expand in the USA during the Economic Boom of the post-war period, when a need for new products started to spread. It was seen as "the little store that has everything", competing with supermarkets and expanding through franchising to satisfy a new kind of consumer, whose life had become frenetic and full of things to do. Reference is made to the paper of J. R Bernstein, *7-Eleven in America and Japan*, pp. 492-530

moment of conviviality, but it was also affected by the innovative products provided by industrialization: as it has been reconstructed by Scarpellini, almost every kitchen could count on the benefits of electrical appliances like refrigerators, mixers, pressure cookers and some others, keeping somehow up-to-date with the running innovative landscape. In this sense, this group of new electrical appliances and new lifestyles deeply affected how the food was prepared and they turned out to be easily accepted by consumers (namely, women), because they were seen as tools that would have simplified the process of food-making. For this reason, the reaction of women to these novelties was active, dynamic and positive, since they saw them as desirable<sup>90</sup>. These kinds of innovations can be defined as innovation in process, because as just mentioned they were tools that altogether contributed in speeding up and simplifying the process of cooking, affecting how the food was prepared and at the same time without casting any doubt on the ability of a woman who was preparing it. On the other hand, innovations in products did not find the same initial success and easy acceptance by women customers. The majority of products that the food industry proposed (to mention some of them: margarine, bouillon cubes, dried pasta, preserves, etc) had to follow a process of selectivity and scepticism of women, and this process did not always end with the purchase. The reason behind this scepticism was not unique: firstly, housewives were not sure if they could “trust” such ready-made products, because they did not know if they would have eventually had the same taste as the home-made ones. And this leads to an important consideration: product innovations were accepted with less ease compared to process innovations. Secondly, but not in terms of importance, manufacturers of ready-to-eat foodstuffs were usually selling their products accompanied by some advice on how to prepare them (e.g. receipts and cooking advices printed on the product’s labels), with the aim of helping and supporting housewives in the cooking of these new products, and with the hope of mitigating their purchase resistance. Nevertheless, these suggestions turned out to reinforce women’s scepticism and resistance, and the reason has been glimpsed by the contemporary historian Scarpellini: products that women found in the refrigerators of supermarkets like frozen fish, as well as canned preserved foodstuffs like meat, soups or legumes, were presented with sophisticated and particular cooking advices on how to prepare them, but the problem was that when housewives chose to buy these ready-to-eat products they

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<sup>90</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, Milan 2016

were choosing them exactly for this characteristic of readiness. In other words, they did not choose them to get home and lose other time for preparing whatever peculiar receipt: as the word said, the ready-to-eat food had to be ready to be served just as it was, meeting the need of having a fast meal to prepare when one did not have the time to cook. For these reasons, the result of new industrialized food products had been sometimes unsatisfactory because of this “buying resistance”. Thus, the introduction of these innovative food products created a sort of culinary dualism where consumers needed both tradition to be preserved, with fresh and genuine ingredients that had never to lack in a meal, and package foods that allowed them to save time in their daily life.

Another remarkable shake in Italian people’s dietary habits and culture has been given by two new players that entered the game during the 60s and the 70s and that will be analysed in the next paragraph: the concept of dieting, already present from the 20s, and the trend of mobility.

### 3.4 Dieting and mobility: two new players entering consumers’ mind

Nutritional habits and food culture of Italian inhabitants have been subjected to significant changes over time, because of a multitude of heterogeneous factors that altogether contributed to the present culinary situation: economic factors, political factors, cultural factors and social factors. In this context, it has been shown in this study how certain factors contributed in affecting consumers’ approach towards food consumption for a limited time (e.g. the Fascist food propaganda, which saw its flourishing during the 1920s and 1930s, but then was definitely overcome), while other factors entered the game with a relatively low weight in the beginning of the Twentieth Century and then gained more and more importance in shaping consumers preferences decade by decade. And this is the case of dieting. Recalling what had been discussed in Chapter 1, with the Second Industrial Revolution many industrial sectors began their path towards a big extension and growth, among them the chemical industry. As a consequence, scientific knowledge and scientific studies were given more growth opportunities, and therefore the Italian society witnessed the birth of scientific experts and professional figures like nutritionists and doctors specialized in the study of body’s requirements. Science was starting to establish itself as a real institution that had the knowledge and the power to impose rules on how to eat properly and to suggest

nutritional practices that would best suit the human body's necessities. During 1960s these patterns of science-driven consumption choices saw a notable boost and reached high affirmation in the Italian society, favoured by the spread of advertising and communication tools such as television, radio and magazines: nutritional norms and values, calories intake and daily requirements were repeated in magazines and television advertisements and programs, spreading widely among the population, reaching a larger number of potential consumers, as per the reconstructions of Scarpellini. Consumers, in fact, began not only to be more aware about nutritional necessities, but they also began to see as an essential requirement to possess as much knowledge as possible in this field, giving less importance to the possession of knowledge about food preparation and receipts, which was "left in the background", and this period (mainly from the late 50s to the early 70s) witnessed an important shift in how food was perceived<sup>91</sup>, marking a new Era of modernity in the perception of food consumption. This latter, in fact, had been subjected to several shakes throughout the course of the Twentieth Century: after the first dramatic and unexpected food shortages of the First World War, that made consumers to view food as the only indispensable element for survival, a fragile and light recovery characterized the interwar period, where there seemed to be the chance for Italian consumers to benefit from some food policies brought in by the Fascist Regime; but this chance revealed soon ephemeral, since the political restrictions on the exportations and the upcoming Second World Conflict negatively affected once again the possibility for consumers to decide in autonomy what they could buy and eat; then, starting from the late 1940s, after deep studies and an analytic research on the nutritional characteristic of the world's population, the concept of Mediterranean Diet was introduced by the nutritionist and researcher Ancel Keys, who noticed that people living in the area of the Mediterranean Basin presented characteristics of more longevity, strong health and an active life. More specifically, the researcher examined a sample of 12 000 people ranging from 40 and 60 years old, who lived in the Countries of Japan, USA, the Netherlands, Italy, (ex)Yugoslavia and Finland in a famous study called Seven Countries Study: after 20 years of clinical observation, the scientist realized how people in the area of the Mediterranean Basin, thanks to a healthier nutrition compared to the one of the remaining countries under analysis, showed a lower incidence of the so-called *malattie del benessere* (i.e.

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<sup>91</sup>Another important shift in the conception of food consumption will occur in the course of the Twenty-first Century, as will be analysed in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

pathologies of well-being), namely overweight, high cholesterol, diabetes, etc<sup>92</sup>; starting from the 70s, the results of these research were shared all over the world, and the Mediterranean diet became officially recognized at an international level as a model of healthiness; therefore, in the period at hand Italian society was suggested to follow this nutritional model, increasing the consumption of cereals, fruits, vegetables, olive oil and fresh fish, while decreasing the consumption of refined sugar and red meat<sup>93</sup>. With these findings, Italian consumers somehow overcame the need of “gastronomic excesses” of the first post-war years of abundance, and food began to be conceived as one of the several necessities for a human being, rather than the unique source on which human well-being depended on, and it started to be associated to physical well-being, in opposition to eating in an excessive way, which came to be associated with negative health consequences.

In addition to dieting, another important factor that contributed to shaping consumers preferences has been pointed out in Scarpellini’s research and has socio-economic traits that arose as a consequence of the economic recovery and of the transformation of the economic structures: mobility. In the 1950s and 60s period, this term has to be conceived in *latu sensu*, because it was referred both to a spatial mobility and a social mobility, made for leisure (for example, families had the chance to travel around Italy and also abroad for vacations, for a day-off and also for small journeys to bordering cities for eating out during the weekend) and made possible thanks to the development of innovative transportation infrastructures (e.g. highways) and the increased economic possibility to afford these leisure activities.

In this context, mobility patterns played a significant role in the Italian people food culture, because it gave Italians the opportunity to travel and tasting a wider variety of foodstuffs that each region was able to offer, and this opportunity runned in parallel with the growth and development of the first chains of food services areas, such as *Autogrill*<sup>94</sup>. Therefore, mobility represented a turning point for the culinary habits of Italians, and was related not only to leisure motives, as said previously, but also - and especially - to working motives. In other words, Italian men and women started to move within the country to enjoy the travelling activity and the pleasure of trying different restaurants,

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<sup>92</sup> A. Keys’ research data have been found in E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016, pp.49-50

<sup>93</sup> A. Keys, M. Keys, *Eat Well And Stay Well. The Mediterranean Way*, 1975

<sup>94</sup> The first Autogrill appeared in 1955, in Bergamo (Lombardy) and from that year onwards the food services chain spreaded all over the Italian country. Reference: E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016



but a large portion of them started to move at higher rates because their workplaces were often far from their homes, now that the business environment was made of a multitude of industrialized firms that gave thousands of job opportunities. Once again, television and advertising played an important role for restaurants, cafeterias, bars and other culinary businesses, promoting travelling activities and contributing to the increase in the mobility rates of Italians.

Despite the big advantages for the society that the patterns of mobility brought in the Italian landscape during these years, not everyone perceived in a positive way the food innovations that it carried with itself. For example, Emanuela Scarpellini has focused on the public opinion related to this new trend, referring also to the advertisement sphere. Among others, the journalist Giorgio Bocca, author of some articles in *La Cucina Italiana*, criticized the spread of downscale Italian restaurants abroad, and he was concerned about the new trend of publishing vapid cooking books that was, according to his opinion, underestimating and making superfluous the sophisticated sense of the taste that was the result of a long process of cultivation and caring of the food culture<sup>95</sup>. Also the political sphere showed some skepticism about these new food innovations and industrialized process of food production: on one hand it was seen as in opposition to modest lifestyles, on the other hand it was enhancing individual consumerism instead of public one. In the meanwhile, the general socio-political environment was entering (starting from the late 60s) into a period of instability, because of the changes that Italy was experiencing, that would have created a growing social tension, having the highest peak with the “1968 mass movements”. In this chaotic context, protests and concerns touched almost every aspect of the political and economic sphere, and the food industry was definitely not excluded. It is in this context of instability that consumers managed once again to make their voices heard, this time in terms of protection from food frauds. Many consumer protection movements were born to reach this goal, the first being the *Unione Nazionale Consumatori*, founded in 1955 by the journalist Vincenzo Dona<sup>96</sup>. As an example,

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<sup>95</sup> G. Bocca, *Le opinioni di un dilettante in cucina*, in the magazine *La Cucina Italiana*, February 1963, in E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016

<sup>96</sup> In the early 50s, sophistications and drafts overflow in the nutritional field, favoured also by a legislation that was among the most retarded; prices were under the arbitrary of producers and sellers, without any kind of relationship with costs; normative gaps concerned every sphere of production and distribution, and services were handled without care for users. Having observed these remarkable facts, on 25th November 1955 the foundation of the *Unione Nazionale Consumatori* took place thanks to the initiative of Vincenzo Dona (who passed away in 2006), who was given the honour of knight commander of the Italian Republic. Source: *Unione Nazioonale Consumatori*

Emanuela Scarpellini mentioned some initiatives established at that time in order to “protect” consumers in terms of knowledge about what was contained in food products: in 1960 there was the first official regulation on the classification of olive oil, followed by another important legislation that still exists nowadays, namely the Denominazione di Origine Controllata (D.O.C), the legislation on the registered designation of origins for wines<sup>97</sup>.

These aspects are worth noting especially because it can be seen how, throughout the years and the historical changes, we assist to a shaping of the Italian consumer behaviour, who moved from being a passive receiver of political and economic policies that reflected on their approach towards food consumption, to an active player able to decide in increasing autonomy what to buy and to consume (even if, of course, advertising continued to be a hidden trickster in driving his or her buying decisions). Speaking broadly, the years analysed in this chapter had been extremely important for Italy: industrialization touched several fields of economy, offering job opportunities to Italian citizens and giving them the chance to raise their living standards, offering new technologies in terms of electrical households facilities and optimization of time; consumers became more powerful and at the same time more exposed to factors of influence (e.g television commercials) in their buying decisions; food availability became easier, thanks to new infrastructures and mobility patterns that characterized this period, together with the removal of seasonal constraints favoured by the innovations in the preservation of many foodstuffs. Despite some patterns of scepticism, as it has been showed, it can be said that the Italian country was approaching some kind of gastronomic unity, or at least a gastronomic heritage, that was increasingly enhanced and valorised not only by Italian themselves, but also by foreign people who were starting to come to Italy for discovering its precious culinary culture, which was a perfect mixture of tradition and innovation. In other words, the years 1950s-1970s were characterized by a flourishing environment, and the period of shortages and depression caused by the Wars seemed to definitely be overcome. However, this phase of growth and economic wealth found a barrier at the beginning of the 1970s, more precisely in 1973, a year that revealed symbolic in the economic development of the Italian Country.

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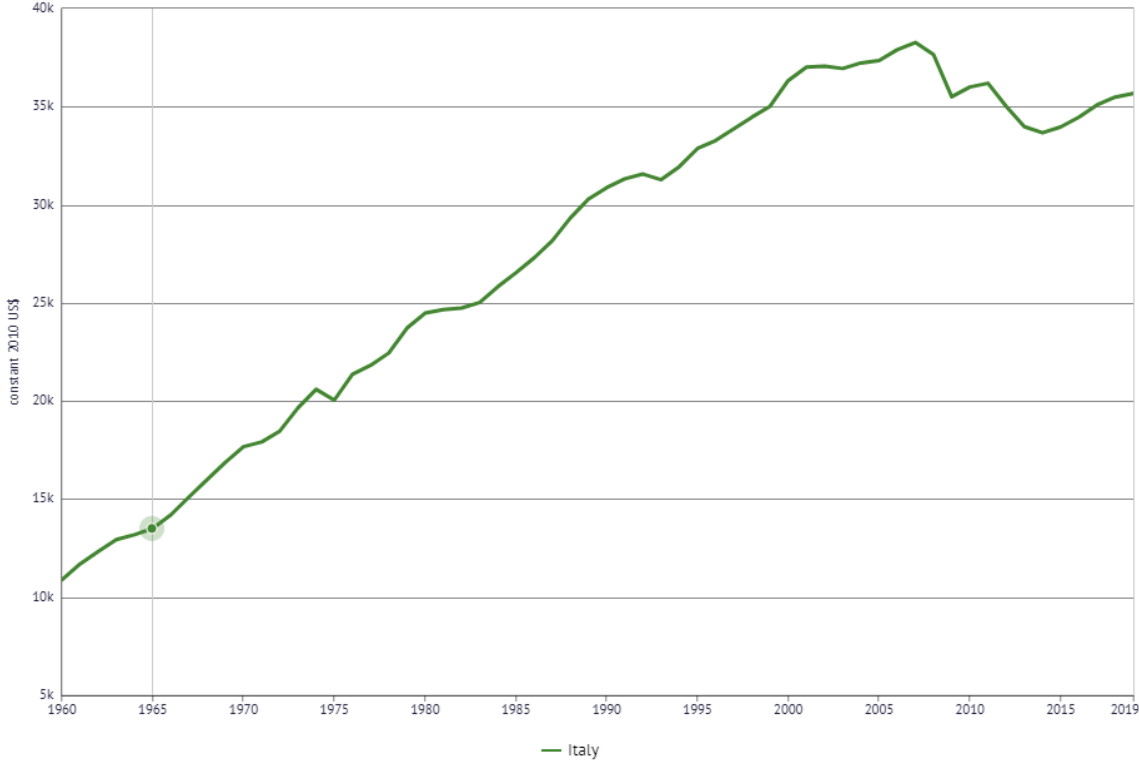
<sup>97</sup> Ibid. 90, p. 138

# Chapter 4. A Globalized World (1973-1995) and Magazine Advertising: case study of “La Cucina Italiana”

## 4.1 From the “age of bread” to the “golden age”

From the 1970s to the 1990s Italian society went through another wave of significant socio-economic changes characterized by an extraordinary intensity and rhythm. Despite the oil shocks (1973) and the worldwide economic crisis, the wealth of Italians grew: Italian GDP per capita increased from 17,671 US \$ in 1970 to almost 31,000 US \$ in 1990 and the growth’s trend continued until 2008 (*Graph 6*). Consumption patterns and habits mirrored the growth of GDP. The increased income allowed families to improve their living standards, not only by giving them the possibility to buy new automobiles, electrical household appliances, furniture, and other leisure goods, but also, and especially, by improving the quality and quantity of their food consumption.

*Graph 6: GDP per capita (in constant 2010 US \$) of Italy, 1960 - 2020*



*Source:* World Development Indicators, World Bank, on World Data Atlas, [www.knoema.com](http://www.knoema.com)

In the field of nutrition, consumption kept rising, domestic supply became also more varied, while Italian food exports contributed to make the label *Made in Italy* known globally, thanks to the price and quality competitiveness of Italian products.

This spread of wealth touched roughly every region of Italy, although the already familiar North-South discrepancy remained present: Italy could still be divided in two macro areas, the North more developed and modern, “European”, and the South still backward, decidedly poorer and more “Mediterranean”. However, these differences were slowly beginning to reduce themselves and the emergence of new productive realities in the Southern regions of the peninsula started to break long-term stereotypes.

Starting from the 1970s, a word that entered the life of every class of Italian society was globalization. The impact of globalization on Italian consumers and the food industry was enormous. Mass media, in particular television, brands and branded food products (as it will be discussed in paragraph 4.2), but also printed advertising had a crucial role in shaping consumption patterns. In paragraph 4.3, the analysis of the food advertisements in the magazine *La Cucina Italiana* will show how Italian food advertising changed in the almost three decades under consideration.

Emanuela Scarpellini in her book “Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present” uses the changes in kitchen technologies and furniture to symbolize and make visible the extent of the cultural and social changes in food consumption habits.

She summarizes the extensive literature referring to the so-called “kitchen debate” and to the change of this room of the house, showing how the kitchen look and function has changed in accordance with major historical changes affecting social and cultural values<sup>98</sup>.

As far as the 20<sup>th</sup> century Italy is concerned: in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the kitchen was used as a mere cooking environment, where housewives used to cook easy meals according to foods availability and economic means; then, during the two world wars, the kitchen gained somehow a metaphorical importance, it was no longer viewed as a small ordinary place where to cook everyday meals, instead it started to represent a place where mothers used to reunite with their children while the men of the family were at the front or dead during the First World War; due to the Fascist regime rhetoric about the relevance of women as cooks and housewives, the kitchen turned out to be again

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<sup>98</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016, pp. 118-124

“the woman place”, the essential core of the family values; then, with the first economic miracle of the 1950s and 1960s, a new transformation occurred: thanks to the economic and industrial recovery, new technologies, and new furniture (e.g. refrigerators, various appliances) created the myth of the “the American kitchen”: a room where families could share conviviality moments and a symbol of the new American lifestyles and post-war possibilities. Tradition mixed up with notions coming from abroad and the kitchen became also a place where to experiment new food preparations, mixing tastes and ingredients<sup>99</sup>; finally, during the 1970s and 1980s, things changed once again: the choice of replacing metallic materials in the kitchen furniture with wooden ones reflected the need for Italian households to surround themselves with objects that communicated a sense of comfortableness, cosiness and safety – perhaps wood represented the need for a return to a sort of tradition or natural connection after the exasperated modernity of the American kitchen.

However, designers and innovative technologies added sophistication to the kitchen. The organization of the room went through real structural modification: the kitchen was not a unique body anymore, and structures like peninsulas started to appear, giving more dynamism to the structure and allowing an optimal use of the space available in the room. In addition to the classic gas stoves also electric glass-ceramic cooktops and glass pans made their appearance, together with the dishwasher and the microwave oven, that can be seen as the most developed device in terms of innovativeness, since it heated a wide range of foodstuffs with radar technology. In this sense, the microwave oven represented what the economist Joseph Schumpeter would call a *radical innovation*, since it was a result of clusters of innovations, continuous improvements that have a cumulative and far-reaching impact, and that represent a real technological revolution<sup>100</sup>.

Yet kitchens continued to gain importance in social terms, representing places for conviviality in a society where individualism and consumerism played a more and more significant role.

The sociocultural changes of the “golden age” had profound effects not only in the cooking system, as it has been seen until now in this paragraph, but also in the dietary habits of Italian consumers and in advertising and communication.

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<sup>99</sup> Reference to Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of this thesis

<sup>100</sup> J. Fagerberg, *Innovation. A guide to literature*, on The Oxford Handbook of Innovation, pp.1-22

Talking about the dietary habits, changes did not only affect *what* people ate, but also *how* and *where* they did it. According to F. Cipriani and ISTAT data (years 1926 - 1985) on Italian households' food consumption, there were two products that saw a remarkable increase in consumption: meat and dairy products<sup>101</sup>. As already mentioned, meat consumption saw an increase also during the period of the first economic miracle, and it continued its path also during the 1970s and 1980s. In particular, the most consumed type of meat was pork: while in the previous decades the increase in meat consumption concerned mainly beef, in these years pork consumption doubled from 12 kilograms per capita in 1970 to 24 kilograms in 1985. At the same time, also white meat such as chicken or rabbit became more popular among Italian consumers, moving from 18 kilograms per capita in 1970 to 27 kilograms in 1985. In the years under analysis, namely 1970s and 1980s, the industrialization of milk and its derivatives allowed firms to sell these products in a massive way, improving and optimizing the packaging (for example, glass bottles used for milk started to be replaced with Tetra Pak containers). Looking again at *Graph 3*<sup>102</sup>, it can be seen how cheese and dairy products in general increased their consumption exponentially, in parallel with coffee and fresh fish.

The most interesting trend in the world of dairy products was represented by yogurt. The consumption of yogurt was not a novelty for Italian society, because in 1947 *Yomo*, the first industrial Italian yogurt, entered consumers' diets, representing a new source of proteins at a high biological value, vitamins and specific minerals. However, it is during the years of the second economic miracle that yogurt consumption spread, with an increasing differentiation in the offer that allowed it to meet a wider range of consumers' needs. In opposition to other European Countries, where yogurt was mainly used as a condiment for flavouring and accompanying dishes, in Italy yogurt was conceived as a delicate and light food that could be eaten also alone, maybe during a breakfast with cereals and a cup of coffee, or as a snack to keep hunger at bay. In fact, it is not by chance that this food product entered the game almost simultaneously with the new trends of dieting that have been previously discussed (chapter 3). Being a low-calorie-intake product, yogurt was the ideal snack for people who wished to eat something that was sweet and tasty and at the same time light and low-fat, and it represented an example of dietary assimilation and transformation. The spread of this trend was also in this case

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<sup>101</sup> F. Cipriani, *Temperal trends in wine and food consumption in Italy*, Federal Legal Publications Inc, 2007

<sup>102</sup> Reference to Graph 3, Chapter 1

helped by advertising, especially by TV commercials. Taking the example of *Yomo*, its TV commercial of the year 1980 has as main protagonists some children, both girls and boys, who ate *Yomo* yogurt enjoying the fruity taste, while on the background the voice of the advertiser is recommending mothers to buy it for their children, ensuring the highest quality, without preservatives, colorants and flavourings<sup>103</sup>.

Until now it has been discussed about the main changes that occurred in the period 1970s-80s in *what* people ate, but other noteworthy changes concerned also *how* and *where* people used to eat, as highlighted by Scarpellini in her volume. With reference to the number of socio-political changes that took place during this decade, the entire lifestyle of Italian consumers was shaped and this had consequences on the way in which they ate: women, as it has been seen, started to lose their primary role of housekeepers and mothers, entering more and more the business life; social barriers such as hierarchies became lighter, and the atmosphere of social rigidity began to vanish, making the way for a less formal and strict atmosphere, where lifestyles were more “relaxed” and “casual”<sup>104</sup>. Accordingly, people enjoyed food consumption as a moment of conviviality and of social interaction, an occasion to stop thinking about work and problems, replacing habitual *etiquette* behaviours with more spontaneous ones. In other words, due also to the new working rhythms that the modern business world request, the way of eating and drinking became somehow more informal: there were no longer only two big meals that scanned the day, because people were more oriented towards quick meals (for example, with less courses) and frequent snacks.

These new habits reflected also on *where* the meals were consumed. As it can be glimpsed from the discussed mobility patterns and the higher income availability that favoured Italian households during the first and second economic miracle, food consumption stopped to be limited to the house itself and started to take place in a variety of locations, from canteens to cafeterias, from restaurants to pizzerias. The amount of money spent outside the houses witnessed an increase, even though Italy remained in a lower position compared to other European countries such as Germany and France, where food consumption outside home was relatively high with respect to consumption at home.

The development of the Fast-Food Restaurants such as McDonald’s (the first one established in 1985 in Bolzano) enhanced the trend of junk food, which was already

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<sup>103</sup> Full commercial at this link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3\\_q7H5XZnPU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_q7H5XZnPU)

<sup>104</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and foodways in Italy from 1861 to the present*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016

common in the USA and had already begun to raise with fast food trucks selling French fries, hamburger sandwiches, hot dogs and other stuffed sandwiches that would become a kind of fashion for the young teenagers of that time. At the same time, dieting trends ran in parallel (and even in opposition) to this fast foods trend, gaining more importance also thanks to the mediatic spread through mass media and fashion and food magazines, as it will be discussed in paragraph 4.2. In the 1980s, consumers' desires were associated with aesthetic appearance, especially with the need of being thinner and more good-looking, and patterns of weight-gains and weight-losses characterized Italian consumers' lives. During these years, the action of eating (regardless of if at home or outside home) was becoming something more than a mere action for nurturing the body: it was gaining a deeper cultural meaning. But to understand better why and how consumers' approach towards food consumption witnessed this gradual swift in its meaning, two key drivers must be introduced in the environment of the food culture: TV advertising and press. In the next two paragraphs, we will address at first the changes in brands and TV advertising and then we provide an analysis of how the famous Italian food magazine *La Cucina Italiana* reflected socio-political and economic changes, consequently affecting the approach of Italian consumers to the food industry throughout the years.

#### 4.2 Brands and TV advertising

The first television broadcast made its appearance in year 1949, with an experimental broadcast organized by the *Triennale di Milano* with the 625 lines standard, and few years later, in 1954, the first official scheduling of broadcasts addressed to the mass public was released in black and white, for the launch of the *Programma Nazionale*.

What no one would have expected is that, starting from the decades that followed, this new innovative tool would have become one of the most important ones in the history of advertising. Among its advantages, TV advertising carries the quality of being perceived as a high prestige medium, at the same time having a strong visual impact and a mass coverage. At the same time, it carries, however, some negative aspects, such as the high production cost and a short message life<sup>105</sup>.

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<sup>105</sup> G. E. Belch, M. A. Belch, *Advertising and Promotion. An integrated marketing communications perspective*, MacGraw-Hill Education, 2018, pp.379-395



As the philosopher and writer Guy Debord stated in his book *La Société du Spectacle* (1967), “the mass media system represented nothing but an aspect on the surface of the new form of power, which was taking advantage of communications to “control” social aspects in an unprecedented way” (Debord, 1967)<sup>106</sup>. And television was undoubtedly the first tool used to achieve this goal. In fact, its impact on consumers’ purchase decisions and food consumption trends was great, and therefore this subject has been included in this discussion. Along with this, branded products started to proliferate representing another additional driver of consumers’ buying behaviour. Before the end on the Second World War, the concept of branded food product had never represented an essential factor in the purchase choice of an Italian consumer, since products’ competitiveness was based mainly on prices -income levels were extremely low in the interwar period and consumer’s preferences were almost all oriented towards foodstuffs that were both cheap and able to provide a sense of fullness, such as bread and refined wheats, potatoes, legumes. But with the Italian recovery of the 1950s and 1960s things started to change, since food firms started their differentiation in the range of proposed products, and their competitiveness in the market depended not only on prices, but also on the ability to meet consumers’ needs, which were in constant change according to the socio-economic development. Modern consumers were experiencing the positive vibes of the second economic miracle, with rising incomes, chances to travel more and hence to discover new places and food products. It is in this context that brands started to gain importance in consumers’ mind: with the proliferation of advertising and mass media, especially the one of television, firms and consumers were becoming closer, and this proved advantageous for both of them, because, on the one side, firms could reach more potential customers thanks to television advertising, and on the other, consumers could get to know many different firms selling the same product and thus have a wider range of purchase choice. Eventually, brands that were capable of bearing in the mind of consumers would have gained competitive advantage and television advertising was the most effective medium that firms could use to reach the goal of disseminating brand awareness. A new innovative activity that arose in these years and that melted together television and brands in order to shape consumers’ preferences in the field of food were TV cooking programs and movies. From *The French Chef* (tv serie broadcast during the years 1963-1973) to *Pane,*

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<sup>106</sup>Quotation of G. Debord, in *La società dello spettacolo*, Millelire Stampa Alternativa, 3rd ed. in *Settebelli*, 1995

*Amore e Fantasia* (movie directed by Luigi Comencini in 1979), the first food programs made continued their expansion up to nowadays (to mention some of them, *Cotto e Mangiato*, *La Prova del Cuoco*, *Masterchef Italia*, *Mela Verde*, and many others), having as main protagonists people (mainly women) who propose cooking receipts using a simple language and a friendly attitude in order to be understood by all the mass target audience and to be liked by all of them. The promotion of goods thus was possible by placing branded products on the cooker's table (i.e. *product placement*)<sup>107</sup>, showing how to use them and most importantly showing how the use of them would have resulted in delicious food, encouraging the purchasing stage of the consumer's decision journey.

Another noteworthy aspect is the influence that globalization had on the circulation of branded food products. In fact, one of the first consequences that globalization brought into the world of food was definitely the knowledge about different food cultures, different foodstuffs and different ways to prepare them. Although there had been some differences in terms of acceptance of 'foreign' foods according to the different social classes (where upper classes showed more willingness to embrace a new ethnic cuisine while lower classes showed scepticism trends towards new foods and new ways of consuming it), the Italian food industry saw a variety of brands entering the market from many European countries and USA. To maintain competitiveness, firms had to start investing strategically in several aspects connected to the brand, such as *brand value*, *brand positioning*, *brand identity*, *brand architecture* and many others, turning the brand into something able to guarantee an added value to the product they were selling. Results were sometimes successful and sometimes not, depending on a group of factors that mutually influenced one with another. A successful example of an Italian company which has been able to maintain and increase its market competitiveness investing properly in both branding and advertising, consequently driving consumers purchase choices in its favor was *Barilla*, with its well-known cookies brand *Mulino Bianco*. At the end of the 1970s, breakfast was still not very popular in Italian families, and cookies were consumed mainly by kids. At that time, *Oro Saiwa* with its dry biscuits was the leader of Italian breakfast market, which wasn't very much extended because of the difficulty for confectionary firms to "change the rules" in a country that had rooted food habits (in this

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<sup>107</sup> The term "product placement" refers to a marketing strategy aimed at spreading brand awareness through the positioning of a certain branded product on platforms that have a mass target audience, for example television shows and movies.

case, the habit of being used to having bread or cereals for breakfast, rather than cookies). To try to break this habit and to enter into the Italian food culture in the most effective manner, *Barilla's* management started to think about the creation of a brand for breakfast products that could have fit the market over time. With the introduction of the first *Mulino Bianco* cookies in 1975, the company strategically invested in three important marketing factors: brand concept, product, packaging. Considering the first one, the brand name *Mulino Bianco* proved clever in many ways: the *mulino* (mill) represented the first stage of the biscuits production process and *bianco* (white) recalled the flour colour and was also connected with purity; the brand logo was made of grain spikes embedded in a general natural environment, which altogether instilled in the mind of the consumer the idea of a high-quality and handcrafted product opposed to the popular industrially made ones; in general, the brand image that was proposed was consistent, adequate and suitable to the desires of the customers, and this proved determinant in the firms' success. Considering the second factor, the product itself, biscuits of *Mulino Bianco* were not perfectly shaped, they had some defects and were not all identical: in this way they would have seemed more hand-made and could differentiate from the industrial ones; moreover, they had traditional names (e.g. *Tarallucci*, *Macine*, *Molinetti*, *Campagnole*, *Galletti*, etc) in order to stress the link to tradition. Finally, packaging played another important role in increasing the brand's market power, since *Mulino Bianco's* biscuits were the first ones to be sold inside a paper bag, rather than the usual squared box of the industrially produced products. In addition, in 1978 *Barilla* introduced the *Coccio*<sup>108</sup>, a terracotta bowl that was given as a gift to customers with the hidden agenda of increasing the brand's promotion and evoking the rural world from which the product came. Eventually, all these factors, supported by the strong promotional activities through television advertising, contributed to the long-lasting success of the brand, which also became a benchmark for many other Italian confectionery brands<sup>109</sup>.

To sum up, it is clear how television advertising and brand proliferation represented two determining factors in the shape and manipulation of consumer's approach to the food culture and of their consumption choices. They should be considered as interdependent rather than separated factors, and the impact that they began to have from the late 50s

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<sup>108</sup> *Archivio Storico Barilla 1975-2006*, in *Barilla's* official website [www.barilla.it](http://www.barilla.it)

<sup>109</sup> The reconstruction of *Mulino Bianco* brand is a personal elaboration of some lessons of the course *Branding & Communication* that I have attended during this master course

onwards in the life of Italian consumers reflected a radical change that was taking place in the society: people were no more tightly devoted to traditional foods as they were in the previous decades, and this was due both to the effects of globalization and to the raised living standards that allowed Italian consumers to choose among a wider range of different consumption choices; hence, the consumer's exposition to influencing factors was increasing year after year, and firms were understanding the importance of investing at least in the most popular ones, such as television advertising. In these years, along with tv advertising, another communication tool began to contribute in shaping the food choices of mass market consumers, being always consistent with socio-cultural and political changes: magazine advertising. The next paragraph is going to address precisely this subject, and an analysis of the changes in publications of *La Cucina Italiana* will be carried out with the aim of supporting the initial purpose of this study, namely, to understand the interdependence between social, economic, political factors and the approach of consumers towards consumption and the food industry.

#### 4.3 Magazine advertising: Case Study of "La Cucina Italiana"

*"In cucina la disdetta esiste ma la fortuna no. La buona riuscita di un piatto dipende dalla conoscenza dell'arte di cucinare."* (Pavoni, 1929)<sup>110</sup>

This quotation of Delia Pavoni, creator of the magazine and wife of the magazine's editor Umberto Notari, is the final aphorism in conclusion of the first number of *La Cucina Italiana*, and it is emblematic in drawing the general *fil rouge* that would have characterized the rest of the publications for the following eighty years. With the mission of helping people to learn the *art* of cooking, unveiling its secrets and passing down as much knowledge as possible concerning one of the best cuisines in the world, the magazine was born in 1929 and its success continued over time. In this paragraph, an analysis of several editions of the magazine will be undertaken<sup>111</sup>, going through the changes that occurred in Italian magazine advertising according to specific historical

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<sup>110</sup> D. Pavoni, *Rubrica della Massaia Moderna*, on the first published volume of *La Cucina Italiana*, December 1929. Translation: "in the kitchen, misfortune exists but fate does not. The success of a dish only depends on the knowledge of the art of cooking"

<sup>111</sup> In particular: December 1929, January 1937, June 1940, January 1952, January 1961, January 1973, January 1983, October 1993. This research has been carried out consulting the original copies of the mentioned years by courtesy of "La Vigna" Library of Vicenza, to which many thanks are given

periods, with the dual aim of discovering how advertising is interlinked with socio-economic and political factors and of studying the impact it had on shaping consumers' food preferences<sup>112</sup>.

The first edition of *La Cucina Italiana* (December 1929) was born as a “cooking newspaper<sup>113</sup> for families and gourmets”, as the subtitle says, with the primary aim of providing Italian households with cooking advice and cooking receipts to “*mangiar meglio, spender meno*”<sup>114</sup>. After a preface of the editor Notari (what was called the *programma*), the first page of the newspaper is dedicated to the presentation of the *Comitato di Degustazione*, made of important cultural and political figures of the time, such as Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Stefano Benni, Paolo Buzzi, Ferruccio Lantini, Alceo Toni, Ettore Romagnoli and the editor Umberto Notari<sup>115</sup>. The main role of the Committee was to meet periodically to deliberate those food specialties that Italian producers introduced in the food commerce, helping the Italian consumer to research, discover and taste the best national foodstuffs. Throughout the eight pages of this first edition it is possible to see how the themes of the journal were dedicated to the domestic cuisine (the main column was indeed titled “*La Tavola di Tutti i Giorni*”), listing a number of receipts from soups to vegetables, from meat dishes to sauces and desserts. Each receipt referred not only to the necessary ingredients but also to the best practices to prepare and cook them, stressing the importance that laid behind a food magazine in the years 1920s: it was more than a source of leisure, it was a source of suggestions and advice offered to the Italian society that framed it in a political context that let little space for autonomy in the everyday life choices (as discussed in Chapter 2, the Italian country and politics were in those years going towards an alimentary autarchy). As a proof for this, columns titled “*come si gustano i liquori*” or “*l'arte di presentare i formaggi*” were emblematic of this implicit attempt of the Italian press (and politics) to shape consumers actions and choices

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<sup>112</sup> This analysis will be carried out according to the teachings got from some courses that I have personally attended during the master (Branding & Communication, Social Media Marketing), as well as from the volume used during Communication: G. E. Belch, M. A. Belch, *Advertising and Promotion. An integrated marketing communications perspective*, MacGraw-Hill Education, 2018

<sup>113</sup> The layout of the magazine was in fact that of a real newspaper, printed black and white and made of just eight pages

<sup>114</sup> Literally, “to eat better and spend less”. This is the motto that has characterized all the editions of the magazine

<sup>115</sup> Umberto Notari (1878-1950) was an Italian journalist, writer and editor. In 1929, under suggestion of his wife Delia, he published the first edition of the magazine *La Cucina Italiana* with the aim of encouraging dietary changes in the daily routine of Italian citizens, recommending culinary solutions that were at the same time cheap and innovative, coherently with the regime of that period

according to the requirements of the socio-political context of that time. At the same time, sophisticated receipts were suggested for special occasions like the Christmas dinner or the New Year's Eve one, where food like *medaglioni di tacchino* (turkey medallion), capons with truffles, roasted steer and warm puddings were proposed to families who were inviting their relatives and friends to dinner. Among these eight pages, some space was dedicated to food advertising inserts. The one of the famous *Olio Sasso* was basic and minimal, with only its name, package image and the slogan "preferred all over the world" printed on the white page; also the *Buitoni* pasta brand chose the same basic style, adding some lines where it was specified that all the Buitoni products were uniquely sold in packages with the producing company's name well-visible in front of the box, probably with the aim of encouraging the customer to look for the original brand and preferring it to the competitors' ones. What can be glimpsed from these advertisements is their link with the political environment of the time: it suffices to recall the famous Mussolini's *Battle of Wheat* to recognize the importance of pasta and other wheat products, whose consumption the press did not wait to enhance.

The connection between advertising and politics became even more accentuated in the years that followed, and to understand in which measure the edition of *La Cucina Italiana* of January 1937 can be of great help. The change in the management of the magazine, that moved from Umberto Notari to the futurist woman Fanny Dini, brought some novelties in the style, which became more "narrative" and increasingly women-oriented: the column *La Posta di Nina* was introduced with the aim of establishing a deeper relationship and connection between the journalist women and the housewives who read it in their homes. Moreover, with *La Posta di Nina* the subscribers had the chance to actively interact with the magazine, by sending some of their own receipts to the management, which then would have published them creating a real community of women who reciprocally helped each other in the world of cuisine. The relationship between author and reader was reinforced thanks to the introduction of columns dedicated to beauty advice ("*La Vostra Bellezza. Cento e cento consigli utili per la bellezza*")<sup>116</sup>, as well as exercise tips for a healthier body and a more good-looking aspect, which became a source of inspiration for Italian women living in the heart of the Fascist period. These beauty advices were introduced also reflecting the general conception widespread within the Fascist society,

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<sup>116</sup> *La Cucina Italiana*, Rome - Palazzo Sciarra, 1st November 1937

which acclaimed the ideals of nurturing a healthy and strong body to maintain a beautiful aspect reflecting the Italian race. In this context, indeed, the connection between politics and advertising reached one of its highest levels: in several pages of the magazine, politics advertisements were published and most of them were enhancing the importance of the role of the Fascist woman in the society, for example with pictures of the *Fasci Femminili* meeting in the squares<sup>117</sup>, or with announcements inviting women to subscribe to the magazine<sup>118</sup>. Moreover, other pages were dedicated to the Fascist propaganda with images and quotations of the Duce, such as the edition of November 1937, where on the cover a representation of Mussolini made its appearance in black and white, next to the quotation *“tutta la Nazione deve farsi una mentalità autarchica”*. In parallel to these themes, also the focus on religious festivities was stressed, for example by introducing Lenten recipes: *zuppa di lenticchie*, *fagioli all’uccelletto*, *frittelle di pesce* and *cipolline agrodolci* were just few of the several proposals. In these editions some articles were dedicated also to the upcoming trends of fashion and culinary exhibitions, while more conspicuous space was left for advertisements of the new popular food products related to the moment of breakfast: sugar, coffee (*Enrilo’s* complete mixture for coffee) and the first *Nestlé’s* condensed milk with sugar, sold in the form of metal sheens popular of those years.

The main cornerstones of Fascist food policies, in particular the enhancement of food saving, continued to be present also in the following editions of the magazine. In the edition of June 1940, the cover hosts the picture of a smiling young lady surrounded by grain spikes, and the caption next to the image is the following: *“the grain starts to blond on the generous breast of the Italian land. The hard working and thrifty housewife goes on with her blessed project, all directed at strengthening the national economy”*<sup>119</sup>. These few words are emblematic of the ideals that circulated in the 1930s and 1940s in Italy: the woman played the role of housekeeper in charge of nurturing her man’s and children’s healthy and strong bodies (and in order to achieve this result, nationally cultivated grain was suggested as the most suitable foodstuff), as well as of an economy-conscious person

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<sup>117</sup> Reference is made to *La Cucina Italiana*, January 1937, p.6. Image: “Una bella iniziativa dei fasci femminili di Terni. I banchi di vendita, nella Piazza del Mercato, con diritto al posteggio gratuito concesso dal Podestà alle Massaie rurali regolarmente tesserate” (Bracci photograph, 1937)

<sup>118</sup> “*Noi per Voi, massaie d’Italia!*” was the slogan of the advertisement inviting Italian women to become part of the community of the magazine, that continued in this way: “Ecco la nostra opera per la vostra tavola, per la vostra casa, per i vostri bambini, per la vostra economia”. *La Cucina Italiana*, January 1937

<sup>119</sup> Quotation on the cover of one edition of *La Cucina Italiana*, June 1940

who was able to spare not only money but also food and house's product. A well-fitting example for the proliferation of concepts of saving economy can be found in the edition at hand, in particular where a column was dedicated to suggested practices on how to replace soap with other products to wash the clothes. Titled "*Invece del sapone*", a paragraph suggested (always with a tone of tolerance that kept the connection between author and reader positive) some alternative ways to wash the clothes instead of using soap, guaranteeing the saving of money, time and efforts. In this sense, the advertisement of a new product, the "*SAP*" was introduced, proposed as an "autarchic product" that was able to win two important battles: the one for the domestic economy and the one for the national economy, replacing in the majority of the cases the common soap. Similar advice was given also in columns like "*Autarchia in Casa*", dedicated to a wide number of suggestions for the correct maintenance of the house: how to properly clean the fish tank, how to properly clean floors, how to realize a good preserves, etc. The most representative case of the Fascist principles of "living well by eating little" and "eating less and eating national" discussed in Chapter 2 can be seen in the wide space dedicated to how to use the leftovers (meat left-overs, fish left-overs, polenta left-overs, milk left-overs, albumen left-overs and many others). At the same time, the receipts published in these years' editions were proposed accordingly, namely *pasta e fagioli*, *pasta con sarde*, *pomodori fritti* and other kinds of receipts that involved basic and cheap foodstuffs. In particular during this period, as discussed, the importance of consuming national pasta and wheat was enhanced, and this was reflected in advertising too. In *La Cucina Italiana* of 1940, in fact, the first inox pasta makers were advertised (e.g. *Columbus*)

Once again it can be noticed how in the Fascist period politics was embedded in every kind of the socio-economic sphere, determining consumers' choices in the food sphere as well as in the social one.

As the Second World War came to an end and made the way for the Italian economic recovery of the 1950s, significant changes in magazine advertising appeared according to the new lifestyle and the new food culture. *La Cucina Italiana* showed its first coloured cover page in the edition of January 1952, where a modern high-quality photo is representing canapé starters, and the overall layout of the cover is reflecting the shift from a generation of financial and political difficulties to one of economic recovery and well-being. In fact, throughout this edition of the magazine the proposed receipts were no longer enhancing the themes of saving and essentiality, because the new trends of



modernity and the increased income availability favoured a wealthier social life, allowing people to move within and outside the Country to discover new food cultures and new sophisticated receipts. The tables of 1950s' families were abundantly set with a wide range of starters, followed by second courses made of prestigious meats and fish, for which food magazines like *La Cucina Italiana* proposed a variety of receipts: *anitra in salmì, arrosto di vitello al latte, manzo in stufato, coniglio arrosto con patatine, aragosta lessata, rombo all'arancio* are few of the many examples. In the same way, also desserts witnessed a quality increase in their preparation (e.g. *budino bianco*, made of white flour, milk, butter, almonds and vanilla flavouring, or *torta morena*, made with chestnuts and peach jam, apples and lemons), reflecting the boost in the confectionary industry that was taking place during those years, as discussed in the previous Chapter. Another worth noting aspect that was reflected in advertising was the prices rise, of which some food firms took inspiration for advertising strategies: *Royal*, for example, chose not to increase the price of its pudding powders sold in the supermarket shelves in order to preserve the loyalty of its customers and maybe also to gain the attention of potential new ones; the advertisement shows in fact a woman in front of the shelf looking at the increased prices of almost every kind of food product, while saying "Santo Cielo! Tutto è rincarato! Però il prezzo dei budini Royal è invariato!"<sup>120</sup>.

The same modern layout of the magazine was kept also in the following editions, such as the one of January 1961, where the readers also witnessed the appearance of the first advertisements of electrical appliances like the *Lavinia* washing machine, semi-automatic and with two combined basins. Product innovations concerned not only household facilities but also food and food packaging: *Lavazza* advertisements proposed blended coffee in substitution of grain coffee, and for the first time it was sold in vacuum-sealed metal sheets ("*in the metal sheet the coffee tastes like it has just been grinded: extremely fresh! extremely perfumed!*")<sup>121</sup>. In the context of the Economic Miracle, in fact, press and advertising shaped according to the innovations taking place in the Italian market and economy. More attention started to be paid to food industries, for example when it came to pasta advertising, where the importance of its production plants was enhanced ("*the importance of the plants is a guarantee for the consumer*") was just one of the several pay-

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<sup>120</sup> Literally: "Goodness Gracious! Everything has got more expensive! However, the price of Royal Puddings is unvaried! on *La Cucina Italiana*, January 1952

<sup>121</sup> Quotation of *Lavazza's* advertisement on *La Cucina Italiana*, January 1961

offs of pasta companies)<sup>122</sup>. Furthermore, the industrialization of the food production process taking place in those years was consequently reflected in magazine advertising of packaged ice-creams, marshmallows (e.g. *Alemagna's* "Charms" candies) and packaged biscuits (e.g. *Eldorado's* "Camillino" biscuits). In addition, the *baby boom* of the 1960s provided food firms with useful opportunities to introduce new products in the market. To mention one of them, *Buitoni* chose the babies to be the protagonists of its *Nipiol* biscuits advertising campaigns: vitamin-enriched biscuits were proposed to young working mothers for their children, guaranteeing a high vitamins content as well as lactalbumin and organic phosphor, suggesting that *Nipiol* were the most suitable biscuits for the babies' weaning. Next to the introduction of new food products' advertisements there has also been a slight modification of the columns of the magazines, which reflected the new dynamic and frenetic lifestyle of Italian society: on one hand, readers were offered more elaborated receipts to make for party occasions (e.g. *anatra in casseruola, filetto in crosta, polpettone di vitello alla salsiccia*) that were becoming more frequent because of the increased income availability, and on the other hand receipt to help families in saving time for cooking were offered, for example in columns like *Cucina Rapida*, which offered quick but delicate dishes that every working woman could prepare. In these years the receipts of *La Cucina Italiana* became also more detailed, explaining how to prepare foodstuffs in a step-by-step way flanked by specific pictures describing each preparation phase.

The transition to an increasingly modern and structured society went on with the 1970s and analysing the edition of *La Cucina Italiana* of January 1973 it can be seen how magazine advertising changed accordingly. Food products like *prosciutto di Parma*, *Negrini's* cured meats, *Twinings'* Earl Grey tea, *Kraft's* mayonnaise and *Cirio's* preserves made their entrance in the Italian market and hence in Italian magazine advertising. The trend of preparing desserts and puddings became more widespread among Italian consumers, who used to bring them as a small gift when they were invited to a friend's house for dinner, and consequently in the several editions of the 1970s the presence of powder yeasts advertisements was sizable. In this context also cocktails preparation receipts began to have a certain diffusion, in order to follow the current trends of meeting with friends and spending time together. Product innovations of these years concerned

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<sup>122</sup> *La Cucina Italiana*, January 1961

mainly the packaging of foodstuffs, for example with the shift from metal sheets to glass vacuum-sealed packages for a number of food products. Magazine advertising of these years also saw the introduction of the first home furnishing advertisements and columns with interior design tips, due to the increased attention and care that was paid to the home and its features. Once again then it can be seen how the improvements in technology and in the cooking system were interconnected with changes in the food culture, in society and in economic perspectives.

A more sophisticated and well-finished layout characterized the editions of the 1980s, starting from the choice of adopting a laminated cover, with the aim of making the magazine to be perceived as more “polished” and of making it more resistant, going on with the choice of adopting brighter colours for the images and photographs, as well as using a more modern writing character that took the place of the old newspaper type. Although some of the columns introduced in the editions of the 1970s remained (e.g. *Cucina Rapida* seemed still to be a useful source of inspiration for the 1980s consumers, whose working life was increasingly frenetic), these editions of the food magazine saw the introduction of some novelties in the general body. For example, the fact that Italian citizens dedicated more and more time to travelling and to discover new places around the Country and abroad gave the rise to some columns dedicated to these mobility trends: *Città e Regioni a Tavola*, among others, disclosed the peculiarities of Italian regions and linked their cities with their typical foodstuffs and dishes<sup>123</sup>. In the edition of January 1983, Liguria region was the subject and the article recommended 10 famous Ligurian typical foods and wines, such as *capponada*, *cioppin*, *pansotti*, *lattughe ripiene*, *Cinqueterre* wine and *Rossese di Dolceacqua*<sup>124</sup>. As discussed in this fourth Chapter, fashion was another social trend that saw growth during the 1970s and 1980s. For this reason, editors of *La Cucina Italiana*, as good strategists, took the opportunity of integrating fashion themes in their magazine connecting them with food. In the edition at hand, in fact, the column *I Vip della Moda in Cucina* aimed at showing how famous people were interested in cooking by interviewing them on their relationship with food and Italian cuisine (e.g. *Giorgio Armani's* interview). Other sections of this edition were dedicated to the advertisement of innovation in pasta makers, that were becoming more technologically developed, and of new industrialized products like *Pfanni's* mashed potatoes, symbols of

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<sup>123</sup> Column “Città e Regioni a Tavola”, in *La Cucina Italiana*, January 1983

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*: 123

a new era where the advancement in the food industry coexisted with the importance of saving the tradition and the customs of the Italian social heritage. Some space was dedicated also to interior design (as it happened in the editions of the 1970s), which was becoming a subject of attention for Italian women who wanted to keep up to date with the modern trends in house furnishing such as plates, silverwares, cutlery etc. In a general frame, it can be seen how the development and advancement in society and in technology were reflected both in consumers' lifestyle changes and in magazine advertising themes, entailing a consequent shape of the Italian food culture, cuisine and consumption trends. Arriving at the end of the Century, more precisely with reference to the 1990s, magazine advertising and consumers' preferences seemed very different compared to the beginning of this study. With the higher-quality laminated cover and higher-quality pictures and colors, the edition of *La Cucina Italiana* of January 1993 is the metaphor of modernity: an tempting Italian pizza is dominating the cover and the subtitle "*since 1929, the cooking magazine with the kitchen inside the editorial staff*" is symbol of the pride for the longevity of the magazine, which publishing has been running for more than 50 years. Another peculiarity lays in the price of the magazine, which doubled from 3,000 Lire to 6,500 Lire, symbolizing the already-discussed economic and financial recovery. Innovation in products kept on increasing and *La Cucina Italiana* did not miss the chance of advertising them: moka pots and the first espresso makers were just few of the several advancements in technologies that were born during those years, next to the spread of gas stoves and other electrical appliances. The success of columns dedicated to mobility and travelling gave the editorial staff of the magazine the opportunity to continue in this direction, for example with the introduction of other articles like *Itinerari Golosi* accompanied the readers into the discovery of typical specialties of various Italian cities and regions. In this context, advertisements of specific regional food products were given more space within the magazine, starting from the typical Alto Adige culinary specialties like cheese, yogurt, ham and apples, to the rising culinary importance of prestigious wines like *Amarone della Valpolicella* (Verona). The conception of food started to become more and more connected with the Italian heritage, and food culture was perceived as something to preserve and to which dedicate time and care. It is during these years, indeed, that the first cooking courses saw their appearance, reserved in particular for restaurant owners,

chefs and professionals. *IPCA*<sup>125</sup>, in collaboration with *Guida Rossa Michelin*, established every Monday a course of cooking lessons in different locations, each time with a different Italian chef explaining cooking techniques and suggesting the best practices on how to create a quality meal<sup>126</sup>. The general kind of receipts included in the edition of October 1993 was similar to that of the previous decade, always proposing sophisticated but time-saving dishes like savory tarts, almond and apple pies, duck fillet and many others. At the same time, however, the world of fashion continued to propound a skinny body as an ideal of beauty, hence consumers -especially women- showed extremely oriented towards dieting trends and weight-loss ones. And as it has been proved more than once throughout this thesis, if a company (a magazine in this case) wants to maintain its competitiveness in the market, the requirement of adaptation to the surrounding socio-economic and cultural environment has to be fulfilled: for this reason articles like *Tre Menu Calibrati*<sup>127</sup> were offered to the readers, advising three meal proposals that carried three different calories intake (respectively 850 kcal, 790 kcal and 938 kcal) to meet the differentiated consumers' needs and requirements. Another interesting aspect emerging from the analysis of this edition is globalization, which, as said, had become a factor of connection of culture also in the food sphere. In this sense, some pages of the magazine were dedicated to advertisements of foreign food products that were not known before by Italian consumers. An example can be found in the *Kikkoman* soy sauce advertisement, describing what it was and especially which could be its major applications and usage<sup>128</sup>. To summarize this *excursus* along several editions of the magazine at hand, advertising patterns have been heterogeneous, and it seems indisputable that changes in both style and content occurred according to changes in the political, social and economic context of the Italian country of the Twentieth Century. The role of marketing and advertising has witnessed a boost in importance and the power of communication has started to be recognized by a number of firms who began slightly to invest in print advertisements, as it happened for *La Cucina Italiana*. The Italian country of the Twentieth Century witnessed a number of political changes, as well as economic ups and downs and social transformations, and the approach towards food consumption for the Italian consumer has shaped accordingly. As it has been pointed out in paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3, consumer's

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<sup>125</sup> Istituto per la Promozione della Cultura Alimentare

<sup>126</sup> Advertisement on *La Cucina Italiana*, October 1993

<sup>127</sup> G. Donegani, G. Manegga, *Tre Menù Calibrati*, in *La Cucina Italiana*, October 1993, p.17

<sup>128</sup> *Cosa c'entrano i Giapponesi con le tagliatelle?*, in *La Cucina Italiana*, October 1993

relationship with the food industry has been (and is still today) connected to and somehow shaped by marketing strategies and the world of advertising. The analysis carried out on *La Cucina Italiana* provides evidence in this sense, because it shows the link between contextual factors and consumers and sheds also light on the key strategic role played by advertising itself: it functions as a convenient factor both for firms and consumers, since they can take advantage of its mass widespread respectively to reach a wider number of potential customers and to get in contact with a wider number of brands and products, extending the market opportunities from both sides. It is important to underline that, despite the importance that magazine advertising has had during the Twentieth Century, in the following Century this kind of advertising would become obsolete, since more innovative marketing tools would be required. In the next and last Chapter of this research, in fact, it will be discussed how consumers of the Twenty-First Century seem to have very different characteristics and preferences with respect to the previous Century, and it will be showed how these changes are once again the result of important shifts in the new social and business environment.

## Chapter 5. Food Consumption in the Twenty-First Century: an empirical analysis

### 5.1 Postmodern consumers and the new business environment

In this fifth and last chapter of the research study, the focus is the Italian society of the Twenty First Century. The years that have been analysed so far have shown an Italian society with heterogeneous behavioural patterns towards food consumption. A multitude of socio-economic factors and events, as well as political and geographical ones caused consumer buying behaviour towards the food industry to change along decades. This final chapter includes the research of a survey aiming at investigating which are the factors affecting the consumption choices of today's consumers, as well as to investigate to what extent they affect them and the variables on which they depend<sup>129</sup>. But before going deeper into the findings of the survey, it is essential to have a general picture of the characteristics of the Twenty-first Century Italian consumers, focusing in particular on the current years, explaining also the features of the business environment in which they are embedded. There is remarkable evidence that the Italian consumer has experienced a change during the years studied all along this thesis, and this change is definitely not going to stop. The consumer of the "Internet Era", namely the *modern consumer*<sup>130</sup>, witnessed the appearance and development of the Internet, and found himself increasingly involved in a network of simultaneous physical and virtual relationships that marked a strong difference with the characteristics of the consumer of the previous decades; in the same way, another difference can be pointed out between the modern consumer and the *postmodern consumer*, the former seeing consumption merely as a way to achieve basic goals or necessities, while the latter being interested in defining a meaningful life through consumption, rather than being interesting in consuming. Nowadays firms, indeed, have to face consumers who have never been so actively engaged in the purchasing process and for this reason the struggle against their market power is significant, asking for as many tools as possible to understand consumers' needs and desires and to drive consequent purchasing behaviour. A characteristic of marketing communication in the postmodern society is therefore the loss of control and predictability, factors on which

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<sup>129</sup> See paragraph 5.3

<sup>130</sup> The modern consumer can be defined as a consumer born in the period when the internet became widely available and for this reason is highly adapted to the use of the internet in his/her decision making for buying goods and services.

firms had always been able to rely in the previous decades, because technological developments entail that marketers are no longer in charge of their distributed meanings<sup>131</sup>. Consumers of these times can be defined as “invading consumers”, not only because their market power has increased compared to the market power of firms, but especially because the product’s meaning is no longer defined only by firms: consumers and sellers both participate in a process of co-creation of meanings, where the consumer is creative in developing new contents and market opportunities. For this reason, it is becoming essential for firms to invest in consumer-driven marketing, namely to shift the focus from a product to its user, basing the marketing strategy on consumers’ needs and objectives. Moreover, the traditional buying behaviour steps (pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase) have become increasingly reduced, since thanks to the Internet consumers can have as much information as possible when they are looking for a product. As an example, if a person wants to buy a certain food product, it suffices that he or she digits on the search engine panel the information that he or she is looking for and, if the answer is satisfying, the product can easily be bought through a credit card. In this context, variety of products, namely the number of different items of a particular class of the same general kind, can be considered as beneficial when it offers potential to expand markets, providing economic benefits as well as increasing sales’ volume and revenues; then, the market expansion will allow firms both to reach new customer segments and to provide existing segments with goods that are more customized. However, this successful outcome does not occur automatically, since sometimes having more product variants can be for the customer a source of indecision and resistance to purchase.<sup>132</sup> In addition to this, studies on consumer behaviour that have been carried out during the last decades have shed light on a factor that had been for long underestimated in the field of consumption choices: the role played by habits. Defined as learned sequences of acts that have become automatic responses to specific cues and are functional in obtaining certain goals, habits represent a form of goal-oriented behaviour which is worth analysing in this research study, in order to understand to what extent they contribute in affecting consumption choices in the nutritional sphere. To better understand this subject, some theories on the role played by habits have been developed by scholars of consumer

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<sup>131</sup> P. Lanzini, lectures of Consumer Behaviour course, Ca’ Foscari University, November 2020

<sup>132</sup> R. Guiné, S. Florenca, M.J. Barroca, O. Anjos, *The link between the consumer and the innovations in food product development*, Foods Review, MDPI, 2020



behaviour. For example, to measure the impact that habits have on consumer behaviour, the *response-frequency measure*, among others, presents respondents with habit-related situations asking them to respond in the quickest way possible to elicit the behavioural option that gets associated with the habits itself: the number of times a specific alternative is chosen can be considered as a measure of the habit's strength. According to some theories, consumer behaviour is sometimes the result of both habitual patterns and rational cognitive processes: for example, the *theory of interpersonal behaviour* assumes that when an activity is performed frequently, habit's strength increases and, as a consequence, behaviour will no longer be guided by intentions<sup>133</sup>. To summarize, the approach towards consumption of postmodern consumers has become significantly sophisticated, influenced by a number of factors that are different from those of the past decades, and consequently the role of marketing and communication is changing accordingly, trying to support both firms and consumers to meet their economic, social and environmental needs, as it will be discussed in paragraph 5.2.

Nevertheless, consumers are not the only actors who witnessed a change in the postmodern society compared to the previous historical periods. Firms and businesses have shaped, too, trying to adapt to a new business environment where consumers are more and more powerful in terms of purchasing choices (they are not passive receivers of communication advertising and they get a wider number of information concerning products thanks to the many *touchpoints* to which they are exposed), and at the same time they are asking for a higher number of requirements and qualifications of firms and their products (for example, it suffices to think about the increasing importance that firms CSR<sup>134</sup> has gained in the recent years), in order to meet their needs, which have become more sophisticated and more differentiated. Hence adaptation, in this case, reveals itself as the only essential tool that a firm must adopt if it wants to survive in the market and not to lose its competitiveness, always keeping up-to-date and filling the consumer's gap even before it arises. This is undoubtedly not a news, since the importance of having adaptation capabilities has always been a requirement also during the past decades of the Twentieth Century, but it now assumes a higher and more "precious" value in a world

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<sup>133</sup> P. Lanzini, *Responsible citizens and sustainable consumer behaviour*, Routledge Focus, London & New York, 2018

<sup>134</sup> CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility. This term postulates to the responsibility, based on normative and ethical premises, of directors and managers of a firm as for the social and environmental consequences of their decisions

where people are less patient, life is more frenetic and, most of all, the network established by Internet has become the main driver of any kind of consumption choice. The contemporary competitive landscape is no longer made only of the single core business system, it has to be seen as a dynamic and co-evolving community of different actors and factors which altogether create new value through collaboration and competition; in other words, the whole business ecosystem is made of stakeholders of various aims and needs, and managers of today shall invest on clear communication towards their stakeholders, as well as they shall work to bring up the so-called “dynamic capabilities” of the firm<sup>135</sup>, which will enable business enterprises to create, deploy and also protect the intangible assets that support the business performance in the long-run<sup>136</sup>: *i)* to sense and shape opportunities and threats, *ii)* to seize opportunities, *iii)* to maintain competitiveness through enhancing, combining, protecting and reconfiguring the firms’ intangible assets. Only with this strategy firms will manage to win the challenge of adaptation, keeping the balance between economic, social and environmental needs and facing threats that are of a “systemic” type rather than of a “competitive” type, since they are neither obvious nor easily recognizable, and apparently unrelated to a company’s business. Therefore, the current competitive landscape requires both firms and consumers to be dynamic and updated in each choice, whether of production or of consumption, in order on one hand to keep a high market power and on the other hand to meet the increasingly sophisticated needs.

Coming back to nowadays consumers, with particular focus on their nutritional choices, it is important to underline that although globalization and the increasingly intensified network of different cultures have contributed to lower the strong attachment that Italian people had with traditional foodstuffs, their connection with the cultural heritage of conviviality and the Mediterranean diet still remains something that cannot be - and does not want to be - released<sup>137</sup>. Recent research on this field, indeed, have shown how Italian

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<sup>135</sup> The concept of dynamic capabilities was introduced by David J. Teece in 2007. According to the paradigm he pointed out, there are three dynamic capabilities that each firm has and that represent the key tool to succeed in an evolving environment.

<sup>136</sup> D. J. Teece, *Explicating dynamic capabilities: the nature and microfoundations of (sustainable) enterprise performance*, on the Strategic Management Journal no. 28, 1319-1350, John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2007

<sup>137</sup> In 2013, the Mediterranean Diet has been recognized by UNESCO as *an intangible cultural heritage* and has also been selected by FAO and CIHEAM for the assessment of diet sustainability models. Reference: *Mediterranean food consumption patterns: diet, environment, society, economy and health*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies, Rome 2015

families consider the meals as conviviality moments where to enjoy the pleasures of eating and being together<sup>138</sup>, and this concept is more intense in Italy compared to other European Countries. In order to support these findings and also to possibly discover other behavioural trends towards today's food consumption, in paragraph 5.3 a survey will be carried out, investigating the preferences of a random sample of consumers of different ages and social classes towards their nutritional choices.

## 5.2 The role of marketing and the new consumer decision journey

In the previous chapter light has been shed on the importance that advertising started to have from the years of the Second Economic Miracle onwards. Whether through TV or press, advertising remains an essential part of the communication process for any firm that wants to deliver a message to its consumer. This importance is still current in postmodern society, and it has even intensified because of the already-mentioned Internet boom, with particular reference to the widespread use of social media. Defined as “the process of planning and implementation of a product concept, price, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services that create an exchange capable of satisfying the goals of the individual and the company”<sup>139</sup>, marketing and its strategies have been developed and improved year after year until now, when marketing has assumed an even more sophisticated meaning, according to the shapes that have occurred in the business environment presented so far. In fact, because of the changes in the attitude towards consumption that consumers are experiencing, “conventional” marketing turns out to be obsolete, since it was somehow promoting a false perception upon consumerism from the perspective of firms, rather than taking into consideration consumers' motivations, needs and also emotional reactions. In postmodern society the rules of the game have changed, asking for better insights on consumers and consumption patterns. If modern society was usually referred to as “mass consumption” where consumers were seen as in the hands of advertisers, with marketers manipulating and orienting their consumption choices, in postmodern society advertising encourages consumers to think of commodities as central means through which conveying their personalities<sup>140</sup>. In addition to this, marketing of

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<sup>138</sup> S. Phull, W. Wills, A. Dickinson, *Is it a pleasure to eat together? Theoretical reflection on conviviality and the mediterranean diet*, Department of Health and Human Sciences, University of West London and University of Hertfordshire, 2015

<sup>139</sup> Definition of marketing by the American Marketing Association (AMA)

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*: 131

today has to face consumers that are more aware of the manipulation strategies underneath advertising and that are much more capable of differentiating between the multiple meanings of the advertisement strategies. This is the reason why marketers have to sophisticate their research when they want to get consumer insights, taking advantage also of the new innovative tools that technology development has provided. In fact, according to some researchers on consumer behaviour and behavioural economics such as M. D. Morris, in today's marketing strategies there is a need for higher interpretation ability, because in the postmodern age where advertising is more ambiguous, controversial and hyper signified, the focus shifts from the product itself to the plethora of signs that capture the attention towards the product<sup>141</sup>. Hence, to satisfy these new paradigms, new marketing techniques have been introduced: from viral marketing to tribal marketing, where the consumer is an active player in spreading the brand's message, from ambient marketing, where new channels are created in places where people lower their rational barriers, to neuromarketing, which take advantage of the consumer' subconscious motivations behind his or her behaviour. In parallel to these strategies, when speaking about the role of marketing a significant portion of attention shall be dedicated to social media marketing. Due to the new active approach that the consumer is adopting when it comes to consumption choices, firms can no longer rely only on conventional ways to get in touch with potential customers and above all they cannot think about the consumer as a passive receiver of everything they present. As previously introduced, consumers are now engaged in content creation at an unprecedented level, also because of the spread of social media platforms where they can publish, develop and broadcast contents that can be either originally created by themselves or reposed from other people. In this context, in the next paragraph it will be discussed how this trend is developing, analysing the survey's results. Hence, for firms investing in *inbound marketing* seems to be the most successful reply to this consumer's engagement. In opposition to *outbound marketing*, which adopts a "push" strategy to deliver the advertising to the consumer without giving him or her the chance to respond or interact with it (for example television advertising or billboards advertising), inbound marketing employs instead a "pull" strategy, where the customer is pulled to the firm with his or her original content, committed in a phase of co-creation of value, which is developed thanks

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.: 133

to a two-way communication between the firm and the interested audience<sup>142</sup>. Here social media marketing can be seen as a branch of inbound marketing, together with digital marketing and content marketing, and its role proves strategic in understanding the consumer's opinions about a product or a service, as well as in establishing a social media presence that can authenticate a firm and reinforce its interaction with the consumer. In this way, the firm will be able to get greater insights about motivations, concerns, struggles and possible resistance to purchase of its target audience.

Another theme to consider to better understand the results of the survey that will be presented in the next paragraph is the change that has occurred in the purchase process of the consumer. For years, the touchpoints through which consumers used to get in contact with a firm's product have always been understood through the metaphor of a funnel: the purchase process used to begin with the first stage of *awareness* of a number of brands in mind, that would then be skimmed in the second stage of *familiarity* and then reduced in the third stage of *consideration*, arriving eventually to the fourth crucial step of the *purchase* which, in case of satisfaction, would have led to the fifth stage of the *loyalty*. The conception of the funnel, however, has become obsolete and no longer reliable, because of the changed approach of the consumer towards purchases. Consequently, marketers have introduced another structure that better delineates the purchase path that the consumer experiences, with the aim of capturing all the touchpoints that propagate from the variety of new channels: the "consumer journey". This framework has been first introduced by David Court, Dave Elzinga, Susan Mulder and Ole Jorgen Vetvik<sup>143</sup> in the famous magazine *McKinsey Quarterly* in 2009,<sup>144</sup> and starting from then it has been adopted as the most reliable framework for studying the purchasing process of consumers. Their idea came from a research on 20,000 consumers' purchase decisions that crossed five industries and three Countries: results showed that marketers are required to find new innovative ways to make brands to be considered in the initial-consideration set, because of the proliferation of media and products; another requirement seems to be a more systematic approach to provide consumer satisfaction, since the relationship between firms and consumers is now based on a two-way

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<sup>142</sup> K. Lehnert, S. Goupil, P. Brand, *Content and the customer: inbound ad strategies gain traction*, Journal of Business Strategies, Emerald Publishing Ltd, 2020

<sup>143</sup> D. Court is a director in McKinsey's Dallas office, D. Elzinga is a principal in the Chicago office, S. Mulder is a principal in the Boston office and O. J. Vetvik is a principal in the Oslo office

<sup>144</sup> D. Court, D. Elzinga, S. Mulder, O. J. Vetvik, *The Consumer Decision Journey*, Marketing and Sales Practice, McKinsey Quarterly, no.3 2009

conversation; last but not least, results of this research shed light on the importance for a firm to align all marketing elements (e.g. spendings, strategies, channels, messages, etc) with the specific phase of the consumer journey that the person is experiencing, in order to catch the consumer in the right place, at the right time and with the right message<sup>145</sup>. The consumer decision journey stage is conceived as a circle, for giving the idea of the non-linearity of the purchase path of postmodern consumers, and it is composed of four main stages: *i)* initial consideration, when consumers consider an initial set of brands according to their exposure to different touchpoints; *ii)* active evaluation, when consumers add or subtract brands as they evaluate which they prefer; *iii)* purchase, when consumers definitely choose one product over another; *iv)* post-purchase experience and loyalty loop, when if the purchase was satisfactory consumers will likely continue their experience with the brand/product over time, since expectations have been met and hence they become reliable factors on which to base the next purchase decision.

To sum up, postmodern consumers and their approach towards consumption seem very different compared to the years that have been under analysis throughout this thesis. At the same time, also the business landscape has shaped and the role of marketing and communication seems to be increasingly relevant to connect consumers and companies in their relationship. This reasoning, as discussed, might be applicable in many kinds of consumption choices and for many kinds of consumers. But what about the sphere of food consumption? Is this field also subjected to these changes in the approach towards purchase? And if yes, which are the relevant factors that influence consumer behaviour when it comes to the food industry? Are these factors similar to those that have characterized the food consumption choices of the Twentieth Century, or have they changed?

### 5.3 Which factors affect the buying behaviour of today's consumers? An empirical analysis

#### 5.3.1 *Purpose of the survey and methodologies adopted*

The journey that has been undertaken all along this research study has proved to be heterogeneous and sometimes multifaceted, rich in changes in the socio-economic and political environment, as well as changes in the Italian consumers' preferences and

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.: 144

attitude towards consumption. Arriving at the current landscape of the Italian society of the Twenty-first Century, where consumers are actively engaged in the purchase process as they have never been before, preferences in food consumption reveal significantly different with respect to those of the past. In order to answer the questions posed at the end of paragraph 5.2 and to get analytical insights on today's consumers relationship with the food industry, a survey has been conducted. It can be defined as *primary research sources*, since it involves the collection of "fresh" data gathered for the first time (in opposition to *secondary sources*, which deals with data that were already collected by others and available for analysis), and the main advantages on which it can rely on are its accuracy and reliability, as well as its update and applicability. The purpose of the survey was indeed to understand not only how Italian consumers now perceive the action of eating (in other words, how much importance they give to meals and whether meals still represent a moment of conviviality and sharing), but also to investigate on the factors that currently influence and affect consumers' purchase decisions and to what extent they do so. A sample of 480 respondents (72.5% women and 26.7% men) has been collected, 91% of them coming from Northern Italy, 0.8% from Central Italy and the remaining 8.1% are Italian consumers living abroad. They were of different occupational status, from full-time workers to students, from part-time workers to unemployed. Respondents were contacted through the most used social platforms: *i)* Whatsapp, through the sending and forwarding of the form's link among my contacts and their friends; *ii)* Instagram, through the publication of IG stories with the link of the survey that my followers were offered to participate; *iii)* Facebook, through the publication of a post describing the research I was undertaking and inviting people to participate, always stressing the anonymity of their answers. The survey consisted of a total of 25 questions, which touched the following subjects that are going to be discussed in depth in the next paragraph:

- general information (e.g. age, gender, occupation)
- how much importance is given to the moment of meal
- changes in consumption preferences compared to 10 years ago (with reference to consumption of meat, pasta and confectionary products)
- features of the main stages of the consumer journey (initial consideration, active evaluation and purchase, post-purchase)
- sustainable consumption and environmental concerns

- advertising and social media influence
- Covid-19 pandemic and consumers' reaction

The survey has been structured as an online form that consumers who wanted to participate and give their contribution to this research had to fill. Moreover, the survey was totally anonymous to guarantee the person's privacy. Questions were submitted in different formats, with the aim of both giving more dynamism to the survey experience and of properly catching the answers with the maximum precision as possible. For example, some questions were posed in the form of multiple choice, others of Likert scale<sup>146</sup>, others of a checkbox and others were open questions requiring a brief answer. The order in which questions were submitted was not casual: at the beginning of the survey, questions were easily understandable and "personal", in order to establish a connection with the anonymous respondent and to introduce to him or her the main subject of the research; then the questions started to become more detailed and structured, going more in depth into their consumption habits and preferences, but at the same time the subjects were proposed alternatively in order to avoid losing the attention and the interest of the respondent (for example, themes like consumption habits were alternated with themes such as advertising, sustainability, Covid-19 pandemic, etc); finally, the last questions were the quickest and easiest to answer (e.g. age, gender, etc) since people's attention is known to be lower close to the end of the activity and respondents are more likely to give less reliable answers. But before entering the outcomes of the study and comparing them with the other data analysed throughout this thesis, it is important to stress that the main themes that the results will deal with correspond with the ones that this research aimed at discovering: how perception of food by Italian people has shaped with the time passing by, how contextual conditions contributed to these changes, how much does advertising weight in this context and which are the features of today's consumer journey. The next paragraph will be dedicated to these subjects, and comparisons between current data and data of the past years will also be made.

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<sup>146</sup> The Likert Scale (1932) is a ranking measure commonly used in surveys and questionnaires, where respondents have to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement on a 1-5 scale



### 5.3.2 Results and comments

The first important outcome that came out from this survey concerns the relationship between postmodern Italian consumers and food, in particular how they conceive the moment of the meal. As previously mentioned, Italian cuisine and the Mediterranean Diet have always been strictly connected to *conviviality* and this connection has proved to be so meaningful that in 2013 the health-promoting Mediterranean Diet has been recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage. According to this, indeed, the meaning of eating together seems to have gained more sophisticated traits, since contemporary society ceased to perceive food as a mere element for survival, attributing to it a number of various features and shades that were almost inconceivable before. In support of this, data coming up from the sample interviewed highly contribute in proving that the action of eating keep being reflected to conviviality and sharing still today: when asked how important is to have the time to dedicate to meals, 60% of respondents ranked this theme in the highest level of importance<sup>147</sup> and another 23% ranked it at a medium-high level of importance. This means that around 83% of the total sample is confirming that the moment of eating is something that has to be appreciated and enjoyed, and that they are likely to dedicate some time to this action. The most significant result on this subject, however, came when respondents were asked whether the meal represented a moment of sharing time with people they care of: 51% of them gave the highest answer (they ranked it 5 points on a 1-5 points scale) and 30% gave still a high answer (they ranked it 4 points). In addition to this, 77% of respondents expressed their preference in buying food that needs preparation and cooking instead of ready-to-eat products that are quicker and easier to manage. These outcomes let me get to a first important conclusion about the changes that have occurred from the early 1900s to today, on how food is perceived. As it has been discussed in Chapter 1, at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, thanks to important innovations in the food industry brought in by the Second Industrial Revolution, food started to gain a different meaning compared to the previous century, and in particular a healthy and correct nutrition started to become synonym of longevity and higher-quality life. As a consequence, people started to look at the nutritional sphere in a different way, seeing it as a tool to raise their own living standards, wellbeing and

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<sup>147</sup> More in detail, on a 1-5 Likert scale, 39.2% of respondents gave 4 points to the importance of dedicating time to the moment of meals, and 30.2% of respondents gave 5 points

hence the quality of their existence. The shaping of food culture went on with the advent of the two World Wars, where the lack of provisions caused a dramatic shock in food consumption and a shift to the conception of food as the only indispensable factor for survival. But it is exactly in this context of misery and food unavailability that families began to appreciate the little moments that they were able to save for eating: while men were at the front, mothers and children reunited with the hope for the end of conflicts, feeling blessed to have enough food at least to survive. Therefore, it can be said that it is during these years that the sense of conviviality saw its appearance, although nutritional levels kept remaining very low even in the small recovery of the interwar period. With the end of the Second World War and with the Economic Miracle, another remarkable shift in the food culture occurred, and the importance of conviviality was even more emphasized thanks to the unprecedented economic recovery that the Italian Country of the 1950s and 1960s witnessed. Together with this, also the role of women changed: from passive actors in the economic and political aspect of society, they undertook a path of emancipation that had the most significant results in the working sphere. In fact, due to their entrance into the labour market, they were no longer only mothers who had to dedicate their routines in taking care of children and of the house, but instead working women facing the new “modern” life full of tasks and requirements. Hence, it can be said that food conviviality assumed in these years a different shade: without losing its core meaning of reconnection with the family, meals became also more dynamic, especially because of the newly spread patterns of mobility within the Country. Eventually, from the 1970s to the end of the Century, the Italian food culture became familiar with what will be later recognized as the Mediterranean Diet, drawing increasingly closer to the meaning it has nowadays, and the consumption of *Made in Italy* products started to spread also abroad, competitive in terms of quality and price. In conclusion, the conception of conviviality that has shown up from the sample surveyed can be seen as the result of a complex path, where heterogeneous actors and factors contributed to give it the meaning it has today. For this reason, it can be noticed how history might have been of great help in understanding what contributed to shape consumers' perception of the moment of eating, representing a key tool for this thesis and for its reports.

A second remarkable fact that showed up from the survey touches the themes of income and working life, namely to what extent they affect the nutritional habits of Italian

consumers. In the previous Chapter it has been discussed how income availability represented a key player in determining consumption choices with reference to the food industry. In particular, during the dramatic years of the Wars and economic fall, when people could not count on high economic availability, and hence it has been shown how food consumption fell accordingly. In the same way, with the economic recovery of the 1960s and the increase of people's economic wellbeing thanks to new job opportunities, an increase in food consumption has been noticed (as pointed out in Chapter 4, for example, several foods like cheese, meat and confectionary products saw an exponential boost, when people started to enjoy the benefit of a higher-quality lifestyle). In other words, whether in positive or negative terms, the relationship between food consumption and income availability have proved to be directly proportional. Analysing the sample of today's consumers, however, results appear to be different from the past ones: when asked how much their food purchase choices depend on income factors, respondents provided heterogeneous answers, ranging from the lowest level of dependence to a highest level of dependence<sup>148</sup>. This means that the general importance attributed to income may vary according to subjective perception, and it does not constitute a key factor in determining food consumption trends as it did in the previous century. This outcome can be explained with reference to the general high living standards and quality of life that was quite widespread in Italy at the beginning of the Twenty-first Century. Since the level of economic wellbeing has significantly increased in contemporary society, due in particular to the exponential boost in innovation and technology, it is not surprising that people do not feel their food consumption to be strictly dependent on their income availability: they manage to buy a wide range of foodstuffs of different quality without serious implications for their financial stability because the general level of incomes allows them to do so, and hence the weight that a person attributes to it on his or her consumption decisions is variable to the person's subjectivity. Additionally, today's food market offers products of a wider price range compared to the past, meaning that consumers can have the chance to buy them according to their financial availability. In parallel to the influence of income in consumers' buying behaviour, also the impact of consumers' working life on food consumption has been investigated, with the aim of understanding how working conditions influence people's consumption habits and

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<sup>148</sup> Data in percentage (Likert scale format, 1-5 points): 13.3% gave 1 point of importance, 16% gave 2 points, 28.7% gave 3 points, 28.5% gave 4 points and 13.3% gave 5 points

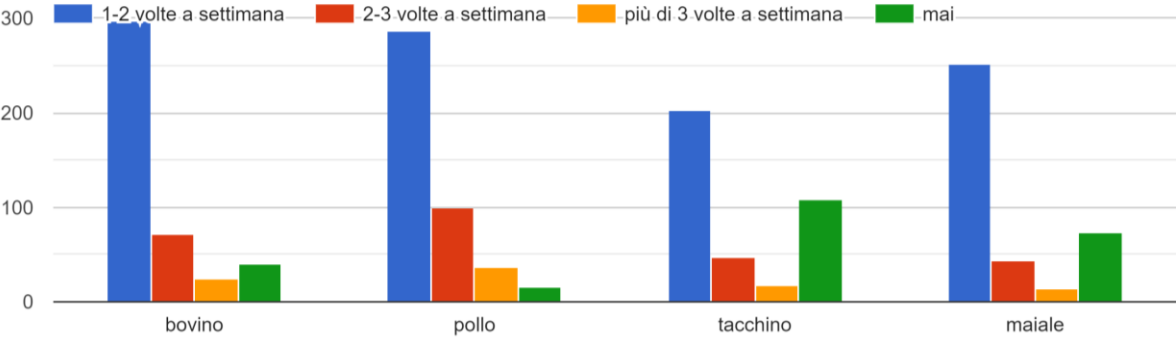
preferences. Results of this inquiry are interesting: more than the half of respondents answered that they would be more likely to consume different foodstuffs if they had a different working life<sup>149</sup>, saying that they would probably eat different foodstuffs if they had another job or occupation. This result is interesting because it proves how food habits are deeply embedded into the daily routine of a person and they change in accordance with factors like time availability (e.g. how much time consumers can dedicate to their lunch break) or occasions of eating in restaurants for work (e.g. how many times they have to eat out for lunch during the working week). According to these outcomes it can be guessed that postmodern consumers usually shape their dietary habits with particular reference to the time they have available for the main courses of breakfast, lunch and dinner. Comparing this situation with past trends, a similarity can be noticed with the trends of the first and second economic miracle: with the rise of new job opportunities in the most developed areas of Italy, the working life became more frenetic and consequently families' diet changed accordingly.

A substantial part of the survey aimed at investigating how Italian inhabitants' consumption changed with particular reference to three food types whose consumption has been studied also in some of the previous Chapters, namely meat, carbohydrates and confectionary products. The first results that will be discussed are those related to the changes in meat consumption. 94.2% of respondents eat meat, while the remaining 5.8% of them do not, either for ethical and environmental reasons or for body's necessities (for example, some respondents explained that they actually feel better when they avoid eating meat). As it can be noticed in *Graph 7* below, which summarizes the 480 answers, the type of meat that is mostly consumed is chicken (only 15 respondents never eat it, and 386 respondents eat it 1-2 or 2-3 times per week) but also bovine is a quite popular meat type among the sample, who consumes it mostly 1-2 times per week. However, it is clear how almost nobody seems to eat meat more than 2-3 times per week (any yellow column of the histogram exceeds 7.5%). Under a general perspective, it can be seen how meat, whether it is chicken, bovine, pork or turkey, is consumed by the majority of people one or two times per week.

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<sup>149</sup> Detailed data: 60% of respondents think that their working life highly contributes in shaping their nutritional habits (4 and 5 points of Likert scale) while only 5.8% of them thinks that the working life has a minimum or absent weight, saying that they will be eating the same products regardless of the working life they will be doing

Graph 7: Meat consumption trends on a sample of 480 consumers (Italy, August 2021)



Source: Primary data collected by Giorgia Precoma, master student at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Department of Management (August 2021)

Comparing this result to meat consumption patterns of the Twentieth Century, significant changes can be identified. Considering the period of the Great War, when people’s diet moved from being essentially carbohydrates-based to protein-based because of the nutritional efforts required by the commitment at the front for most Italian men, meat consumption extended to the everyday life of almost every consumer. Here, the strong link between the socio-political context and food consumption trends can be stressed. In the same way, in the years 1950-1970, the boom of meat consumption and calories intake that occurred with the recovery from the Second World War showed how the new benefits of higher incomes and more dynamic lifestyles represented two determining factors in the considerable increase of meat consumption, proving that food behavioural trends (in this case, with reference to meat) are once again connected to the economic and social conditions in which the consumer is embedded. Arriving at the current results, meat consumption has lowered significantly compared to the above-mentioned periods of time, but still this change has to be linked with the historical context where postmodern consumers are living. Two are the main factors that can be pointed out, the first being the commitment in sustainability issues that is becoming widespread, and the second being

the changes in dietary requirements of a wide number of consumers. Sustainable concerns are becoming a subject of major consideration for Italian consumers, especially when it comes to environment: when asked to what extent they are aware of the current environmental issues, indeed, more than half of the respondents considered themselves as very much aware of these issues. This strong commitment is actually reflected in consumption, especially that of meat, with the aim of playing an increasingly active role in the postmodern society and contributing in preserving the environment in a proactive way. Furthermore, the decreased frequency of meat consumption with respect to the previous decades can be connected also with the changes in the person's nutritional requirements, that seem different to the past: a more various diet and the wider food types availability let consumers not only having a heterogeneous diet, but also listening more to their bodies and consequently avoiding those foodstuffs that their body struggles with. Moving from meat consumption to carbohydrates consumption, interesting outcomes emerged from the survey, with particular reference to the changes that occurred in pasta consumption of the 480 people sample. Although Italy is still the Country which consumes the higher quantity of pasta (every year, 23 kilograms per capita of pasta are eaten in Italian households),<sup>150</sup> preferences for this kind of food have faced some changes, looking back to ten years ago. According to the survey, the general consumption of pasta is declared to be from 1 to 2 times per week (37,9% of respondents) and from 3 to 4 times per week (34,2% of respondents), while comparing this pattern with the extent to which pasta was consumed ten years ago, differences emerge, which can be reflected in the changes in the socio-economic and environmental context. *Graph 8* represents the changes compared to ten years ago in pasta consumption, and what can be glimpsed is that around 60% of respondents have introduced in their diet pasta with flour that is different from the common durum wheat (e.g. whole wheat flour, rice flour, corn flour, gluten free flour, etc).

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<sup>150</sup> Redazione Economia, *Pasta, l'Italia è il Paese che ne consuma di più: 23 kg a testa all'anno*, Il Corriere Della Sera, 16 October 2019

### Graph 8: Current pasta consumption compared to ten years ago

Rispetto a 10 anni fa, come è cambiato il tuo consumo di pasta?

480 risposte



Source: Primary data collected by Giorgia Precoma, master student at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Department of Management (August 2021)

The most probable reason for this choice can be of health type, since many postmodern consumers actually witness physical benefits in eating not-refined flours and consequently favouring the consumption of them as substitutes of the common durum wheat. This preference may be attributed also to the higher awareness that consumers have regarding health requirements and healthy foodstuffs. For example, a number of scientific studies on the advantages and disadvantages of eating type 0 and type 00 flour have been carried out recently, and thanks to the advancements in the scientific research and to the mediatic diffusion of its findings, consumers manage to make more conscious decisions about their nutritional sphere. Being more aware of the questionable effects of durum wheat flour for the body (e.g. insulin increment, lack of fibres, hunger quick suppression, etc<sup>151</sup>), consumers of the Twenty-first Century may prefer to try also other kinds of pasta in order to provide their body with a healthier diet. In this context also the advertising sphere plays an active role, since advertisements of such flours (and their benefits) have become more frequent and diffused. To sum up, the gradual changes in pasta consumption that took place during the Twentieth and Twenty-first Century can be related mainly to the higher level of awareness concerning nutritional features and

<sup>151</sup> M. De Tullio, *Le Farine Tipo 0 e Tipo 00: fanno bene o fanno male?*, San Camillo Centro Polispecialistico, Bari

characteristics of foods, possible thanks to the continuous innovations in the scientific sphere, as well as the possibility to benefit from a wider variety of foods to choose among to improve the heterogeneity of their diet. Hence, not only in the sphere of meat but also in that of carbohydrates it can be noticed how the contextual landscape in which consumers are embedded highly contributes to shaping and determining their consumption preferences. Finally, also the confectionary industry witnessed important changes from the consumers' side. Recalling the massive growth of the confectionary industry during the years 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s that has been discussed in Chapter 3, the Italian society witnessed a real boom of the packaged sweets industry, thanks both to the industrialization of the food production process and to the so-called "American dream" that was entering Italians' daily lives as an ideal model of lifestyle. At the same time, however, concepts like dieting started to become popular among consumers, thanks to the several advancements in scientific research on this field and the widespread of experts providing nutritional advice and support in the sphere of correct nutrition and body requirements. Even though the Italian culture remains connected to the dessert tradition (cake receipts are still today handed down from generation to generation, especially when it comes to small towns), the difference in their consumption is noteworthy. 75,8% of respondents declare that their consumption of confectionery products has lowered compared to ten years ago, while only 5,2% of them declare that it has increased. It can then be concluded that, as for pasta, the higher level of awareness about nutritional components of such products and the higher attention paid to the health requirements of the body have led Italian consumers to modify their consumption of sweets and confectionery foodstuffs, which are usually of high-content preservatives and additives. On the other hand, however, it can be said that today, in order to provide for this issue, many confectionery firms have started to invest in the realization of specific product lines aimed at guaranteeing to customers the healthy features of their products, with the introduction of organic lines that, for example, offer products at a low content of sugar, or with natural preservatives, or with raw materials at km0. In this way, firms are trying to keep their relationship with customers positive, introducing articles that satisfy their current needs and keeping always up with their requirements, answering with the best offer to maintain (or even increase) their loyalty.



The analysis of the results that emerged from the survey provide food for thoughts not only concerning the changes in consumption patterns of specific foodstuffs, as it has just been discussed, but also concerning the influence of newly emerged socio-economic and environmental factors that have arisen in the society of the Twenty-first Century. Two are the key factors that seem to play a role in shaping consumers buying behaviour nowadays, one being environmental concerns (also with reference to the current Covid-19 world pandemic) and the other being the use of social media. As already introduced at the beginning of this fifth Chapter, the present business landscape is strictly interrelated with several elements that contribute to determining what consumers want and do not want from a product, a brand or a firm. With reference to the influence of sustainability and environmental concerns on the consumer approach towards food consumption, it can be said that today's consumers are more environmentally conscious with respect to the past, favoured also by the mediatic actions undertaken to increase people's awareness of the dramatic situation that the Earth is experiencing. 294 out of 480 respondents, in fact, state that they often buy sustainable food products when they go to the supermarket (e.g. km0 products, organic products, etc) and 67% of them are even willing to substitute food products that they are used to buy and eat with sustainable ones, in order to give their active contribution to the sustainability issue. In addition to this it is fundamental to consider the impact that the current Covid-19 pandemic has caused in Italian society. Although only 26,5% of respondents state that their consumption has suffered from the imbalance brought in by Coronavirus, the general buying behaviour has been shaped when it comes to small details in the purchase process. For example, when respondents were asked to what extent their approach towards the food industry has changed, the answers were various: someone stated that they prefer to do the grocery shopping in smaller food shops rather than in big supermarkets (in order to avoid the contact with many people and to avoid creating gathering), others stated that they increased their usage of food delivery services, others started to buy more packaged vegetables to have a higher level of cleanliness, and others increased the consumption of long-life food products. These data prove once again how the postmodern consumer has a high engagement in the socio-economic landscape where he or she lives, whereas in the past this engagement was not so widespread, because the general consumer awareness on many fields was low. This brings to another important consideration, that refers to the second factor of influence of today's consumer consumption choices. It is true that the

level of awareness concerning the surrounding environment has increased intensively, but this is only in part due to the proactive behaviour and interest that Italian consumers have towards these issues. In this context, in fact, a key role is played by social media, whose entrance in the socio-economic environment of the Twenty-first Century has represented a real shift in paradigm on how consumers look at food consumption. As it has been discussed first in Chapter 4 with the study of magazine advertising and then in this Chapter with the role of marketing, it can be glimpsed how communication represents a key factor in shaping consumers' approach towards consumption. With reference to nowadays society, an important factor of influence is represented by social media. Social networks like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and many others are in fact a remarkable source of information and communication both between firms and consumers and between consumers themselves. Among their advantages lays the capability to increase the consumer awareness for many brands and products, and as a demonstration of this, 52% of the survey sample said that they have got to know new food products that they did not know before, thanks to social networks. Hence, social media are becoming a strategic tool on which firms are increasingly investing, given their high power in information spread and high virality among users. When scrolling down the Instagram page, for example, the user is exposed to a number of images posted by his or her followers, and it often happens that if something (in this case, a food product) catches the user attention, he or she will be more likely to think about this specific product and the probability of its eventual purchase can witness an increase. According to the survey, when respondents were asked to what extent their desire of trying a food product would increase when they see it in a follower's feed, the general answers were confirming what has just been said: they will be influenced (although in different measure<sup>152</sup>) in terms of an increase in the desire to try such food. To summarize, both social and environmental factors are proved to be two elements that, together with the previously considered ones, contribute to the shaping of the postmodern consumer's approach to food consumption.

After having pointed out the main features of Italian consumers' preferences in the food industry, a last consideration must be made to finalize this analysis, namely the one related to the new consumer decision journey. In paragraph 5.2 some questions were left

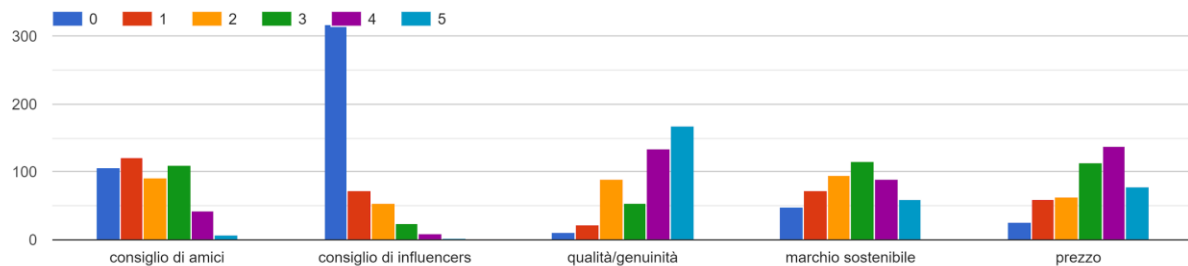
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<sup>152</sup> 35,4% said that their desire to try that food would increase, but to a small extent; 18% said that their desire would increase to a medium extent; 11% said that their desire would increase to a medium-high extent

open, especially regarding whether and how the consumer decision journey has witnessed some changes through time. In order to provide a reliable answer to such questions, a portion of the survey was dedicated to this subject, investigating in particular the features of the stages of *awareness*, *consideration/purchase* and *loyalty*. Considering the first stage, namely the awareness stage, most respondents declare that they get to know new food brands or products by physically going to the supermarket or by friends' suggestion, as well as by advertisements in television and social media platforms. Another minority of them instead declared that their awareness stage begins by reading magazines or by advice from their nutritionist. The conclusion that can be made from these data is that the awareness stage of postmodern consumers with reference to the food industry is made of heterogeneous touchpoints through which the consumer get in touch with the food product; moreover, the already-mentioned influencing factor of social media seems to affect this stage as well, representing one source of awareness creation in the consumer's mind and thus a strategic tool on which firms should invest to spread brand awareness towards potential customers. Going on with the analysis of the new consumer journey stages, those of consideration and - eventual - purchase has been inspected. Respondents were given a list of factors and they were required to answer to what extent these factors weighed in choosing one product instead of another. The factor "suggested from a friend" seems to affect consumers' purchase decision in different ways, because answers were not homogeneous: some respondents showed to be highly affected by the friends' opinion when they have to choose between two products, while others showed a very low affection by this factor. A similar reasoning can be done analysing the factor "sustainable brand", which provided heterogeneous answers, even if the general tendency of respondents is to give a medium importance to this factor of influence. On the contrary, an evident outcome can be pointed out concerning factors such as "quality/genuineness" and "price", on which the majority of the sample agreed in giving both of them a high influencing power in preferring a product over another. In the same way, the factor "suggested by influencers" turned out to be something that did not affect the preference from one product over another, showing a quite defined autonomy of consumers in their consumption preferences. *Graph 9* is summarizing the considerations just made.

*Graph 9: The new consumer journey: which factors affect the third and fourth stages of consideration and purchase*

Quando compri del cibo, che cosa ti fa preferire un marchio rispetto ad un altro? (0 = non influenza la mia scelta; 5 = influenza molto la mia scelta)



*Source:* Primary data collected by Giorgia Precoma, master student at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Department of Management (August 2021)

Arriving at the last stage of the consumer decision journey, the loyalty loop, 72% of the sample interviewed proved to be active loyalists: if they are satisfied with the brand or product, they suggest it to their friends and family, contributing in spreading brand awareness and consideration among other potential customers. Another 43% says that they are likely to behave in the same way also inversely: if they are not satisfied with the brand or product, they discourage that product to their friends and family, contributing as well in generating negative publicity of such product. Hence, this active loyalty, whether positive or negative, represents a key aspect that nowadays firms must consider, highlighting once again how consumers are increasingly active in the purchasing process and how their market power is rising more and more.

In conclusion, the analysis carried out on a sample of 480 Italian consumers of different ages and occupational status provided several useful insights about the changes that occurred throughout time in food consumption of Italian consumers. First of all, there is high evidence that the Italian food culture keeps having a strong connection with the moment of meals, seeing it as a moment of conviviality and sharing rather than a mere action of nutrition. This means that despite the innovations in the food industry and the

changes in consumption patterns and trends, the world of Italian food is perceived as an intangible heritage embedded in the everyday life of most consumers. Other meaningful insights emerged from the current consumption patterns of three food families that have been studied also in the previous Chapters of this thesis, namely meat, pasta and confectionary products. It can be seen how meat consumption in the Twenty-first century is different compared to that of the Twentieth: consumers ceased to see it as an indispensable nutritional requirement for their body (like it was during the war periods) or as the “luxury” good that spread among the tables of most Italian families during the years of the Economic Miracle, and are beginning to experience diets without or with a scarce presence of it. The main reason for this choice can be attributed to the increased awareness of the impact it has in terms of sustainability, and since environmental concerns are becoming a noteworthy subject since the last few years, Italian consumers seem to wish to participate actively and to provide support. Hence, there is remarkable evidence on how the socio-economic and environmental context (in this case sustainability issues) highly contributes in shaping consumers’ preferences in food choices, providing the answers that this research aimed at finding. Also for pasta consumption interesting outcomes emerged, in particular with reference to the changes in dietary habits of Italian consumers who, thanks to the continuous innovation in scientific research, are discovering the benefits also of other flour types, less refined and more digestible. This situation clearly differs from that of the past Century, where scientific research was less developed and the common behaviour was to adapt to the available foodstuffs, rather than investing in discovering new possible alternatives. The confectionary industry, on its side, witnessed probably the most remarkable shift in terms of consumption. In fact, results of the survey demonstrate how consumption of packaged sweets saw a decrease in almost all the respondents’ daily diet. This trend is interconnected with a theme that has already played a role in the past, the concept of dieting. In fact, starting from the 1950s the concept about the “ideal body” as a slim or even skinny body began to widespread largely enhanced by the fashion world of that time, which publicized this trend in the most famous magazines (e.g. *Vogue*) and in the first runway shows, and consequently Italian consumers shaped their approach to food consumption to meet the beauty standards that society somehow acclaimed. Even if in a different measure, also in contemporary society attention to the aesthetic appearance and desire for a healthy body are two trends that are pretty common when it comes to

choosing the proper nutrition. Because of this social reason, then, it can be seen how postmodern Italian consumers adopt a slighter approach towards confectionery products, replacing them with other foodstuffs that are conceived as healthier. The rising importance of social media within the current society has also emerged from this investigation, providing useful insights for firms who want to maintain their competitiveness in the market. In this sense, the role of marketing proves strategic, to create a strong relationship between firms and consumers based on a co-creation of the product's meaning. Nowadays companies, indeed, should invest in the so-called consumer-driven marketing, involving the consumer in each phase of their selling process and adopting strategies of social listening and social monitoring to avoid missing important changes in their buying behaviour. As a consequence of the new approach of the consumer towards consumption, changes in the consumer decision journey have occurred, shifting from an obsolete metaphor of a "funnel" to a more circular model describing the new purchasing path that he or she undertakes, where brand awareness plays still a significant role, but at the same time it does not have to be necessarily at the first stage of the process, since a wide number of touchpoints might appear in every phase of this never-ending purchase cycle. To be sure that consumers will receive the right information tailored to the phase in which they find themselves, firms should strategically align spending with the consumer journey phase and thus tailor the message to the specific phase, as well as investing in consumer-driven marketing and in the point of sales.

## Conclusion

This thesis investigates changes in food consumption patterns and food advertising in the Italian 20<sup>th</sup> century. Research allowed to draw a heterogeneous picture of the political, social and economic changes which revolutionized the life and habits of the Italian population in the last 150 years. It has been possible to identify four main phases:

- 1) The years between 1900 and 1914, when Italy was a new born agricultural country characterized by enormous regional differences. Food consumption habits mirrored the state of regional agriculture, with some areas, in the North and Center more developed, showing higher levels of meat consumption and regions, in the South, plagued by backwardness and extremely dependent on the vagaries of climate. Yet in the most developed areas, a nascent food industry was making its first steps laying the ground for a brilliant future, as in the dairy production.
- 2) During the fascist “Ventennio” (1924-1944), Italians in their the daily life had to deal with extremely restrained budgets and consumption opportunities: in a context of political and economic uncertainty, the symbolic and identarian value of food grew significantly together with the worries about food availability. Food policy was at the center of the Regime’s interest and propaganda. The political goal of the Fascist government of reaching an alimentary sovereignty was met thanks to both limitation on food imports and exports (e.g. the *Battle for Wheat*) and to mass propaganda. Through food advertisement, the regime promoted role division in the household and an image of the woman as “angelo del focolare” which resisted for many years after the demise of Fascism. The analysis of the food magazine *La Cucina Italiana* between December 1929 and January 1937 shows the relatively hidden political scope of advertisement: “*come si gustano i liquori*” and “*l’arte di saper presentare i formaggi*” were only two of the many columns dedicated to the suggestion of the best practices that women should perform in order to reflect the ideal housewife, with the implicit attempt of shaping their action and choices according to the requirements of the socio-political context of that time. Coherently to the political ideology of saving and maintaining a modest living condition, food advertisements had minimal layouts and concerned national products (*Olio Sasso*, *Buitoni* Pasta, etc) clearly aiming at promoting Italian industry. Moreover, to strengthen the connection between authors and readers, some diaries as *La Posta di Nina* were created to enhance the interaction

among women, and to spread the importance of women's political commitment. It is clear how, through the control of food production, distribution and consumption supported by a strong advertising strategy, Mussolini was close to reaching his final aim: getting mass consensus and achieving imperial expansion.

- 3) Food advertisement shows how radical was the change brought about by the 1950s and the so called "Miracolo italiano". The economic and industrial recovery gave the opportunity to many Italian households to raise their incomes and living conditions, favoring a consequent improvement in nutrition: the daily calories intake grew from 2500 kcal in 1950 to 3000 kcal in the early 1960s and even to 3500 kcal before the 1970s<sup>153</sup>. The rhythms of life had also changed: processed food spread on the domestic market because they met the needs of modern consumers who had less time to dedicate to food preparation. According to G. M. Rey in "I conti economici dell'Italia", the percentage of processed products supplied by the food industry accounted for more than 33% of the total amount of foodstuffs available on the market<sup>154</sup>. The kitchen as a house room witnessed remarkable changes in terms of furniture and function: new electrical appliances simplified the process of food-making, the role of Italian woman started to change. The new lifestyle and food culture found an echo also in innovative magazine advertising: in the edition of January 1952, *La Cucina Italiana* showed its first coloured cover page, with high-quality food photos that mirrored the new economic prosperity of the 1950s.
- 4) During the 1970s, after some years of national crisis, the Italian country experienced another period of slow but constant recovery known as the second economic miracle, which brought to an economic and industrial modernization and to a remarkable transformation of the relationship between Italian consumers and their nutrition and conviviality norms. In the field of nutrition, consumption kept rising, domestic supply became more varied and Italian food products' international sales increased thanks to the phenomenon of globalization, which favoured the expansion of the label *Made In Italy*. Meat consumption kept increasing, together with the expansion in the food market of dairy products, favoured by television commercials that also helped spreading the brand awareness. Mobility patterns allowed Italian consumers to go out

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<sup>153</sup> Reference to *Graph 5*, source: FAO (2017) and [www.ourworldindata.com](http://www.ourworldindata.com)

<sup>154</sup> G. M. Rey, *I conti economici dell'Italia*, vol. 1, Una sintesi delle fonti ufficiali 1890-1970 (Rome, 1991), pp. 20-22, 31-36



for dinner more often, allowing the proliferation of restaurants, cafeterias and pizzerias. Despite the increasing influence of television commercials in affecting Italians' consumption choices, magazine advertising in the 1970s and 1980s still played an important role of "awareness creator", because the number of pages dedicated to food advertisement was higher compared to that of previous editions, allowing readers to get in contact with a wider range of brands and products. The focus of these editions laid also on home furnishing advertisements, since interior design trends began to appear in the Italian market.

- 5) Finally, contemporary consumers' preferences have been investigated through a survey which shows that we entered a new brand phase.

Each of these phases has been analysed through available statistics on food consumption, the magazine advertisements and secondary literature on the development of the food industry and kitchen furniture. These outcomes once again prove how the historical context in which the consumer is embedded contributes to shaping its consumption choices, and how food advertising has echoed the specific socio-political changes that characterized the Italian country throughout the 20th century.

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