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**An Italian company  
in China:  
an analysis of Fabbri 1905's  
marketing strategies**

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*A Nonna Giovanna e Nonno Tito,  
Che mi portavano ogni anno i baicoli da Venezia,  
Che mi hanno fatto amare questa città  
prima ancora che io la potessi conoscere.*

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## **Abstract (English version)**

The aim of this thesis is analyzing how the Italian company Fabbri 1905 operates in China from different points of view.

The company at issue operates in the food and beverage sector, directed both to end consumers and professionals. Since 1905, it sells a wide variety of products as ice-creams, syrups, jams, and liqueurs, which are usually labeled as *Made in Italy*. Therefore, in the first section, we present a general analysis of the market in China for these kinds of products.

Selling in more than 100 countries worldwide, the thesis focuses on Fabbri 1905's market presence in China, a profitable opportunity that brings with it some challenges. Among these, the company has to face linguistic challenges: after a general overview of the different strategies used to translate European brand names in Chinese, the thesis discusses the features of the company's Chinese name 法布芮 *Fǎbùruì* and the translation of Fabbri 1905's products sold in China. Another example of challenge that the company had to overcome is that of counterfeit products: Fabbri 1905 took to court two Chinese companies accused of imitating the iconic Amarena Fabbri's packaging.

Additionally, we analyze Fabbri 1905's presence on the Chinese social media: how it communicates and through which channels.

Lastly, the thesis presents the way Fabbri 1905's competitors behave and operate in China, focusing especially on the French company Monin as a successful example of online branding on WeChat.

**Key words:** food and beverage sector, Made in Italy, brand and product naming, Chinese social media, competitors

## Preface (Chinese version)

### 一家在中国的意大利企业：法布芮1905营销战略分析

**前言:** Fabbri 1905 更名为“法布芮 1905”：简单的更名背后蕴含着一个故事和一项战略。故事是指这家拥有百年历史的公司，如今正将意大利美食传统带到世界各地。法布芮1905的业务遍及包括中国在内的十多个国家。实际上，该公司的格言之一就是：放眼全球，立足当地。而战略指的是公司为进入世界上最具挑战性和最广阔的市场--中国场所制定的新名称、新传播方式和特定的社交媒体计划。

这篇论文论述了法布芮1905食品公司在中国的营销活动。法布芮1905主要向分销商销售它的产品，因此面向B2B业务。比如说在中国该公司得到一家名为懿翼的经销商的帮助。但也向最终消费者销售部分产品。法布芮1905销售的主要产品是糖浆、自制冰淇淋基底粉、用甜糖浆保存的水果、利口酒等。针对两种商业模式，该公司都在中国领先的网上商店天猫和淘宝上搭建了销售平台。实际上，电子商务现象对于在中国经营的公司来说确实非常重要。得益于智能手机的普及，这个亚洲国家多年来一直是全球领先的在线销售市场。

**第一章**介绍在中国的食品和饮料行业，以及“意大利制造”标签的含义和影响。

本章首先介绍“意大利制造”标签是什么：是针对那些被认定为来自意大利并出口到国外的产品进行分类的一种说法。因此，“意大利制造”标签具有文化、商业和经济价值，代表着意大利的传统、习俗和饮食方式。此外“意大利制造”标签是创意、风格、手工和传统的代名词。在一般人的观念中，它与时尚和食品行业的产品联系在一起。

然后在第一章我们将对某些产品的市场进行分析，这些是与“意大利制造”标签相关的典型产品，以及法布芮 1905 销售的主要产品类型。

- 中国的糖消费情况：在亚洲国家糖的消费量并不高，人们更喜欢吃咸味菜肴。不过，现在出现了一些新趋势，尤其是在年轻人和高消费的人群中：他们更多遵循西方习惯。
- 利口酒市场：在中国酒类市场不断扩大，然而中国传统利口酒--白酒-在这一领域处于领先地位。此外法布芮 1905 最近在中国推出了法布芮金酒，但是金酒仍需要找到融入中国人饮食习惯的途径。

- 冰淇淋市场: 冰淇淋不仅是意大利最有名的产品, 而且在中国也很受欢迎。实际上, 有许多亚洲和意大利公司在中国销售冰淇淋。在该国冰淇淋龙头公司是: 伊利集团、蒙牛集团、和路雪和哈根达斯。本段还介绍了中国人牛奶消费量的情况: 由于中国人对 "乳糖酶" 吸收不良, 中国人日常食用的乳制品很少。
- 糖浆市场: 第一部分简要分析了在中国高玉米果糖浆的消费情况。此外, 由于糖浆是台湾珍珠奶茶的主要成分之一, 本段有一部分旨在介绍珍珠奶茶的起源及其在中国的受欢迎程度。
- 烘焙市场: 该行业正在不断发展壮大, 但是外国企业需要适应中国人对非甜味食品的喜好。夹心饼干奥利奥的改良就是一个很明显的例子, 它让我们更好地理解产品本地化的意义, 以及在中国开展业务时不采用全球标准化战略的重要性。
- 涂酱市场 (包括果酱、沙司和蜜饯): 本段介绍两种拥有领先地位的产品, 即意大利费列罗公司生产的能多益 (意大利语: nutella) 和亚洲传统果酱称为红豆沙。

**第二章**介绍意大利家族企业法布芮1905的悠久历史: Gennaro Fabbri在博洛尼亚创立该公司已有 100 多年的历史, 如今该家族仍是公司管理层的一部分。法布芮1905的产品注重意大利传统和食品质量。

Gennaro Fabbri的妻子 Rachele Buriani于1915 年发明了名为“阿玛蕾娜”(意大利语: Amarena Fabbri)的蜜饯: 蘸着甜糖浆的野生黑樱桃。今天它已经成为公司的明星产品。最令人赞赏的是它的罐子。罐子上的青花图案让人想起中国元、明、清朝的瓷器装饰。这个包装深受消费者的喜爱, 以至于两家中国公司剽窃了Fabbri的设计来牟利。因此2019年法布芮1905将两家中国公司告上法庭, 指控它们模仿这家标志性公司的青花图案。

如今, 法布芮1905在全球拥有 300 名员工和 10 家关联公司。其中, 法布芮上海食品贸易有限公司由Nicola Fabbri于 2009 年创立, 该公司负责管理在中国的业务, 依靠多家分销商和电子商务平台销售产品。法布芮还特别积极地组织和参与在中国举办的活动, 因此本论文在第二章最后的部分针对这一内容进行了讨论。

**第三章**涉及语言学主题: 外国公司及其产品名称的翻译策略。本文在对欧洲品牌名称中文翻译的四种语言策略进行了简短的理论介绍以后, 对法布芮1905的案例进行了具体分析。该品牌名称符合其他外国公司的总体趋势: 考虑到它只有三个汉字, 对客户来说易于记忆。但是



从语义角度来看没有相关含义。事实上，该名称只是公司创始人姓氏（意大利语：Fabbri）音译，后面的数字部分是公司成立的年份。本文第二部分讨论了法布芮1905产品的中文翻译。研究基于以下几个来源：法布芮1905的公司简介、电子商店账户、中文产品目录和微信账户。在列出的译文中，有些译文由于情况特殊，我们对其进行了详细分析，例如那不勒斯甜食“baba”和法布芮1905的明星产品“amarena”的翻译。最后，我们还通过查询中国商标局网站，对法布芮1905在中国的注册商标情况进行了分析。

**第四章**介绍中国的社交媒体平台。中国的主要社交网络有微信、快手、抖音、小红书、新浪微博、人人网、哔哩哔哩和知乎。本章将详细介绍中国食品和饮料产品帖子和视频的吸引眼球之处，尤其是法布芮1905销售的产品类别。在大多数描述饮料制作的内容中，我们可以看到简约的背景、透明的玻璃杯和制作饮料的人的手，而描述冰淇淋的内容大多是装在桶里的冰淇淋，口味丰富多彩。此外，本章还介绍了一些特殊的社交网络内容，例如与关键意见领袖或网红合作以及在中国新年之际发布的内容。

第二部分重点介绍了法布芮1905的案例，该公司通过三大社交媒体平台推广其产品：该公司通过微信、小红书和豆瓣三大社交平台推广其产品。本段详细分析了该公司在这些社交网络上的行为：语言、布局、颜色、字体和其他具体特征。此外，还分析了法布芮1905的官方网站，该网站也有中文版，主要通过二维码组成，将用户引流到社交网络账户和中文在线商店平台。

**第五章**重点分析法布芮1905的竞争对手及其在中国社交媒体平台上的行为。具体来说，我们调查了与法布芮1905同在中国推广其产品的三个产品推广平台上注册的其他公司。此外，我们还调查了竞争对手的官方网站是否有中文翻译。

第二部分的重点是莫林（法语：Monin）：一家成立于1912年的法国公司，是法布芮1905在中国的主要竞争对手之一。我们已经介绍了它在微信上的活动。该公司专门针对中国受众发布微信推文，例如针对中国不同地区设计的饮料配方。此外，在其官方网页上，有很多篇幅都在介绍更贴近亚洲人口味的产品：红豆糖浆、罗望子糖浆和鸭屎香乌龙茶风味糖浆。

法布芮1905的另一个重要竞争对手是 Toschi Vignola，它也生产野樱桃制成的阿玛蕾娜蜜饯，并用类似的包装进行销售。

总结，法布芮1905应关注以下因素：产品的意大利制造和意大利风格；法布芮阿玛蕾娜野樱桃的罐子；产品包装的精致度；与中国领先企业合作以获取消费者的信任，与中国领先企业合作；产品和广告的本地化。事实上，中国在文化和语言上与西方国家相距甚远。在中国出口和经营蕴含的重要发展机遇，当然也会带来一些挑战。

考虑到法布芮1905产品的价格、类型和特点与中国传统有很大不同，该公司的目标受众显然不一定主要来自甘肃等农村地区。相反，产品更有可能吸引上海等工业发达和富裕的城市。正确的产品、预防措施、本地化以及一支有能力、有经验的团队是进入中国市场的关键和必要因素。除了上述因素以外，公司还应避免以单一视角看待中国市场，而忽略了中国内部的地区差异：地貌、语言和传统，这些都需要有针对性的理解和方法。因此，营销和销售活动应关注并取决于公司希望瞄准的目标消费者，根据所提供产品或服务的类型，确定是瞄准一线城市还是三线城市。

简单概括**关键词**包括：食品和饮料行业、意大利制造、品牌和产品命名、中国社交媒体、竞争对手。

## Introduction

Fabbri 1905 becomes 法布芮 1905 *Fàbùruì 1905*: behind a simple name change, there lies a story and a strategy. The story refers to the century-old company, nowadays bringing the Italian food tradition worldwide, while the strategy refers to its objective of entering the most challenging and extensive market in the world: China. With new names, a new communication, and a specific social media presence program, this thesis narrates indeed a journey, as the title suggest, of the Italian company Fabbri 1905 in China.

Fabbri 1905 operates in the food and beverage sector: this is why the first chapter provides a general overview concerning the industry at issue in China and the meaning and implications of the *Made in Italy* label. Following an introduction concerning sugar consumption in the Asian country, we have given emphasis to products typically associated with the label *Made in Italy* and that the company Fabbri 1905 sells both as final products and as intermediate products for artisanal production. The spirits industry is the first one to be described: a market in expansion, although *baijiu*, a traditional Chinese liqueur, stands as the leader in the sector; while the gin, which Fabbri 1905 has recently launched in the Asian country, still needs to find its way to enter in the culinary customs of the Chinese people. In the second subsection we describe an Italian product *par excellence*: ice cream, which has a huge potentiality in China due to the high level of appreciation registered. In fact, both foreign and Asian companies have success selling the product at issue. Moreover, analyzing the ice cream market induces us to discuss also about the broader context of the low level of milk consumption in China. The syrups industry is described in the third subsection, where we analyze the consumption of High Fructose Corn Syrup. In addition, since syrup is one of the main ingredients of Taiwanese bubble tea, a section of the paragraph is focused on describing its origins and its popularity in mainland China. The fourth paragraph focuses on the pastry market, a growing sector which however needs to be adapted by foreign companies to the preferences of the Chinese people towards types of food not excessively sweet. The adaptation of the sandwich biscuit Oreo stands as a useful example to better understand what it means to localize a product and the importance of not using global standardized strategies when operating in China. The last subsection focuses on the spreads market where we briefly analyze the position of two leader products: Nutella produced by the Italian company Ferrero and the traditional Asian red bean jam.

The second chapter focuses on the main subject of this thesis: the Italian family company Fabbri 1905. It operates in the food and beverage sector, selling especially to professionals, but in part also to end

consumers. The first category includes ice cream artisans, pastry chefs, baristas, bartenders, chefs, food service professionals, restaurant chains, cruise lines, and fast-food chains.

The first section of the chapter provides an excursus throughout the long history of the brand at first called *Premiata distilleria G. Fabbri* ('G. Fabbri Prize-winning Distillery'), founded in 1905 in Portomaggiore (Bologna, Italy): more than 100 years of expertise passed down through generations, focusing on the Italian tradition and food quality. We have especially given much space to Amarena Fabbri, a wild black cherry dipped in a sweet syrup, invented in 1915 by Rachele Buriani: today it stands as the flagship product of the company. The real advantage of Amarena Fabbri is the jar in which it is stored, adorned with blue and white floral motifs that recall the decorations of the Chinese porcelains of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. This is why the packaging is perceived as an added value to the product and the brand itself, to the point that Fabbri 1905 in China had to take two companies to court, accused of imitating the iconic company's blue and white patterns.

Today, Fabbri 1905 counts on 300 employees and a global presence supported by ten affiliated companies. Among these, Fabbri Shanghai Food Trading Corporation LTD, founded in 2009 by Nicola Fabbri, manages operations in China, relying on several distributors and e-commerce platforms to sell its products. The company at issue is also particularly active in organizing and participating to events held in the Asian country, and hence the last section of the second chapter is dedicated to this topic.

The third chapter focuses more on the linguistic point of view. Following a general introduction concerning the four brand translation strategies for foreign companies operating in China, we analyze specifically the case of Fabbri 1905.

The brand name was translated with 法布芮 1905 (*Fàbùruì 1905*), which, as will be described more in detail, doesn't have a particular meaning in Chinese: it simply consists in the phonetic adaptation of the Italian surname *Fabbri* and the year of foundation of the company. As a consequence, it will be also examined whether this choice is in line with the general trend of foreign companies' brand translation.

The second paragraph aims at listing and analyzing in detail the translation of Fabbri 1905's products: considering that they are typically connected to the Italian tradition and culinary customs, the translations are not automatic and universal, as a consequence they may also vary according to the referent we are taking into consideration. In fact, the research has been carried out by analyzing Fabbri 1905's official e-shop on Taobao, Fabbri 1905's products catalogues for China, Fabbri 1905's official WeChat account, and the Chinese version of the Company Profile document.

In conclusion, we also discuss the current situation of the registered trademarks of Fabbri 1905 in China. By consulting China TradeMark Office's website, we have noticed that the majority of Fabbri 1905's registered trademarks are in Italian, there are, however, some Chinese names that have been protected.

The fourth chapter presents a general overview concerning Chinese social media platforms. After a short introduction describing the "online world" in China, some of the major social networks are described: WeChat, Kuaishou, Douyin, Xiaohongshu, Sina Weibo, Renren, Bilibili and Zhihu. The following section aims at describing more in detail those eye-catching features for Chinese posts and videos depicting food and beverage products, especially focusing on those main categories of products that the company Fabbri 1905 sells. In most of the cases of contents portraying drink preparations, we can notice a minimalist background, a transparent glass and the hands of the person preparing the drink, whereas the ones portraying ice cream (mostly served in tubs) are colorful and we can see the product with at most the hands of the ice cream maker or customer. In addition, we have described those contents characterized by special elements, such as the posts in collaboration with a Key Opinion Leader or a celebrity and in occasion of the Chinese New Year.

The second paragraph focuses on the case of Fabbri 1905, which is promoting its products in China through three main platforms: WeChat, Xiaohongshu and Douyin. The company's behavior on these social networks is examined in detail: the language, the layout, the colors, the font, and other specific features. In addition, we analyze Fabbri 1905's official website, which also has a Chinese version, composed mainly by QR codes that redirect the user to the social networks' accounts and to the Chinese online shop platform.

The fifth chapter centers on the analysis of Fabbri 1905's competitors and their activities across Chinese social media platforms. More precisely, a research has been undertaken to check which companies are registered on the three platforms utilized by Fabbri 1905 for promoting its products in China. In addition, the research was also centered on determining whether Fabbri 1905's competitors have translated their official websites in Chinese.

The second paragraph centers its focus on Monin: a French company founded in 1912 that stand as one of the major Fabbri 1905's competitors in China. We have described its active engagement on WeChat, particularly interesting since the company posts articles tailored for the Chinese audience, for example beverage recipes specifically designed for different areas of China. Moreover, on its official page much space is given to products that are closer to Asian tastes: the Red Bean Syrup, the Tamarind Syrup and the Yashi Phoenix Oolong Tea Syrup.

## Chapter 1

### *Exploring China's food landscape: insights into a dynamic market*

As previously outlined in the introduction, the current thesis centers its focus on analyzing the operations of the Italian company, Fabbri 1905, in China.

Before delving deeper into the topic, it is necessary to take a step back to examine the broader context where the company operates. Therefore, the present chapter is aimed at analyzing the implications of the *Made in Italy* label and its correlation with the Chinese consumers' behavior and preferences, without shifting the focus from the food and beverage sector.

#### *1.1. Overview on the meaning of the Made in Italy label and its relation to the Chinese consumer behavior*

*Made in Italy* is an expression used to categorize those products produced in Italy, recognized as Italian and exported abroad (Castoldi and Salvi, 2003: 225). As a consequence, *Made in Italy* has a cultural, commercial, and economic value, implying Italian traditions, customs, way of eating and drinking. However, due to the globalization of the economy and due to offshoring<sup>1</sup> practices, the expression often refers to the flow of exports of Italian branded products labeled as such, even though the actual production is carried out in other countries (Castoldi and Salvi, 2003: 225) or even though the company's ownership is foreign. Concerning the first case, Stefano Liberati (2021: 263-270) in his book *I signori del cibo* ('The food lords'), shows an interesting example: in the mid-1980s a group of Italian entrepreneurs started to produce tomato paste in the Chinese region Xinjiang. As a consequence, the region became a place of maximum production, thanks to the Chinese low labor costs and the Italians machineries and know-how. However, the Chinese swiftly grasped the production methodology, leading to the circulation of Xinjiang-produced tomato paste by Chinese companies. This product began competing with Italian offerings, eventually monopolizing areas where China holds significant economic and political influence, for example in Africa. Today in West Africa, an area where the product at issue is widely consumed, there is a strong competition between Italian and Chinese tomato paste companies, which continue to recall the *tricolore* (the green, white, and red Italian flag) on their packaging (Liberati, 2021: 263-270).

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<sup>1</sup> The term offshoring refers to "the practice of basing a business or part of a business in a different country, usually because this involves paying less tax or other costs" (source: Cambridge English Dictionary)

As we can notice, the label *Made in Italy* represents a strategic tool for many companies, as demonstrated by the current Italian government itself, which has set up the *Ministero delle Imprese e del Made in Italy* ('Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy'), currently under the responsibility of Adolfo Urso. In justifying this choice and the very use of this expression in English, the Ministry writes on its official website:

“The new name is intended to emphasize a strategic orientation: to put at the center of action not only the *context* (economic development), but more the *subject*, for example the enterprises, which are the true protagonists of growth. Italian companies are, in fact, recognized everywhere for the quality and excellence of their products and have enabled our *Made in Italy* to become a label that is appreciated all over the world”<sup>2</sup>

In fact, *Made in Italy* goes beyond being just a label, it is a synonym of creativity, style, artisanal and tradition. In the common thinking, it is associated with products especially belonging to the fashion and food industry. In the first case, Prada, Gucci, Armani, and many others stand as a symbol of the Italian refinement and quality. Concerning the second case, we just need to think about the Mediterranean diet, known to be one of the healthiest in the world. Italian food is recognized to be simple yet refined, traditional yet universally known, based on high quality ingredients yet on recipes coming from popular practices. In addition, although Italian food notably varies among different regions, the most common products linked to this label are pizza, pasta, olive oil, coffee, ice cream, truffles, wine and many more.

But is it possible to establish an assessment of *Made in Italy* that goes beyond the common perception of our country as a place of creativity and good living, art, and passions? A research conducted by Istat, the Italian National Institute of Statistics, shows that in October 2023 exports grew by 3.0% year-on-year, with an increase of 9.4% for non-EU markets. More specifically, food products, beverages and tobacco recorded +9,1%<sup>3</sup>. In fact, the food and beverage industry is one of the strongest and most profitable sectors in Italy.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.mimit.gov.it/index.php/it/ministero/il-ministero-in-2-click>

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/292235>

Table 1 shown below illustrates the strengths and the weaknesses of the food and beverage sector within the Italian market. The information reported in the table is based on the analysis conducted in 2021 by the *Federazione Italiana dell'Industria Alimentare* ('Italian Food Industry Federation')<sup>4</sup>:

*Table 1: Strengths and weaknesses of the Italian Food and beverage sector – re-elaborate version of the table in slide 5 taken from the following website: [https://www.sace.it/docs/default-source/eventi/old/2021/20211006---arabia-saudita/federalimentare-overview-f-b-6thoct21.pdf?sfvrsn=c9609fbe\\_2](https://www.sace.it/docs/default-source/eventi/old/2021/20211006---arabia-saudita/federalimentare-overview-f-b-6thoct21.pdf?sfvrsn=c9609fbe_2)*

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wide range of high-quality products</li> <li>▪ Geographical quality indicators</li> <li>▪ Close connections with the territory and Italian cultural heritage</li> <li>▪ High level of safety, attention to nutrition and sustainability</li> <li>▪ Process/product innovation while respecting tradition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fragmented sector (98% SMEs)</li> <li>▪ High costs for logistics and services</li> <li>▪ Lower growth rate in exports compared to EU competitor countries</li> <li>▪ Counterfeiting and imitation</li> <li>▪ Lack of Italian Large Scale modern retail spread worldwide</li> </ul>

Concerning the first and the last point of the weaknesses listed, it is worth noticing that Italy, at least in the food and beverage business, can't count on strong global brands as the ones from the United States such as Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza, or Starbucks, even though the words pizza and coffee are universally linked to Italy.

It happens, indeed, that Italian brands or products end up in foreign hands. See, for example, the over 100 years old Peroni beer, now part of the Japanese Asahi Group Holdings, which continues to maintain a *Made in Italy* profile. Or the salt crystal beer *Messina* (the product name is a reference to the Sicilian city), taken over by the Dutch company Heineken. Or Galbani, founded in 1882, the company that produces dairy products as the Italian mozzarella has now been acquired by the French group Lactalis. These are only three examples of those brands that, despite being managed by foreign companies, in the Italian people's imagination itself are considered to be Italian, and they are sold around the world as such.

The only real global company, in the food and beverage business, with an Italian property and label is Ferrero. The company was founded in Alba (a city in the Italian region Piemonte) and accounts for 0.2% of Italy's Gross Domestic Product (Polizzi, 2023: 37). Its products are sold in 170 countries, including China, and it has 32 factories in five continents<sup>5</sup>. The flagship product, of absolute popularity, is Nutella, featured in a famous scene in Nanni Moretti's movie *Bianca* (known in English

<sup>4</sup> Source: [https://www.sace.it/docs/default-source/eventi/old/2021/20211006---arabia-saudita/federalimentare-overview-f-b-6thoct21.pdf?sfvrsn=c9609fbe\\_2](https://www.sace.it/docs/default-source/eventi/old/2021/20211006---arabia-saudita/federalimentare-overview-f-b-6thoct21.pdf?sfvrsn=c9609fbe_2)

<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://www.ferrero.it/i-nostri-numeri>



as *Sweet Body of Bianca*), as an antidote to depression and loneliness. In addition, Ferrero won the Global Power of Consumer Products 2015 as the most popular Italian company in the world, ranking 77 in the global classification (Deloitte, 2015: 12).

It is also worth mentioning Eataly, owned by the Farinetti family, a chain of Italian marketplaces that brings the value and variety of Italian food companies all over the world, from pasta to wine, from meat to cheese and, of course, sweets.

Despite the fact that Italy counts a few big multinationals, the country is the world's leading country in terms of certified products, among whom wine alone holds 65% of the total certifications<sup>6</sup>. The Ismea-qualivita report<sup>7</sup> highlights the commercial value that PDO and PGI<sup>8</sup> products during 2023. These are valuable food products that are very competitive on the international market and therefore in some cases designed for export. The so-called *PDO Economy*, according to this research, is now worth more than 20 billion euros, while the export of the wine sector alone is worth almost seven. In fact, the best Italian products - from parmesan to oil, from mozzarella to San Marzano tomatoes - now boast many imitation attempts, even in rich countries like the United States. As a consequence, there is a need to pay attention to local laws: monitoring fakes and copyright violations is fundamental for companies' protection, as the Amarena Fabbri case showed in chapter 2.

The label *Made in Italy* can also count on a positive country of origin effect. The Country of Origin (COO) is a discriminating variable in purchasing decisions, it “represents the extension of the perception of a specific country to its products or brands, with a positive or negative effect [...] related to the historical, socio-economic, political and cultural characteristics of a country” (Alon et al., 2022: 264, my translation). It consists of an *extrinsic cue*, used by consumers as the first indicator of the quality of a product when he or she is unfamiliar with it (Bertoli and Resciniti, 2013: 28). In the case of *Made in Italy*, even if the customer knows well that all or part of the manufactured product was made outside Italian borders, s/he automatically perceives it as more valuable and more authentic. On the contrary, there are other countries that have an image to improve, for example China, whose products generate mostly a reaction of suspicion in the consumer who usually perceive the product

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<sup>6</sup> Source: [https://www.sace.it/docs/default-source/eventi/old/2021/20211006---arabia-saudita/federalimentare-overview-f-b-6thoct21.pdf?sfvrsn=c9609fbc\\_2](https://www.sace.it/docs/default-source/eventi/old/2021/20211006---arabia-saudita/federalimentare-overview-f-b-6thoct21.pdf?sfvrsn=c9609fbc_2)

<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://www.qualivita.it/rapporto-ismea-qualivita-2023/#toggle-id-1>

<sup>8</sup> PDO stands for Protected Designation of Origin: the product has a strong connection with the terroir, in fact every stage of the production, processing and preparation process must occur exclusively in the designated region; PGI stands for Protected Geographical Indication, it refers to those products that have a particular quality, reputation or other characteristics linked with the terroir, as a consequence at least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation must occur in the designated region. (source: [https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes-explained\\_en](https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes-explained_en))

as fake or low-quality. Therefore, the latter case consists of a negative country of origin effect, although this perception is slowly changing.

As we said above, there are food items and beverages that are associated with Italy all over the world. However, reactions to new products vary from country to country. Generally speaking, the newer a product is perceived, the more challenging it becomes for companies to secure market acceptance. This is especially true for the average Chinese consumers. On one hand, they are hesitant to be the first to try a product, yet they also don't want to lag behind in embracing innovations: as a consequence, they tend to be more inclined to purchase a product after observing others doing so (Alon et al., 2022: 68). In fact, for a company hiring the so called Key Opinion Leaders or Key Opinion Customers represent an effective strategy to make the product more accepted within the Chinese market, as we will see in chapter 4.

Therefore, it is likely that, at least in the case of spaghetti, the nationalistic spirit prevails in China: it could be said that the spaghetti are culturally equivalent to the Chinese noodles<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, the penetration factor of a product is also determined by cultural and anthropological reasons. Clearly, the task of selling spaghetti in China is more difficult (even though not impossible) comparing to other markets. As an Italian saying says: "It is like selling ice lollies at the North Pole".

To give an example, Yang Guang, in the professional medical academic journal called 人人健康 *rénrén jiànkāng* 'everybody's health', has written an article titled 《改掉这些“洋习惯”》 *gǎi diào zhèxiē “yáng xíguàn”* 'drop these foreign habits'. In the article, he stands against the tide of change, strongly disagreeing with the westernization of Chinese diet habits, more specifically he criticizes the growing interest of the Chinese people in consuming milk, believed to be harmful to health due to the common Chinese lactose malabsorption, as we will see in the paragraph 1.2.2. Below is the abstract of his writing:

“Nowadays, people are more and more westernized, festivals are westernized, the diet is westernized, habits are westernized ..... They do not know that some things can't be westernized, because Eastern and Western people's physiques are different. Therefore, some of the "foreign habits" should be dropped!” (Yang 2014: 1, my translation)

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<sup>9</sup> From a linguistic point of view, it is interesting to notice that *pasta*, and *spaghetti*, are translated in Chinese as 意大利面 *yìdàlì miàn*, literally 'Italian noodles'. *Spaghetti* in Chinese share the character 面 *miàn*, which refers to the wheat flour, with the word 面条 *miàntiáo* which means 'noodles'.

Generally speaking, compared to Western countries China is culturally different with a strong and rooted tradition, different consumer behavior and political system. Considerations that suggest exporting to China are often dictated by a superficial analysis of numbers: as China is the second most populous country in the world (only recently surpassed by India), the potential market is enormous. Nevertheless, China has within profound regional differences in taste, language, customs, also between first, second and third tier cities<sup>10</sup>. As a consequence, the approach of companies often goes accordingly, with successes and failures.

Nevertheless, to have a clearer understanding of Chinese culture, emphasizing generalizations while not fully encompassing regional variations, it can be helpful to refer to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Hofstede, by analyzing 90 000 people in 66 countries, elaborated a model consisting of five indexes that, on a scale from 0 to 100, try to evaluate and confront countries' different cultures. Below is a brief definition for each index (Cateora et al., 2020: 84-96):

- Power distance Index: it measures the tolerance of social inequality. If the score is high, it means the political system tends to be more hierarchical.
- Individualism and collectivism Index: if the score of individualism is high, the culture has a "I" approach to life, meaning that it is more about the individual rather than the group. If the score of individualism is low, the culture has a "we" approach to life, meaning that the group's benefit is more important.
- Uncertainty Avoidance Index: it measures how much the population is willing to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity. The cultures that score low values are more inclined to take risks and have a more empirical approach to understanding and knowledge.
- Masculinity and Femininity: if the masculinity score is high, the society is oriented towards achievements, heroism, assertiveness, and material success.
- Long Term and Short Term orientation: if the long term index is high, it implies that the culture is time-oriented. People are more inclined to plan and to respect rules and traditions.

As Shi Xiumei and Wang Jinying (2011: 15) explain in their article, China ranks differently compared to Western countries: in China the Power Distance Index scores a high value corresponding to 80; China is a collectivistic society and people seek for harmonic relationships, as a consequence it scores a low value concerning the Individualism Index; the Uncertainty Avoidance Index scores

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<sup>10</sup> The Chinese City Tier System is a classification method used to classify Chinese cities, based on different factors such as the Gross Domestic Product, population, infrastructures, industries, business opportunities and more. Usually, this system divides the cities in four categories. First tier cities are the most advanced and developed urban centers, for example Beijing and Shanghai. Whereas cities belonging to the fourth tier are those that exhibit the lowest levels of development, for example Heihe and Zhongwei (source: <https://multimedia.scmp.com/2016/cities/>).

significantly low with 32; the Masculinity Index is quite high with 66 and, finally, the Long Term Orientation index is significantly elevated.

Since China shows a low score in Hofstede's Individualism Index, according to the research conducted by Yunjae, Kihan and Lu (2010), it is more likely that the family, the community, and popular appeals stand as the subjects of food advertisements. In addition, another example is that, considering that China shows a high score in the Power Distance Index, the usage of status appeals is more prevalent in Chinese food advertisements compared to those in the United States (Yunjae, Kihan and Lu, 2010: 7).

These scores in part derive from the Confucian philosophy which has profoundly influenced the Chinese population and its social structure since around 500 BC. Confucianism (known in China as 儒教, *Rújiào*) is based on the teachings of Confucius (孔夫子, *Kǒng Fūzǐ*) and consists of a ritual system and a moral and social doctrine that has influenced several East Asian countries. In fact, from an economic perspective, according to Monkhouse, Barnes, and Hanh Pham (2013: 322), we can identify five main Confucian values that still shape the behavior of the average East Asian consumer: face saving, humility, group orientation, respect for social hierarchy and reciprocity in exchange. By looking at these values, we can notice all of them concern the relation of a person with another. This helps us introduce a keyword necessary to better understand the Chinese society: 关系 *guānxi* 'relationship, connections, relations', which, from a business perspective, it refers to the capacity to build and maintain, faithfully and respectfully, good relationships with business partners.

*Made in Italy* also has to deal with trends of nationalism of goods, referring to the attitude of those who only buy products from their own country and consider the use of imported goods immoral. This behavior can have social, cultural, political reasons. In recent years, thanks to increased awareness of environmental issues, a new motivation has emerged to favor zero kilometer products, given the cost (also in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) of transporting goods.

In China, Deng Xiaoping's reforms (改革开放, *gǎigé kāifàng*, 'reform and opening-up') and the entrance in the World Trade Organization in 2001 (where China was required to adhere to new trade regulations), the country started a process of liberalization and opening of its markets for goods and services (D'Costa, 2012: 202). However, these events seem not to have stopped the nationalistic spirit of Chinese people and economy. On the contrary, it gave rise to new forms of it, emphasizing control over the more valuable segments of the value chain, rather than solely focusing on economic nationalism tied to local labor and capital for production (D'Costa 2012: 203). China's openness has led both to a growing tension between foreign brands and Chinese brands (occasionally resulting in

boycotts that affected the former<sup>11</sup>), while, ironically, if we go to China we can notice that the iPhone enjoys significant popularity. Therefore, we can note that the Asian country, while moving towards a consumeristic society, is nowadays characterized by contrasting trends, reflection of its dual economic system, socialism and capitalism, defined in Chinese as 中国特色社会主义 *zhōngguó tè sè shè huì zhǔ yì* ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’.

An example that synthetize the fusion of these two apparently conflicting trends is new a marketing phenomenon that has been recently gaining popularity in China: the 国潮 *guó cháo* (literal meaning: ‘national trend’). It consists in promoting local products with “patriotic” characteristics as references to Chinese culture and history. Thus, *Made in China* becomes a synonym for quality and fashion: a contemporary style, but still linked to tradition. It appeals to the feeling of national identity, especially directed towards Millennials and Gen Z (Goldin, 2022). This can represent both an opportunity and a risk for foreign brands, who need to beware of offending the Chinese culture in any form or manner. In the beverage sector, one of the most iconic brands that take advantage of this new trend is Goyeahtea (known in China as 宫野, *Gōngyě*), specialized in producing tea and milk tea. In fact, its logo represents the traditional Chinese mask of the dancing lion, plus the brand often uses calligraphic fonts, traditional references and symbols (Goldin, 2022).

To conclude, the food and beverage world is crossed by many elements: new economic and marketing phenomena, cultural and taste preferences, trends, labels. Perhaps the next generations will no more associate a product with a specific country, perhaps they will value more other product characteristics, such as price or sustainability.

### *1.2. Sugar consumption and market trends in China: focus on specific products*

Food represents a fundamental part of Chinese culture. From meal preparation rituals, dietary practices to rooted consumption etiquette, food reflects traditions passed down through generations, symbolizing values, history, and regional diversity within the Chinese society. However, there are new trends, especially among the younger generations and wealthier people, who follow more western habits.

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<sup>11</sup> The latest episodes involve boycotts addressing to brands such as H&M and Nike, due to the companies’ decision to stand against forced labor in Chinese regions like Xinjiang (Friedman and Paton, 2021)

Therefore, the aim of this paragraph is to show the general market trends in China of those categories of products usually labeled as *Made in Italy*, and that the company at issue, Fabbri 1905, sells both as final products and as intermediate products for artisanal production: ice creams, syrups, spreads, pastry, and liqueurs.

In addition, some of leading companies that dominate the various sectors will be mentioned, in Chinese they are called 龙头企业 *lóng tóu qǐyè* ‘dragon’s head companies’. The name comes from a popular Chinese dance: the first person in line (the leading company in the economic sector), wearing a dragon head mask, is followed by other dancers (the smaller actors in the production system) who support the body of the mythical animal (Liberati, 2021: 20).

Moreover, since the products listed, with the exception for spirits, are sweet products, it is necessary to understand the broader context of sugar consumption within the Chinese market.

Concerning Chinese consumption patterns and preferences, sweet flavors are not as dominant as savory ones. Furthermore, unlike the Italian tradition, a Chinese breakfast predominantly consists of savory dishes rather than sweet ones. Desserts are, indeed, usually considered as snacks and are traditionally lower in sugar content.

Therefore, analyzing the dynamics of sugar consumption in China is not merely an academic pursuit, but it bears implications for cultural value, public health policies, regional differences, economic considerations, and societal well-being.

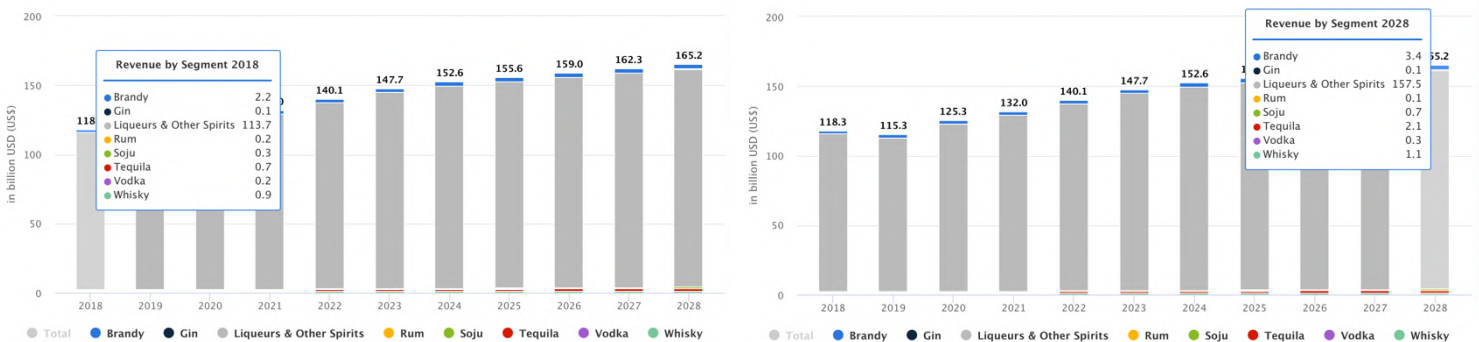
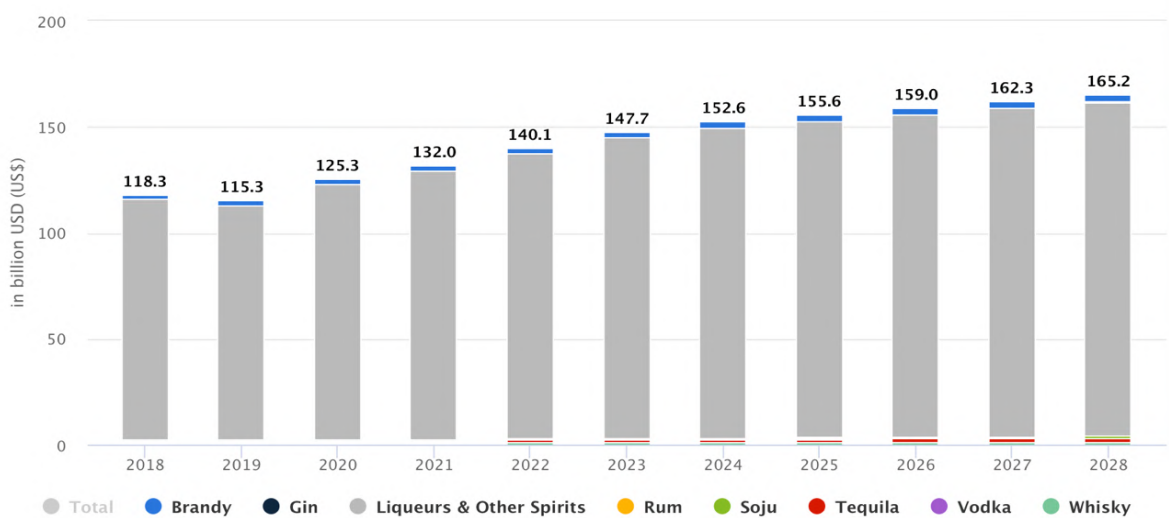
The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in 2023, has drafted a document concerning the world sugar market projections for the period 2023-2032, covering topics as consumption, production, trade and prices for sugar beet, sugar cane, sugar, molasses, and high-fructose corn syrup. According to this report, per capita sugar consumption is prospected to increase in those countries with low per capita intake levels, due to its calorie content. Conversely, countries with high per capita consumption levels are expected to witness a contrasting trend due to health concerns. More specifically, in China, although the sugar per capita consumption should remain below the global average (12.6 kg/cap) in 2032, it is expected to rise due to the reopening of markets after the COVID-19 pandemics (OECD/FAO, 2023: 173). China’s sugar consumption has experienced in the latest years a rapid growth, largely attributed to the significant increase of the Gross Domestic Product and the consequent improvement of living standards (Liu, 2009: 32).

In addition, it can be noted that sugar consumption in China tends to be lower in northern regions compared to the southern ones, as the former tend to eat more savory dishes (FAO, 1997). Moreover, China’s sugar consumption notably increases between the Mid-Autumn Festival and the Chinese New

Year, due to the demand for beverages, pastries, confectionery, and other sugar-containing foods. On the contrary, in the first half of the year, the low temperature and the lack of major festivals make the social demand for sugary foods lower (Chen, Liu, and Tian, 2018: 44).

### 1.2.1. Spirits

China stands as one of the major importers of beverages, of all kinds, in the world: in 2020 the country imported 9160 million USD, placing second only to the United States of America (FAO, 2022: 225). More precisely, in 2023 the revenue in the spirits market reached 147.6 billion USD and it is expected to grow annually by 2.28%<sup>12</sup>. Spirits are alcoholic beverages whose alcohol content is much higher than most of wines and beers, produced through the distillation of wine, fermented fruits, or grains. In the next page are presented three tables showing the forecast concerning the revenue by segment of the spirit market in China in the period 2018-2028.



Tables 2-4-5: Spirit market in China - revenue by segment, 2018-2028. Most recent update: November 2023 (source: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/alcoholic-drinks/spirits/china>)

<sup>12</sup> Source: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/alcoholic-drinks/spirits/china>

As we can notice, it is evident that brandy stands out as the prevailing choice among the liqueurs sold in China. Forecasts also expect a substantial growth in the tequila market in the coming years. In addition, while Rum is the only one expected to slightly decrease, gin exhibits an unchanging value consistent with the previous years, forecasted to remain at 0.1 in 2028.

The leader brands in the Chinese spirit market are: the English Diageo (known in China as 帝亚吉欧, *Dìyàjíōu*), the French Pernod Ricard (known in China as 保乐力加中国, *Bǎolè Lìjiā Zhōngguó*), and the Chinese Kweichow Moutai (贵州茅台酒, *Guìzhōu Mǎotáijiǔ*).

In addition, some Chinese gin brands have lately sprung up, for example Porcelain Shanghai Dry Gin 百思林 *Bǎisīlín* (figure 1) and Balang 八浪 *Bālàng* (figure 2). By looking at the bottles in the pictures, we can notice that the brands both seem to embrace their cultural roots. Especially the first one reminds the Chinese porcelains decorations, with traditional and elegant patterns. This packaging can be reconducted to the new marketing phenomenon mentioned earlier called the 国潮 *guó cháo*.



Figure 1: Porcelain Shanghai Dry Gin (source: <https://www.porcelaingin.com/>)



Figure 2: Balang Gin (source: <https://sashaworks.com/Balang>)

Another example of brands in the spirits' market refers to a western one: Lyre's, an English company selling non-alcoholic liqueurs. Two years after entering in the Chinese market, in 2022, Lyre's has



launched the baijiu in its non-alcoholic version, aimed only at the Asian country<sup>13</sup>. The English company's cultural adaptation highlights its strategic response to local preferences and culture, attempting to meet the tastes and demands of the Chinese consumer. In fact, baijiu (in Chinese 白酒 *báijiǔ*, literal meaning 'white liqueur') is a traditional Chinese distillate made from sorghum, a grass belonging to the *gramineous* family, but it can have different preparations made from cereals such as millet, rice or maize<sup>14</sup>. Baijiu is a very strong liqueur, which can reach over 50 alc/vol. While it is highly consumed within the Chinese borders (baijiu can in fact be found for sale everywhere - from supermarkets to neighborhood shops), abroad it is almost unknown. In addition, this liqueur has also entered the history books: during the visit of the Nixon in Beijing to meet Mao, the Secretary of State of the United States, Henry Kissinger, said to Deng Xiao Ping: "I think if we drink enough Moutai, we can solve anything".

### 1.2.2. Ice cream

In China the ice cream market is expanding year by year, except for the period impacted by the COVID-19 pandemics. A research conducted by iiMedia Research<sup>15</sup> (艾媒咨询 *Ai Méi Zīxún*) and published in 2022 revealed, indeed, that the vast majority of Chinese consumers enjoy eating ice cream, showing their increasing inclination towards buying leisure food items.

The survey shows that the typical Chinese ice cream consumer profile comprises predominantly:

- Women, constituting 62.8% of the consumer base, while men account for 37.2%.
- From a geographical point of view, people from East China and South China represent higher percentages of ice cream consumers, 28.1% and 18.0% respectively. In contrast, regions like North China and Northeast China, characterized by colder climates, exhibit lower levels of ice cream consumption among their population.
- The average consumer usually belongs to the 18-29 or 30-39 years old age groups, accounting for more than 40% of the total.

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<sup>13</sup> Source: [https://store-f56tfmlqlu.mybigcommerce.com/content/press\\_releases\\_pdf/Lyre's%20Enters%20%24100%20Billion%20Spirit%20Category%20with%20World-First%20Non-Alcoholic%20Baijiu%20for%20China.pdf](https://store-f56tfmlqlu.mybigcommerce.com/content/press_releases_pdf/Lyre's%20Enters%20%24100%20Billion%20Spirit%20Category%20with%20World-First%20Non-Alcoholic%20Baijiu%20for%20China.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> There are in fact many types of baijiu, however the most famous one, considered as a status symbol in China, is Moutai (known in China as 茅台酒 *máotái jiǔ*), sold by the already mentioned company Kweichow Moutai.

<sup>15</sup> The following data about Chinese ice cream market take as reference this source: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1741189472413068692&wfr=spider&for=pc>

Research by iiMedia also revealed that China’s per capita consumption (2.9 kg in 2021) is higher than the average of the Asia-Pacific region. However, it shows a lower trend compared to the global average, which in 2021 reached 4.5 kg.

In addition, the ice cream companies that have the highest levels of appreciation in China are: the Chinese Yili Group (伊利集团, *Yīlì Jítuán*) and Mengniu Dairy (蒙牛集团, *Méngniú Jítuán*), the Anglo-Dutch Wall’s (known in China as 和路雪, *Hélùxuě* and in Italy as “Algida”) and Häagen-Dazs (known in China as 哈根达斯, *Hāgēndásī*) from the United States. The companies mentioned are specialized in the sale of industrial ice cream, predominantly of ice cream bars.

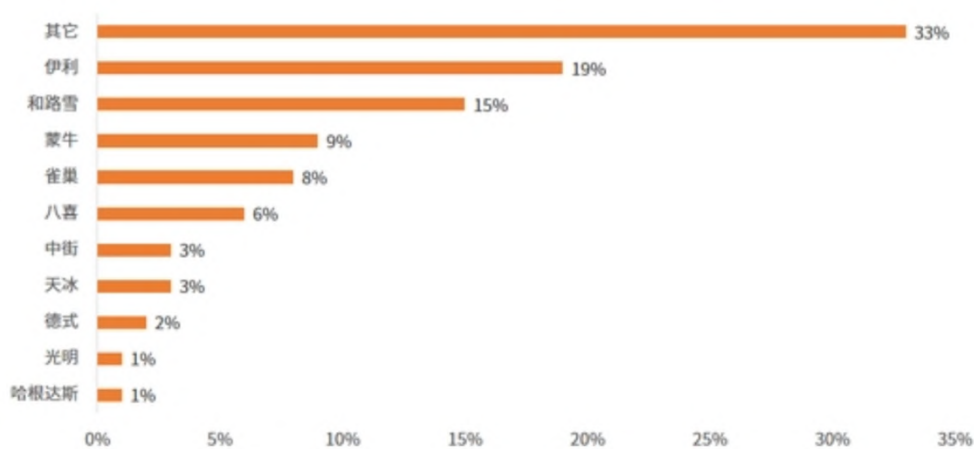


Table 5: Ice cream offline market share in China in 2021 – source: iiMedia Research (source: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1741189472413068692&wfr=spider&for=pc>)

Flavor is the primary factor considered by most of Chinese consumers when buying ice cream, whose price is generally between RMB 3 and RMB 10. The iiMedia research shows that chocolate, fruit, milk, and vanilla are the most popular flavors. In addition, new ones are emerging: soy sauce cheese (酱油芝士味, *jiàngyóu zhīshì wèi*), balsamic vinegar (香醋味, *xiāngcù wèi*) and, finally, the liqueur flavor (酒味, *jiǔ wèi*). The latter has been launched by Kweichow Moutai (leader in the liqueur market as we have seen in the paragraph 1.2.1.) and Mengniu Dairy through a co-branding collaboration creating a new product: the baijiu ice cream.

Lastly, the study also shows a change in ice cream’s consumption patterns: even though it is usually eaten in warmer seasons, a noteworthy increase in consumers enjoying the product during winter months has been observed, indicating a shift away from seasonal consumption habits.

Since the product at issue often includes milk as an ingredient, it draws attention to the broader context of milk consumption within the country. Dairy and milk-based products do not constitute a central element in the traditional dietary practices of Chinese people, apart from some Chinese regions where the population is mostly composed by breeders and shepherds (Vigolo, 2022: 153).

In recent times, there has been a growing acknowledgment of milk as a beneficial nutritional element, pushed especially by the Chinese government. However, its consumption has not yet penetrated the habits of the Chinese consumers, who consume dairy products more as ingredients for a recipe, rather than as a final product like cheese.

In addition, a study conducted in 1988, examining lactose malabsorption among 337 individuals from different ethnic groups in China, revealed a notable prevalence of lactose malabsorption among the Han population. In contrast, the Uyghur population, known for their traditional consumption of higher quantities of milk and cheese, exhibited a comparatively lower incidence of lactose malabsorption. In fact, “milk drinking habit may help people tolerate the effect of fermentation following lactose malabsorption” (Gong et al., 1988: 284-286). Although the study dates back to 1988, the thesis remains relevant, as numerous recent articles illustrate the tendency of Chinese people to experience reduced tolerance or digestion of dairy products: as we said Chinese people are not used to consume them on a daily basis and, as a consequence, lack enough of the *enzyme lactase* which helps to process milk-based food.

In fact, authors such as Greenwood (2020), Smith (2019: 262-284), Cavallo (2018), Hockridge (2006) and Bian et al. (2000: 1129-1132) have written more recent articles supporting the same thesis.

### 1.2.3. Syrups

Concerning the syrup market in China, Matthieu David, CEO and founder of Daxue Consulting<sup>16</sup>, has said: “While the Western world uses syrups also for kids, the usage is different in China where syrups are solely utilized as ingredients for cocktails or coffee, for instance.”<sup>17</sup> From one perspective, this statement holds truth, evident for example in Italy or in the United States where syrups can be used with ice to prepare slushes, particularly appreciated by children. However, on the other hand, recently in China a new drink is gaining widespread popularity among all generations, especially the younger consumers: the bubble tea or boba (珍珠奶茶, *zhēnzhū nǎichá*, literal meaning ‘pearl milk

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<sup>16</sup> Daxue Consulting is company based in China specializing in market research and strategy consultancy services.

<sup>17</sup> Source: <https://daxueconsulting.com/logistic-systems-in-china/>

tea’). The bubble tea is originally made of tea, milk, and chewy tapioca pearls; newer recipes often incorporate syrups of various flavors, especially fruit-based ones. It is typically consumed cold and is notably rich in carbohydrates, both characteristics that somewhat diverge from the principles of Chinese medicine, which advocates a healthy diet and hot drinks. The bubble tea, indeed, doesn’t find its origin in Mainland China. On the contrary, it was invented in Taiwan in the 1980s, which in turn has been influenced by the Japanese drinking habits: cold drinks, mixed tea, milk, and ice in cocktails (Noël, 2020). Although its characteristics, the bubble tea has been a real success in China: in 2022 across the country 400 000 bubble tea stores have opened, among these almost 23 000 outlets belong to Mixue Ice Cream & Tea (蜜雪冰城, *Mixuě Bīngchéng*, literal meaning ‘honey snow and ice city’), the leader company in the bubble tea market (Ma, 2023).

Two additional examples within the syrup market include High Fructose Syrup (known in China as 果葡糖浆, *guǒ pú tángjiāng*), and High Fructose Corn Syrup or HFCS (known in China as 高玉米果糖浆, *gāo yùmǐ guǒ tángjiāng*). Both are exhibiting a gradual increase in demand in the Chinese market, due to its versatile applications in different food and beverage products. In China, that stands as the biggest producer of starch (OECD/FAO, 2023: 176), we can notice a growing demand for these alternative caloric sweetener agents, as we can see in Table 6.

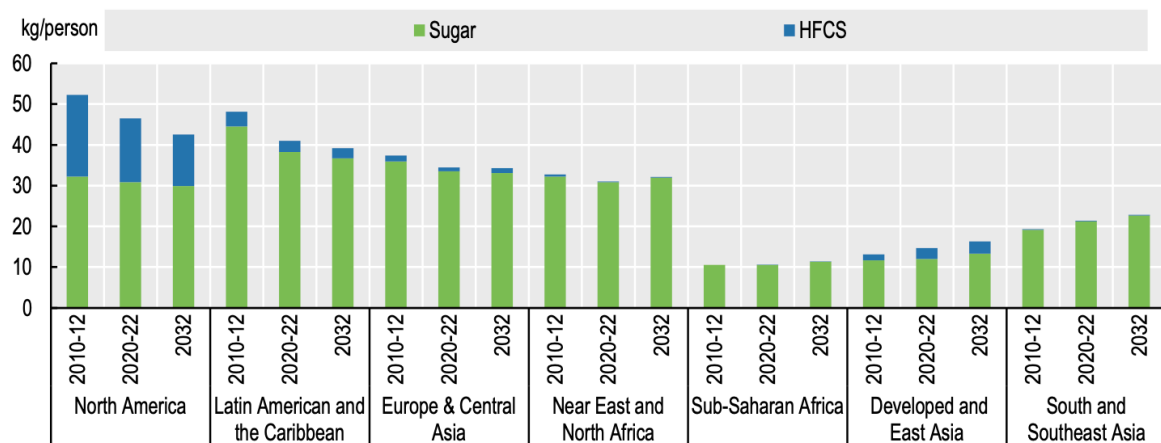


Table 6: Carbohydrate consumption per capita, per type, in the different regions (OECD/FAO, 2023: 175)

In 2020, China has experienced a notable increase in corn prices, that has inevitably impacted the production and consumption of the High Fructose Corn Syrup. As a consequence, industries, particularly soft drink manufacturers, sought other alternatives like sugar and other sweeteners such as erythritol in response to the escalation in costs. However, since the projections for the next decade

in China indicate a shift in the corn price, anticipated to become more competitive, in a growth in domestic demand of High Fructose Corn Syrup is forecast, expected to reach 2.8 kilograms per capita by the year 2032 (OECD/FAO, 2023: 176).

To conclude, it is interesting to notice that if we look for “糖浆” (*tángjiāng*, ‘syrup’) on 小红书 *Xiǎo Hóng Shū*, one of the leading Chinese social network where the user can post videos and photos, the brand most commonly tagged and linked to this term is Monin. Monin is a French company specializing in syrups, sauces, concentrates and other beverage products, which will be analyzed in more detail in the last chapter. Since Xiaohongshu can be seen as a reflection of the tastes of the average Chinese consumer, the numerous photos tagging bottles of Monin syrup (with their simple but refined labels) highlight the French company’s popularity and appreciation in China.

#### 1.2.4. Pastry

According to Hui Jiang’s article “China’s Rising Bakery Sector” (2021: 1), the recent developments of the Chinese bakery sector have led the industry to sharp growth, mainly boosted by the influence that the western lifestyle (and, as part of that, western diet) is exercising on the rising middle class population, which, as a consequence, is driving up the demand for convenient food alternatives. The Western-style pastries are, indeed, increasingly being integrated into the daily dietary habits of numerous middle-class urban consumers, competing with traditional Chinese desserts<sup>18</sup>.

For this reason, bakeries are spreading in China, with a concentration particularly evident in wealthier regions as in the eastern coastal provinces and in large and medium-sized cities (Bi, 2023: 328). Two examples that demonstrate the growing interest of Chinese consumers in this type of product are: the Singaporean multinational BreadTalk, which is gaining much popularity not only in China and in Singapore, but in Asia in general, offering a wide range of bakery products such as bread, cakes, and pastries; Bakery China (known in China as 中国国际焙烤展览会, *Zhōngguó Guójì Bèikǎo Zhǎnlǎnhuì*, ‘China International Bakery Exhibition’), founded in 1997, is an event held annually in Shanghai which serves as a gathering point for professionals and buyers to meet and share the latest innovations in manufacturing, distribution, research and development, applications and other services in the bakery industry<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> They are mainly consumed during festivals. In addition, the ingredients used are usually uncommon in the Western sweet pastries, some examples include red bean, lotus seed or taro pastes, sticky-rice dough, pumpkin, exotic fruit and more.

<sup>19</sup> Source: <https://www.bakerychina.com/en/>

As for the other products described in this chapter, the pastry sector suffered a severe slowdown due to COVID-19: “the unpackaged segment has been hit harder due to shorter shelf life, consumers’ limited access to retail outlets, and increased concerns about food hygiene [...] Cake sales have been hit especially hard by the disappearance of large celebrations during quarantine and social distancing measures” (Hui, 2021: 4).

In fact, products that are imported and not consumed at home on a daily basis are more susceptible to market closure. For instance, the Chinese, within the domestic context, tend not to have large ovens or small stoves, resulting in limited baking of cakes or preparation of coffee using moka pots. Therefore, these products that are not traditional and are not usually consumed at home by the Chinese people witnessed a considerable decline in consumption due to COVID-19 pandemics.

For this reason, foreign companies exporting in China should localize the flavors to target preferences (Hui, 2021: 3), in order to enter more deeply into the local market.

The case of Oreo in China is an example of a company that localized its product. Oreo is one of the most famous biscuits in the world, that, however, at first didn’t gain much success in China: the product was not aligned to Chinese cultural preferences, only the brand name was translated as 奧利奧, *Àoliào*. As Srinivas K. Reddy (2014: 44-48) points out in its article, the problems concerning the “sandwich” biscuit in the Asian country were the following:

- Packaging: the Oreo was sold all over the world in a standard packaging, containing twelve biscuits. While in the United States bigger portions are perceived as an added value; Chinese people, on the contrary, are more used to smaller portions, especially for products that are not well-known in their culinary tradition.
- Taste: Oreo was perceived as excessively sweet.
- Price: Oreo was considered premium priced.
- Competitors: at first, in 1996, when the company entered in China, there weren’t many biscuits brands that could compete with Oreo. Its major competitors were the companies specializing in the sale of sweet crackers. However, the Taiwanese Master Kong (康師傅, *Kāng Shīfù*) later started to gain much success in China, leveraging two brands that together owned 32% of the national market share, while Oreo held 19%. It achieved notable success due to the sale of a sandwich biscuit that was less sweet in taste and sold in smaller quantities comparing to Oreo.

For the above listed reasons, the company launched a new product: the Light Sweet Oreo (奥利奥轻甜夹心, *Àoliào qīngtián jiāxīn*, ‘Oreo light sweet filling’). The company thus tailored its product to suit the local market, without losing its corporate identity. In fact, from an external point of view, the product looks the same as the one sold in Western countries (figure 3<sup>20</sup>), but it actually adopted some modifications by reducing sweetness and the portion sizes (Reddy, 2014: 44-48). In addition, the company introduced other taste adaptations for the Chinese market, for example the red bean paste Oreo (figure 4<sup>21</sup>, 奥利奥夹心故宫版蜜制红豆酥味 *Àoliào jiāxīn Gùgōngbǎn mìzhì hóngdòusū wèi*, ‘Oreo Palace edition made with honey, red bean crisp flavor filling’) and the chicken hot wings Oreo (figure 5<sup>22</sup>, 奥利奥夹心饼干辣鸡翅味, *Àoliào jiāxīn bǐnggān là jīchì wèi*, ‘Oreo cookies spicy chicken wing flavor filling’).



Figure 3: Light Sweet Oreo – source: Taobao



Figure 4: Red Bean Oreo - source: Taobao



Figure 5: Hot Chicken Wings Oreo - source: Taobao

In addition, Ding (2019) in his article also suggests that companies working in the pastry sector should pay attention to the social significance and symbolic value of the products they are selling. China is, in fact, shifting towards a consumer society, where people pay more attention to non-traditional elements, such as the status symbol represented by the product (Ding, 2019: 23).

### 1.2.5. Spreads

Traditionally, breakfast in China is characterized by savory dishes, as mentioned earlier. However, due to globalization, the country is increasingly influenced by Western trends. This transition can be observed in the growing number of bakeries and the consequent rise in the consumption of pastries,

<sup>20</sup> Source of figure 3: <https://www.taobao.com/list/item/686880476274.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Source of figure 4: <https://www.taobao.com/list/item/606634380972.htm>

<sup>22</sup> Source of figure 5: <https://www.taobao.com/list/item/574369411112.htm>

as highlighted in the previous paragraph. Simultaneously, various other Western products are gradually becoming incorporated into the Chinese breakfast culture: the spreads, including jams, toppings, and preserves. This phenomenon is illustrated in the table below, which shows the revenue generated by some specific spread products in China. As we can notice, jams and marmalades hold the largest share of the market: from generating 13.44 billion USD in 2018, projections indicate substantial growth, reaching 23.48 billion USD in 2028. Chocolate spreads and peanut butter, instead, are only expected to slightly increase in their revenue between 2018 and 2023<sup>23</sup>.

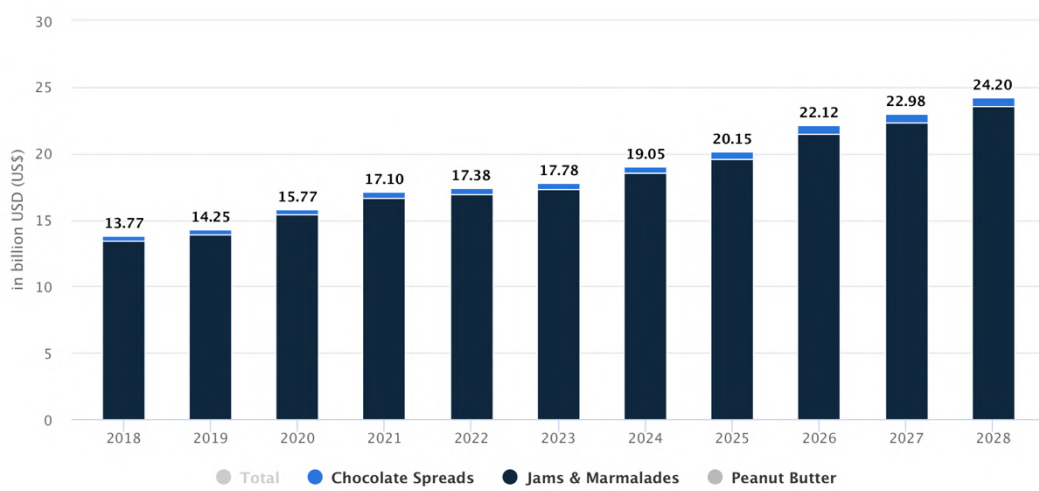


Table 7: Spread market in China - revenue, 2018-2028. Most recent update: November 2023 (source: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/food/spreads-sweeteners/spreads/china>)

The two leading foreign companies in the Chinese chocolate market are Mars from the United States, followed by the Italian Ferrero (Barbera, 2023). Ferrero (known in China as 费列罗, *Fèilièluō*), is famous all over the world especially for two iconic products: Ferrero Rocher (known in China as 金沙朱古力, *Jīnshā zhūgǔlì*), it consists of layered chocolate balls wrapped in a gold packaging particularly appreciated by Chinese consumers, since the color is associated with concepts as wealth and well-being; and Nutella, the famous hazelnut and chocolate spread. Nutella is known in China as 能多益, *Néngduōyì*: from a semantic point of view, the translation of the product name is a particularly effective since it literally means ‘can be more beneficial’.

The category of jam also includes a popular product in East Asia, known as red bean paste or red bean jam. In China it is referred as 豆沙 *dòushā* ‘bean paste’ or 红豆沙 *hóngdòu shā* ‘red bean

<sup>23</sup> Source: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/food/spreads-sweeteners/spreads/china>



paste'. Made of a variety of red bean called *adzuki*, this dark-red paste serves a versatile purpose in culinary applications: it is usually used as a filling for pastries. To show some examples: the Red Bean Cake (红豆糕, *hóngdòu gāo*); the Zongzi (粽子, *zòngzi*), a sweet dumpling made of glutinous rice usually eaten during the Dragon Boat Festival; the Tangyuan (汤圆, *tāng yúan*), glutinous rice balls typically served in a hot broth or syrup.

The majority of *adzuki* beans produced in China is, indeed, processed into bean paste, intended for domestic pastry production or for export as an intermediate product (Beckman, Lei, and Wang, 2009: 5).

## Chapter 2

### *Fabbri 1905 company profile: Italian tradition and high-quality products*

Fabbri 1905 is an Italian family company that operates in the food and beverage sector, selling both to end consumers and professionals. The latter category includes ice cream artisans, pastry chefs, baristas, bartenders, chefs, food service professionals, restaurant chains, cruise lines, and fast-food chains. Therefore, the company is internally divided in four main divisions: pastry and ice cream, semi-manufactured products for the food industry, large consumption and Ho.re.ca. circuit (restaurants, catering, bars, and cafeterias) (Poli, 2004: 103-104).

Fabbri 1905 sells high-quality products, especially fruit-based ones, composed by traditional Italian ingredients. The company has 40 production and packaging lines, more than 180 000 square meters of production space, and 1300 different types of products (Fabbri 1905, 2020-2021: 26). The latter are highly versatile: fruit pulp and syrups for cocktails, ice cream powder bases, but also toppings to garnish savory dishes and desserts, and many others.

Having more than 100 years of experience in the field, Fabbri 1905 has a long family tradition: today the fourth generation is part of the management of the company that counts 300 employees (Fabbri 1905, 2020-2021: 26). Since 2000, even the fifth generation is starting to fill some roles in Fabbri 1905 (Fabbri 1905, 2020-2021: 12).

The label *Made in Italy*, as we have seen in the first chapter, is commonly associated with concepts such as craftsmanship, high quality, and rooted tradition. These concepts are attributable also to Fabbri 1905's products. Therefore, the following chapters aim at explaining how the company positions itself in the global market, more specifically in the Chinese one, while trying not to compromise its Italian identity.

### *2.1. More than 100 years of experience<sup>24</sup>*

The history of the Fabbri 1905 company, at first called *Premiata distilleria G. Fabbri* ('G. Fabbri Prize-winning Distillery'), started in 1905. In that year, Gennaro Fabbri bought, thanks to his brother Antonio's financial help, a failed grocer's shop in Portomaggiore (Bologna, Italy).

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<sup>24</sup> The information about Fabbri 1905's history are all taken from *Cento anni Fabbri* (Poli, 2004)

In a period in which the food and mechanical industry were growing, Gennaro realized that a good quality product had to be associated with an effective marketing strategy. Having many competitors in the liqueur field, his first three bottles were so iconic that achieved resounding success: the *Primo Maggio* ('May Day'), reminding the socialist manifesto; the *Amaro Carducci*, homage to the Nobel Prize poet; the *Virov* energy drink for their working-class customers.

This success was, however, locally limited. As a consequence, Gennaro's sons (Aldo and Romeo) decided to abandon their studies, becoming part of the company. They travelled, around the Italian region Emilia Romagna, in elegant cars to make the brand better known, while offering a ride in exchange.

Gennaro's intuition was a commercial strategy based on the offer of gadgets, unique names and labels for the bottles. These concepts were so innovative and successful, that soon he invested the money back in his company: in 1914 he moved the *Distilleria* in Borgo Panigale, the industrial area of Bologna.

After moving to Borgo Panigale, the company extended the product selection to both alcoholic and non-alcoholic syrups, and eventually to the famous 'Amarena' (lit. 'black cherry'). Amarena Fabbri is a kind of wild black cherry: "semi-candied and preserved in syrup, [...]. A versatile ingredient for both sweet and savory dishes, for garnishing drinks, or simply to enjoy by the spoonful"<sup>25</sup>. It is the leading product of the company: 185 million wild black cherries are produced every year (Fabbri 1905, 2020-2021: 26), used to garnish for example ice creams, cocktails, or cakes.

The product, invented in 1915 by Rachele Buriani (Gennaro's wife), was at first called "Marena con frutto" and it was stored in demijohns. It later acquired added value thanks to the ceramic jar which stored the fruit and its sweet syrup. It is said that the jar was a gift given by Gennaro Fabbri to his wife to thank her for inventing this product.

The iconic blue and white vase, whose final version was created by Riccardo Gatti from Faenza (a town in the province of Ravenna), took inspiration from the Chinese art and *potiche*. In fact, the form and the blue floral motifs on a white background, recall the so-called Chinese 青花 *qīng huā* 'blue flower / pattern'. It refers to the blue and white porcelains, among whom the most precious ones date back to the Yuan (1279-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. At the time, the technique consisted in painting on the biscuit ware (unfired porcelain) with Chinese paintings (Liu Yanzhe, 2022: 164).

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<sup>25</sup> Source: [https://shop.fabbri1905.com/it-IT-en/amarena-fabbri-400g\\_FAFA4001.aspx](https://shop.fabbri1905.com/it-IT-en/amarena-fabbri-400g_FAFA4001.aspx)



Figures 6-7-8: Three examples of the Amarena Fabbri iconic vases (source figures 6 and 7: Poli 2004, pages 42 and 38; source figure 8: official Fabbri 1905 website)



Figure 9-10-11: Three examples of Chinese blue and white porcelains<sup>26</sup>

Thanks to the blue and white jar, the company acquires an identity that goes beyond the product itself. In fact, while the first advertisements placed the wild cherry at the center, as we can see in figure 12, we can notice that later the way of promoting the product changed.

In fact, the Amarena jar, and the packaging of Fabbri 1905's syrups too, are so recognizable that, by the end of the 20th century, the company advertised its products by depicting only the outline of their packagings, as we can see in figures 13 and 14. With a simple and straightforward language, the consumer immediately recognizes the context of the

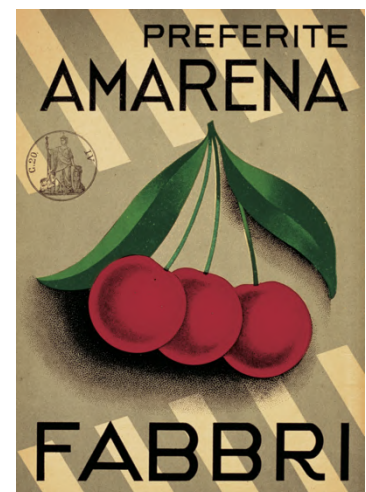


Figure 12: Amarena Fabbri advertisement, 1956 (Poli, 2004: 20)

<sup>26</sup> Sources: figure 9 <https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/culture/china-blue-white-porcelain.htm>; figures 10 and 11: <http://www.chinaonlinemuseum.com/ceramics-blue-and-white-porcelain.php>

advertisement: it emphasizes the brand and its visual identity, placing the product itself on a secondary position (Borello and Vezzani, 2000: 92-94).

A recent example of this kind of advertisements can be found in some of Fabbri 1905's WeChat articles, such as the one of 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021: the jar is in shadow, the observer is only able to see the outline of the vase and some decorations in half-light, as we can see in Figure 15.



Figure 13: Amarena Fabbri advertisement, 1998 – 'Excuse me, have you seen Amarena Fabbri?' (Poli, 2004:104)



Figure 14: Fabbri syrup advertisement, 1998 – 'Where are the great Fabbri syrups? In the glasses of those who love the best, natural, fanciful, and rich in taste drinks' (Poli, 2004:104)



Figure 15: Amarena Fabbri advertisement (source: Fabbri 1905 official WeChat account, 14/09/2021)

Gennaro Fabbri died in 1935 and, between that year and 1945, Fabbri 1905 suffered from the war. The bombing of the factory by the Allied, the fascist self-sufficiency policies, the restrictions and the import quotas weakened the company's business.

Germany and Italy were at first heavily reliant on foreign provisions. As a consequence, they both adopted protectionist policies concerning cereals, sugar, and agricultural goods, allowed to be only produced domestically (Tattara, 1991: 465). As a result, during those years, Fabbri 1905 risked losing a big percentage of its total sales. However, thanks to its production of jam, which was also sold to the army, it became one of the leading companies in the field.

During the German occupation of Italy, the company was also requisitioned and forced to produce jam for both the military forces and the civilians.

In the Post-war period, Fabbri 1905 focused on the production of liqueurs, ice cream, Amarena and fruit syrups. It was in 1947 when it became a public company, and its great success was mostly due to the semi-manufactured products for ice cream called “cremolato”. The target market were ice cream artisans who already had electric machines for the production. Therefore, the Fabbri family organized some vans and transformed them into laboratory schools to promote the new product.

“It could [...] be said that the Fabbri company played an important role in the launch of ice cream as a product which was viewed as a food, and no longer as a treat for greedy people or well-behaved children” (Poli, 2004: 59)

Since Fabbri 1905 was becoming famous all over Europe, the company had to enlarge its production within the province of Bologna: in the 1960s the factory was moved to Anzola dell’Emilia, while the headquarter remained in Borgo Panigale.

In 1999, Fabbri 1905 became a joint-stock company, and in 2002, *Fabbri G. Holding Industriale SpA* was established. This holding company owns 100% of the shares of "Fabbri 1905 SpA" and "Fabbri Gestioni Immobiliari SpA," overseeing real estate assets (Poli, 2004: 103).

Although the headquarter today is still in Borgo Panigale, the company is supported by ten affiliated companies to manage the Fabbri presence on the international market. Two are located in the USA, one in Germany, one in France, one in Spain, one in Argentina (both for production and trade), one in Brazil, one in Canada, one in Singapore (to manage the company’s presence in Asia) and one in China (Fabbri 1905, 2020-2021: 30).

In fact, one of the mottos of Fabbri 1905 is “think globally, act locally”, a sentence that we can often see in Chinese in the company’s official account on WeChat: 放眼全球, 立足当地 *fàngyǎn quánqiú*,

*lìzú dāngdì*. It is, in fact, interesting to see how typical Italian products can be sold in over 100 countries where the culture and culinary traditions may differ.

The strategy concerning the foreign market has been two-sided. On one hand, it entailed seeking out companies capable of distributing Fabbri's products, simplified by the presence all over the world of Italian migrants. On the other hand, direct investment through a system of foreign branches (Poli, 2004: 97-99).

## 2.2. *Fabbri 1905 in China*

“In China, Fabbri is called an egg company: white on the outside and yellow inside  
[...] A western company on the outside, therefore, and with a yellow, Chinese,  
heart inside”<sup>27</sup>

Fabbri 1905 has established its market presence in China through a subsidiary company: in 2009 法布芮上海食品贸易有限公司 *Fǎbùruì shànghǎi shípǐn màoyì yǒuxiàn gōngsī* ‘Fabbri Shanghai Food Trading Corporation LTD’ was founded. Today, it is directed by Nicola Fabbri.

The company, in order to sell its products in China, is supported by several local distributors, for example 懿翼 *yìyì*. In addition, Fabbri 1905 also relies on e-commerce platforms: it is, indeed, registered both on Taobao and Tmall, through the official e-shop accounts called “fabbri 法布芮旗舰店 *fabbri Fǎbùruì qíjiàn diàn* ‘Fabbri flagship store’.

Tmall and Taobao are both managed by Alibaba Group Holding Limited. Taobao, known in Chinese as 淘宝网 *Táobǎowǎng*, was created in 2003 as a response to the US-based online sales website eBay. It operates as a C2C (consumer to consumer) platform, enabling small enterprises or individuals to buy and sell products. Whereas, Tmall, known in Chinese as 天猫 *Tiānmāo*, was created in 2008 and it is a commercial website based on Taobao. It operates as a B2C (business to consumer) platform, allowing only legal entities, such as organizations or brands, to conduct sales: it implements strict requirements and verification processes for sellers registering on the website. In fact, Tmall is widely perceived by consumers as more reliable, safer, selling higher quality products compared to Taobao. The e-commerce phenomenon has indeed been revolutionary for companies operating in China. Thanks to the spread of smartphones, the Asian country has been the world’s leading market for online

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<sup>27</sup> Words of Nicola Fabbri (my translation), source: <https://www.fabbri1905.com/notizie/area-stampa/comunicati-stampa/quando-la-cina-ama-le-amarene-dalloriente-due-premi-a-fabbri-1905.kl>

sales from 2013 to 2020 (China Internet Network Information Center CNNIC, 2020: 38), which was further strengthened in the following years by the pandemic. Many Chinese never even owned a laptop, switching from the wired phone directly to the smartphone. In addition, according to “The 49th Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development”, the user size of online shopping in China had reached in December 2021 842 million people, covering 81.6% of the national total. Notably, this trend exhibits remarkable growth, extending its reach even into rural areas (China Internet Network Information Center CNNIC, 2022: 37-38).

Concerning the promotion of the products, at the moment, the affiliated company in Shanghai doesn’t have a marketing department. Nevertheless, it has been decided (starting from in August 2023) to hire a Chinese digital marketing agency, called *Digirepub*. Their purpose is to promote the products, both for retail and professionals, on Chinese social media.

In China, Fabbri 1905 has great experience especially working with professionals in the B2B market, particularly in the field of syrups and ice cream powdered bases. However, in recent years, the company is working towards developing the retail market (B2C), selling products such as Amarena Fabbri, toppings, Marendry (a liqueur with an Amarena Fabbri note) or Gin Fabbri.

However, the restrictions implemented during the COVID-19 pandemics negatively affected the company, which had to face difficulties in developing effective marketing strategies and in selling. Fabbri’s products are, in fact, not typically bought by Chinese for daily consumption, but, on the contrary, they are considered more as premium food.

Besides being attentive to local preferences and tastes, companies must remember that everything goes through China’s state and governmental regulations. A company that wants to export to China will therefore have to organize a solid structure around the construction and launch of the product: experts in geopolitics, anthropology, marketing, IT, law, privacy and more. It is not easy, but the results can be very valuable: selling in China could represent a profitable opportunity that brings with it some challenges.

In the next page, we propose a brief SWOT analysis of Fabbri 1905. It takes into account Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that the company has to face selling in China, and that will be further examined more in depth in the following chapters.



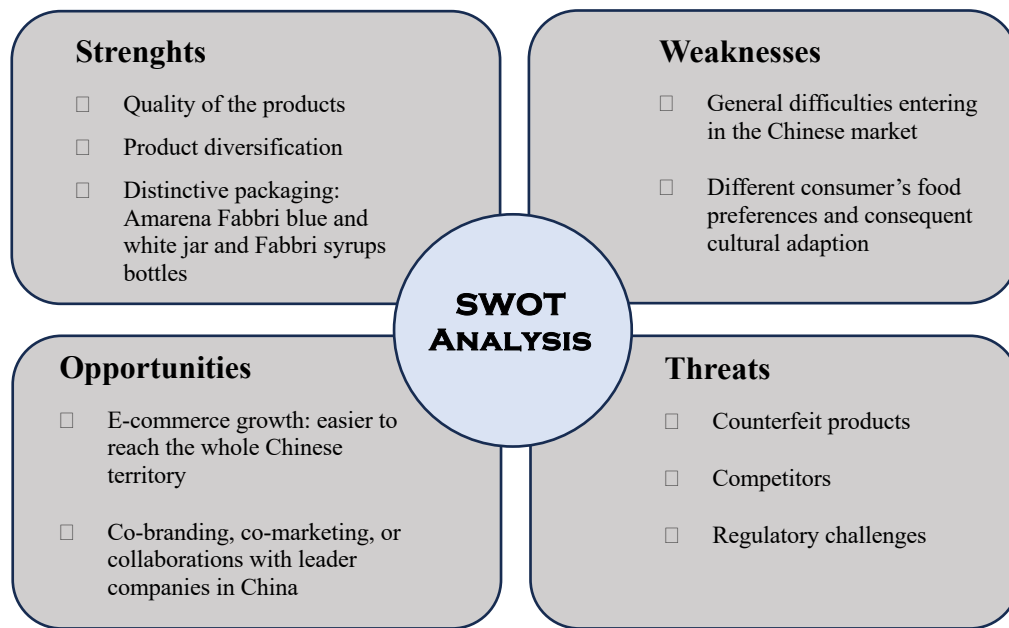


Table 8: Fabbri 1905 in China – SWOT analysis, personally drafted

Since Amarena Fabbri stands as the flagship product of the company, it can be useful to examine its market presence in China, indicative of Fabbri 1905's position in the target market.

At first the wild black cherries were only sold in the B2B sector. Therefore, the company had and has to find clear ways to adapt the explanation of the product and its usage to the average Chinese consumer, who is not as expert of the food and beverage field as a professional can be. For instance, Fabbri 1905 reinterpreted some Chinese recipes using Amarena Fabbri: recipes proposed to better suit the local market. To give two examples, the 月饼 *yuèbing* 'mooncake' and the 蛋挞 *dàntà* 'egg tart' are suggested to be filled or garnished with the wild cherry. The first one is a traditional pastry with a red bean core, usually prepared during the Mid-Autumn Festival; the second one is believed to have English and Portuguese origins and it is nowadays a common dessert in China.

Thanks to the qualitative research<sup>28</sup> conducted by Tiziano Vescovi in 2019 (2022: 74-77), it is possible to better understand how this typical Italian product, the Amarena Fabbri, is positioned in a culturally diverse country. The focus group has been carried out in Shanghai, using as methodological framework Schwartz's value theory. The first group was composed by innovators and people belonging to the Generation Z; the second one by early adopters<sup>29</sup> and young professionals; the third

<sup>28</sup> A qualitative research is "a type of market research that aims to find out people's opinions and feelings rather than information that can easily be shown in numbers" (source: Cambridge English Dictionary). The latter refers, in fact, to the quantitative research.

<sup>29</sup> In the field of marketing, the early adopter is defined as "someone who is one of the first people to start using a new product" (source: Cambridge English Dictionary).

one by early majority<sup>30</sup> and young mothers. The outcomes obtained are the following (Vescovi, 2022: 74-77):

- Packaging: it is very much appreciated due to the decorations that, as above described, recall a traditional style of Chinese vases. However, it also recalls pickles or savory products, sold in China in similar packaging.  
Another element that could be considered as negative from the point of view of a Chinese consumer, is that the vase completely hides the product. Since it is not common to find syrupy wild cherries in China, the groups' members were more skeptical concerning the product, not being able to see it before opening the jar.
- Branding and communication: according to the members of the groups, it was not easy to understand the origin of the product. Due to the similarity of the packaging with the patterns of the Chinese porcelains, the Italian provenance and the positive country-of-origin effect were not perceived by the groups' members. In addition, the image displayed on the jar shows the Amarena on top of the ice cream, which can be evocative for an Italian consumer, but a Chinese one could be confused concerning the product's usage.
- Product: the ice cream image above mentioned makes the young mothers especially think about an unhealthy product used to garnish cold food. In fact, according to Chinese medicine, low-sugar and hot dishes should be preferred for physical well-being. Another factor is that its shelf-life is considered suspicious since the product can be conserved for a long time. On the contrary, Amarena Fabbri is a natural product.
- Taste and suggested use: generally speaking, it can be observed that Chinese culinary preferences tend to low sugar products, compared to Western habits. Desserts are typically consumed as a snack, made by ingredients that are less commonly used in Europe, such as red beans or tea. As a consequence, the Amarena Fabbri should be presented as a highly versatile product that can be used to prepare sweet and sour dishes or combined with yogurt, to reduce its sweetness.

In conclusion, there are two primary factors to be considered when trading with a culturally diverse country: the reduced familiarity and awareness concerning the product within the target market; the presence of distinct product-related attributes, concerning for example usage, perception, role, and complementarity.

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<sup>30</sup> In the field of marketing, the early majority are defined as those people “who begin buying a new product or service after waiting to see if the people who have already bought it are satisfied with it” (source: Cambridge English Dictionary).

Overall, the most effective feature of Amarena Fabbri seems to be the blue and white jar. A recent episode demonstrates, in fact, how this item is perceived as valuable in China. At the same time, it also shows how the threat “counterfeit products”, mentioned in the SWOT analysis above, could weaken the brand.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020, the Yangpu District People’s Court of Shanghai recognized the high reputation of Fabbri 1905’s packaging. This is because in 2019 Fabbri Shanghai took two products of Yi Pai and Beijing Jin Mai Xing Long Food to court (Bettazzi, 2021). The two companies were, in fact, accused of imitating the iconic company’s blue and white patterns, as we can see in Figure 16. Thanks to the Italian lawyer Lara Gualdi and the HFG Law Firm in China, the brand reputation, the intellectual property, and the uniqueness of the brand have been legally recognized. In addition, the court also recognized the influence of the brand in the Chinese market, attributed to its long-term and widespread promotional efforts and the numerous marketing and sales activities (Giacopello and Xia, 2020). It is worth noticing that the support by institutional bodies toward a foreign company is unusual in the Chinese practice<sup>31</sup>.



Figure 16: Yi Pai packaging sued for imitating Fabbri 1905 blue and white patterns – source: <https://www.hfgip.com/news/fabbris-packaging-recognized-famous-china>

### 2.2.1. Events and rewards

In the dynamic landscape of China, where the deeply rooted local tradition is being influenced by western trends, Fabbri 1905 shows its commitment to gastronomic excellence by participating and hosting events across the Asian country, especially before the COVID-19 pandemics. Thanks to its reputation for culinary expertise and careful selection of the ingredients, the company has gained trust, although its products may be perceived as too different by some Chinese consumer. These occasions range from food fairs to competitions. Among these, the company participated in Shanghai to HOTELEX, the International Hospitality Equipment & Foodservice Expo, an important event for all the big food and beverage companies that sell their products in East Asia. In this occasion, Fabbri 1905 in 2019 set up two stands: one dedicated to ice cream and pastries and one to cocktails and

<sup>31</sup> Source: <https://www.fabbri1905.com/notizie/area-stampa/comunicati-stampa/dalla-cina-arriva-un-importante-riconoscimento-per-fabbri-1905-e-il-made-in-italy.kl>

cafeteria. *Simplé Aloe*, an ingredient to make artisanal ice cream by adding milk or water, and *Crema Salata*, a soft and thick paste made with salted milk, have been particularly appreciated by the Chinese consumers during the event<sup>32</sup>.

In the same year, Fabbri 1905 collaborated with another Italian brand: Damiani Gioielli. The company offered its ice cream garnished with Amarena Fabbri at an event organized at Plaza 66 (known in China as 恒隆广场, *hénglóng guǎngchǎng*), a high-end shopping mall in Shanghai. On this occasion, a seamstress tailored a customized *qipao* (the 旗袍 *qípáo* is a traditional Chinese dress for women) decorated with the same blue patterns as those that characterize the brand, as we can see in the Figure 17.



Figure 17: Fabbri 1905 customized qipao (source: <https://www.fabbri1905.com/professionisti/partnership/partnership.kl>)

In addition, Fabbri 1905 participated to the fair organized by SIGEP<sup>33</sup> China, the Southern China International Expo dedicated to ice cream, bakery, and coffee. In 2023, the company took part to this event through its distributor 懿翼 *Yiyi*, managing a corner in its stand.

Aside from attending events, Fabbri 1905 holds in more than 23 countries a competition called Lady Amarena: the first international one addressed to the bartoladies<sup>34</sup>. The ladies have, in fact, to create an original cocktail using Fabbri 1905's products. This contest has been organized several times in China too (the most recent edition occurred in October 2023), demonstrating how rapidly the mixology industry is growing in the country. Besides, the Chinese bartolady Liu Tingzheng, in 2019, was crowned Lady Amarena worldwide, beating over 4000 bartoladies from five continents<sup>35</sup>.

In addition, in December 2023, Leo Ko, a bartender from Hong Kong has won the first prize in the World Cocktail Championship IBA hosted in Rome, thanks to his cocktail called "Come to Connect", prepared both with Fabbri Dry Gin and Fabbri Ciliege Speciali ("Fabbri Special Cherries")<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Source: <https://www.fabbri1905.com/notizie/area-stampa/comunicati-stampa/hotelex-2019-bilancio-positivo-per-fabbri-alla-fiera-di-shanghai.kl>

<sup>33</sup> SIGEP is an Italian showcase for all the companies working in the "sweet" field. In 2023 has been organized in 155 countries (Source: <https://en.sigep.it>)

<sup>34</sup> Source: [https://en.fabbri1905.com/initiatives-and-awards/lady-amarena/lady-amarena.kl?gclid=CjwKCAjw-KipBhBtEiwAWjgwrHjWaBmihhPWNglYxOWR3WvPVjTaM9cP0uV2svieeHCHHBprgcsdKhoCaQ8QAvD\\_BwE](https://en.fabbri1905.com/initiatives-and-awards/lady-amarena/lady-amarena.kl?gclid=CjwKCAjw-KipBhBtEiwAWjgwrHjWaBmihhPWNglYxOWR3WvPVjTaM9cP0uV2svieeHCHHBprgcsdKhoCaQ8QAvD_BwE)

<sup>35</sup> Source: <https://www.fabbri1905.com/notizie/area-stampa/comunicati-stampa/viene-dalla-cina-la-miglior-bartolady-del-mondo.kl>

<sup>36</sup> Source: <https://www.fabbri1905.com/notizie/area-stampa/comunicati-stampa/il-gin-di-bologna-sul-tetto-del-mondo.kl>

Fabbri 1905 gained some official rewards related to its operation in the Asian country. First of all, the prize *Panda d'oro*, both in 2017 and 2018, a reward given by the Italian Chamber of Commerce in China for those Italian companies that have distinguished themselves during the year. In addition, for the same reason, in 2017 the company has also obtained the *China Award*, by Italy China Foundation<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Source: <https://www.fabbri1905.com/notizie/area-stampa/comunicati-stampa/quando-la-cina-ama-le-amarene-dalloriente-due-premi-a-fabbri-1905.kl>

## Chapter 3

### *Linguistic barriers: a major challenge for foreign companies operating in China*

Introducing Italian products in the Chinese market can be challenging for many reasons. The brand has to pay attention to linguistic nuances, cultural sensibilities, preserving, at the same time, the identity of the brand.

Concerning the first aspect, it is important to remember that the European languages and the Chinese one rely on different writing systems: the first on a phonographic alphabet, while the second one on a logographic writing system. In other words:

“Modern Chinese is characterized by a quasi-perfect correspondence between syllable, character and morpheme [...] in which graphemes (almost always) have a meaning. Thus, in Chinese you cannot dissociate meaning from sound: whereas in a language like English, where syllables do not necessarily correspond to morphemes, one can make up a word without any meaning.” (Basciano, 2016: 249-250).

In addition, in Chinese homophony (or near-homophony) problems are quite frequent and should be considered when dealing with brand or product naming. Chinese has, indeed, a limited number of syllables, much more inferior than the English language: 400, 1200 considering the variations due to the tones (Basciano, 2016: 249-251). Therefore, it is not uncommon that characters graphically different sound the same (or similar) but have different meanings. For example, the word 四 *sì* means ‘four’, however its pronunciation sounds similar to 死 *sǐ* ‘to die’, as a consequence ‘four’ is considered to be an unlucky number in Chinese culture. Another significant example is the poem 施氏食狮史 *shī shì shí shī shǐ* ‘Story of Master Shi who eats lions’, written by Zhao Yuanren in 1930. The verses are only composed of different characters all pronounced as “shi”, even though they vary in their graphics and tones.

Therefore, this linguistic feature is one of the reasons why companies selling in China find it difficult to avoid the adaptation of its brand name or products’ names (Basciano, 2016: 249-252): the company has to engage in a process of “re-branding” or repositioning in the host country (Alon, Littrell, and Chan 2009: 127).

The language reflects the way we behave, our values, beliefs, and habits: “language forms a map in the mind that filters experience to form impressions; it forms identities around linguistic roots, which

inform our understanding” (Alon, Littrell, and Chan 2009: 126). In fact, a company aiming at succeeding in China can’t take for granted the linguistic aspect of its operations. The next paragraphs focus, indeed, on how companies, specifically Fabbri 1905, behave from a linguistic point of view in China.

### 3.1. General overview on brand translation strategies

“Brands are complex and composite signs based on pictographs (alphabetic or other), on sounds as spelt locally (in each particular linguistic context) and on other visual elements (i.e. logos and iconic content). The linguistic content of a brand name has an influence on its verbal, auditory and intellectual meaning and its interpretation by consumers” (Usunier and Shaner, 2002: 212).

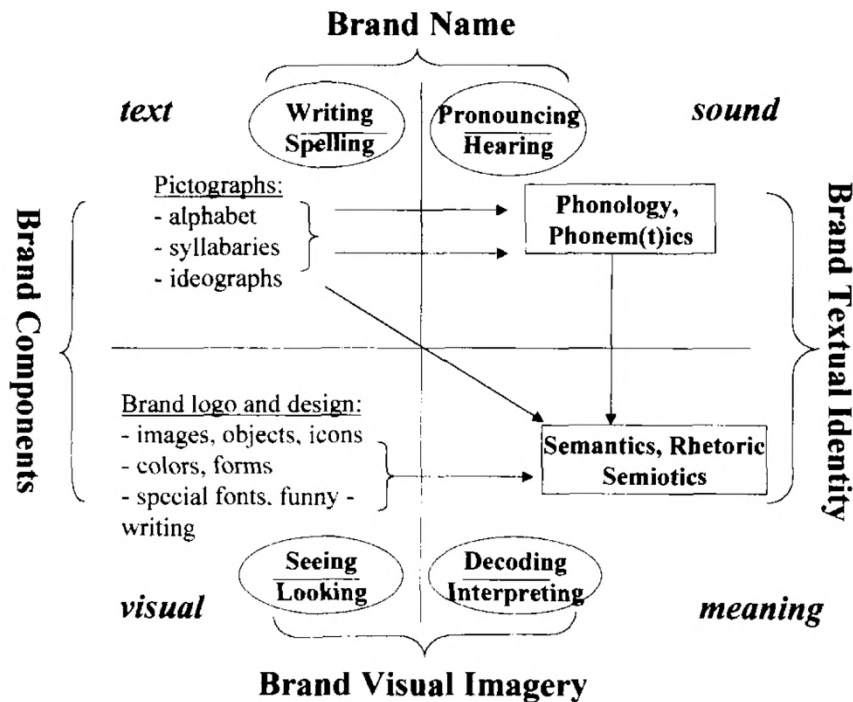


Table 9: Brand as a complex and composite sign (Usunier and Shaner, 2002: 213)

Based on Usunier and Shaner (2002), we can deduce that brands and the way they are communicated may heavily affect a company’s performance. They represent important assets for the firm and also strong tools to establish a first contact with the customer.

This is why, when a company starts to trade in another country, it has to find effective ways to communicate its brand and its identity, trying to convey the same message, to capture the interest of the target market, and not to fall into cultural misunderstandings or mistranslations.

Concerning the latter, this paragraph, taking as reference Bianca Basciano's article (2016: 271-277), briefly presents the different linguistic strategies for translating a European brand name in Chinese:

- Literal translation: word for word translation. On one side it allows the company to keep the original meaning of the brand name. On the other side, the image that the name evokes may differ due to social beliefs or customs, as a consequence it is important to pay attention to cultural differences. An example of brand literal translation is the one of Red Bull: 红牛 *hóng niú* 'red bull'.
- Phonetic adaptation: sound adaptation of the original brand name's syllables into the closest Chinese syllables. Usually, the Chinese characters don't have a brand-related meaning, they are neutral. The company has, indeed, to pay attention not to choose characters that have a negative connotation for the target culture. An example of phonetic adaptation is the one of Ferrari: 法拉利 *fǎ lā lì* 'law - pull - benefit'.
- Phonetic-semantic adaptation: combination of the two methods mentioned above. The company chooses to adapt the sound of its name into Chinese characters that have, at the same time, a product-related or brand-related meaning. An example of phonetic-semantic adaptation is the one of Hasbro, a company from the United States operating in the toy and entertainment industry: 孩之宝 *hái zhī bǎo*, that can be translated as 'the treasure of children'.
- Creation of original names: ad hoc invention of a new Chinese brand name. In this case, the brand name has usually a general positive semantic connotation, not related to the company's business. In addition, it doesn't have a sound correspondence with the original brand name. An example of this last method is the one of Sprite, a company selling a white-sparkling soft drink: 雪碧 *xuě bì* 'snow - green jade'.

### 3.1.1. The case of Fabbri 1905 brand naming in China

Considering that the company's Italian name derives from the surname of the founder, Fabbri 1905 has opted to translate the brand name as 法布芮 1905 *Fǎbùruì 1905* in Chinese. Therefore, the chosen approach, among the ones listed in the paragraph 3.1., is the second one. The original Italian name has been adapted using Chinese characters that phonetically sound similar.

There are three aspects that should be considered while analyzing Fabbri 1905's Chinese brand name: the phonetic adaptation, the meaning, and the shortness.

First of all, we can notice that since there is, generally speaking, a low similarity between Italian and Chinese languages, the company name is partially phonetically adapted, therefore there isn't a full correspondence of sounds.



Secondly, a positive semantic connotation is preferred when deciding a Chinese brand name (Francis, Lam and Walls, 2002: 110), choosing characters that refer to concepts such as fortune or happiness. However, in Fabbri 1905's case there are no connections to the products, no Italian cultural reference, or any particular acceptance to other positive meaning. The three Chinese characters, indeed, literally mean: 法 *fǎ* 'law, method'; 布 *bù* 'cloth, to announce'; 芮 *ruì* '(of young grass) fresh and soft'. In addition, while Francis, Lam, and Walls (2002: 113) state that this factor could diminish the effectiveness of the name. Basciano (2016: 273) writes: "it can be observed that names formed through pure phonetic adaptation immediately identify the products as foreign, thus they may result attractive in a way [...] at least for particular groups of consumers".

Lastly, after conducting a research concerning the brand names of Fortune-500 companies in China and Hong Kong, Francis, Lam and Walls (2002: 111) concluded that simplicity is a fundamental requisite for brand names. Brand names, indeed, should be short, straightforward, and simple, since, with these characteristics, they tend to be more memorable for consumers. In fact, the research shows that 43% of brand names were composed by two characters, while 40.2% by three, and none of them had only one character. Based on these findings, it could be argued that the length of Fabbri 1905 Chinese brand name, consisting of three characters followed by the date of company's foundation, should be easy to remember and in line with the general trends in brand naming in China.

### 3.2. *Fabbri 1905 products' translation*

The aim of this paragraph is to examine the way Fabbri 1905 decided to translate its typical Italian products in Chinese. The analysis takes as references several sources: Fabbri 1905's official e-shop on Taobao<sup>38</sup>, Fabbri 1905's products catalogues for China, Fabbri 1905's official WeChat account, and, lastly, the Chinese version of the Company Profile document.

Fabbri 1905 has a wide choice of products that can be distinguished, from a linguistic point of view, between those which already have a direct translation, and those which lack one. Some examples of the those belonging to the first category are: 糖浆 *tángjiāng* 'syrup', 冰淇淋 *bīngqílín* 'ice cream', 沙司 *shāsī* 'sauce, topping', 金酒 *jīnjiǔ* 'gin', 利口酒 *lìkǒujiǔ* 'liqueur'. Concerning the last three words, it is worth noticing that they are phonetically adapted loanwords, that have now become part of the everyday vocabulary of the Chinese. More specifically, the translations of the words "liqueur"

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<sup>38</sup> Fabbri 1905's official e-shop on Taobao can be found here:  
[https://faburui.world.tmall.com/shop/view\\_shop.htm?spm=a21n57.1.0.0.5b0a523c8tImNB&appUId=RAzN8HWX1ZGLsMETxjEbzUh1m3eBCXeWEL9aoj7ipF6UNif7JNZ](https://faburui.world.tmall.com/shop/view_shop.htm?spm=a21n57.1.0.0.5b0a523c8tImNB&appUId=RAzN8HWX1ZGLsMETxjEbzUh1m3eBCXeWEL9aoj7ipF6UNif7JNZ)

and “gin” constitute a hybrid form: it has been used both a phonetic adaptation and the addition of a semantic element indicating the category to which they belong (酒 *jiǔ* ‘alcohol’).

Below is the table showing Fabbri 1905’s products in Chinese. Before delving further into the list, it is important to clarify that:

- The sources concerning the descriptions of the products listed can be found in the note below in alphabetic order<sup>39</sup>.
- When comparing the Italian and English versions of the official websites, it can be observed that the English and the Italian product names are the same, unless expressly noted in the table.
- The items listed are product lines. They are typically associated with a specific flavor (chocolate, strawberry, pistachio etc.) that precedes the corresponding Chinese name of the product line. For example: 法布芮草莓糖浆 *Fǎbùruì cǎoméi tángjiāng* ‘Fabbri strawberry syrup’; 焦糖酱早餐沙司 *jiāotángjiàng zǎocān shāsī* ‘caramel sauce breakfast sauce’. To enhance the table’s smoother readability, this will be omitted.
- Fabbri 1905’s products are always preceded by the company’s name, 法布芮 *Fǎbùruì*, as we can also notice in the example above. To enhance the table’s smoother readability, it will be omitted.

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<sup>39</sup> Amarena Fabbri: [https://shop.fabbri1905.com/it-IT-en/amarena-fabbri-400g\\_FAFA4001.aspx](https://shop.fabbri1905.com/it-IT-en/amarena-fabbri-400g_FAFA4001.aspx)  
Babà in Rhum: [https://shop.fabbri1905.com/it-IT-en/babagrave-in-rhum-400g\\_282382.aspx](https://shop.fabbri1905.com/it-IT-en/babagrave-in-rhum-400g_282382.aspx)  
Base for Semifreddos: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/fabbri-products/base-per-semifreddi.kl>  
Black gum: <https://en.cocktail.fabbri1905.com/products-for-beverage/black-gum.kl>  
Chococioc Classica: <https://en.cocktail.fabbri1905.com/products-for-beverage/chococioc-classica.kl>  
Chococioc Più: <https://en.cocktail.fabbri1905.com/products-for-beverage/chococioc-piu.kl>  
Ciliege Speciali: <https://en.cocktail.fabbri1905.com/products-for-beverage/ciliege-speciali.kl>  
Coatings: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/fabbri-products/cioccolato-bianco-38-kg.kl>  
Delipaste: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/professionals/gelato/products/le-paste.kl>  
Fragola Fabbri: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/consumers/fragola-fabbri/fragola-fabbri.kl>  
Gin Fabbri: <https://en.cocktail.fabbri1905.com/products-for-beverage/gin.kl>  
Glazes and Nappage: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/professionals/pastry/products/le-coperture.kl>  
Gourmet Sauce: <https://en.cocktail.fabbri1905.com/syrups-and-ingredients/gourmet-sauce/topping.kl>  
Granitina: <https://en.cocktail.fabbri1905.com/products-for-beverage/granitina.kl>  
Liqueur Choco Cherry: [https://shop.fabbri1905.com/it-IT-en/liqueur-choco-cherry-200g\\_FAFB4015.aspx](https://shop.fabbri1905.com/it-IT-en/liqueur-choco-cherry-200g_FAFB4015.aspx)  
Marbling: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/professionals/gelato/products/i-variegati.kl>  
Marendry: [https://shop.fabbri1905.com/it-IT-en/marendry-1l\\_413078.aspx](https://shop.fabbri1905.com/it-IT-en/marendry-1l_413078.aspx)  
Mixybar: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/consumers/syrups/syrups.kl>  
Mixyfruit: <https://en.cocktail.fabbri1905.com/syrups-and-ingredients/mixyfruit/mixyfruit.kl>  
Morbifrutta: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/fabbri-products/morbifrutta100.kl>  
Nutty: <https://www.fabbri1905.com/professionisti/gelateria/prodotti/nutty.kl>  
Simple: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/professionals/gelato/products/i-completi.kl>  
Super Soft!: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/professionals/gelato/products/prodotti-per-gelato-soft-ice.kl>  
Supplement with vegetables fibres: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/fabbri-products/integratore-con-fibre-vegetali.kl>  
Top Fabbri: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/consumers/topping/topping.kl>  
Zenzero Fabbri: <https://en.fabbri1905.com/consumers/zenzero-fabbri/zenzero-fabbri.kl>

- On Taobao's product descriptions, it is common to find some words, following the product name, that specify the intended usage of the product that help the consumer better understand what he or she is buying. Here are two examples: 法布芮 Fabbri 家用野草莓酱早餐沙司面包吐司淋酱果酱 225g *Fǎbùruì Fabbri jiāyòng yě cǎoméi jiàng zǎocān shāsī miànbāo tǔ sī lín jiàng guǒjiàng 225 g* 'Fabbri home-use wild strawberry jam breakfast sauce bread toast spread jam 225g'; 法布芮 Fabbri 巧克力酱沙司意大利进口摩卡咖啡装饰淋酱果酱 950g *Fǎbùruì Fabbri qiǎokèlì jiàng shāsī yìdàlì jìnkǒu mókǎ kāfēi zhuāngshì lín jiàng guǒjiàng 950g* 'Fabbri chocolate sauce imported from Italy mocha coffee decorate spread jam 950g'.
- The products sold in China and Italy are the same, therefore they are not culturally adapted, even though the prices change. Comparing Fabbri 1905's e-shops on Taobao and on Amazon Italy, Chinese customers generally need to pay more to buy the company's products: there is not a production line in China, as a consequence the price difference is due to the export costs.
- Not all of the products listed below are available at the moment on Taobao. In addition, some of them have been introduced in the target market only recently. For example, Gin Fabbri was launched on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023, according to the official WeChat account.
- By consulting Fabbri 1905's Italian e-shops, the last two items listed, belonging to the section in the table below called "Utensils for professionals", are only available in China. As a consequence, the names inserted in English are not official tradenames.

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Italian and English name</i>	<i>Product's characteristics</i>	<i>Chinese name</i>
Ice cream	SuperSoft!	Powdered bases for soft ice cream.	软冰粉 <i>ruǎnbīngfěn</i> ‘soft ice powder’.
Ice cream	Delipaste – flavouring pastes (in Italian ‘Delipaste – paste aromatizzanti’)	Concentrated flavoring paste to make artisanal ice cream. It also can be used for pastry.	调味酱 <i>tiáowèi jiàng</i> ‘flavoring paste’.
Ice cream	Morbifrutta	Cold, low-dosage, neutral-tasting base for preparing fruit flavor artisanal ice cream.	莫比水果基底粉 <i>Mòbǐ shuǐguǒ jīdǐfěn</i> . The first two characters sound as “morbi” in Italian, followed by five characters meaning ‘fruit base powder’.
Ice cream	Nevefrutta, Nevepanna Belpanna 100 CF etc.	Ready-to-use powder bases for ice cream.	冰淇淋粉 <i>bīngqílínfěn</i> ‘ice cream powder’. It is also possible to find 冰淇淋基底粉 <i>bīngqílín jīdǐfěn</i> ‘ice cream base powder’.
Ice cream	Granitina	Ready-to-use powder to prepare slushes (in Italian ‘granita’).	格林尼塔冰沙粉 <i>gélínnítǎ bīngshāfěn</i> . Here, the first four characters don't have a specific meaning, but sound as “granita” in Italian. Following three characters meaning ‘slushie powder’. The translation of this product is analyzed in detail in the text below the table.
Ice cream	Simplé – complete (in Italian ‘Simplé – i completi’)	Ready-to-use bases for ice cream, pastries, milkshakes, slushes, and many other preparations.	On Taobao’s description it is called: 速成冰淇淋酱 <i>sùchéng bīngqílín jiàng</i> ‘accelerated process paste’. On the products catalogues, it is possible also to find 速成系列 <i>sùchéng xìliè</i> ‘accelerated process set’, referring to the product line.
Ice cream	Supplement with vegetables fibres (in Italian ‘integratore con fibre vegetali’)	A supplementing ingredient that improves the creaminess and scoopability of ice cream.	冰淇淋凝固原料稳定剂植物纤维粉 <i>bīngqílín nínggù yuánliào wéndìngjì zhíwù xiānwéifěn</i> ‘ice cream solidify ingredient stabiliser plant fibre powder’.
Ice cream	Marbling (in Italian ‘variegati’)	Sugar or anhydrous pastes to garnish ice cream in tubs.	淋拌酱 <i>lín bàn jiàng</i> ‘pour and mix paste’.
Ice cream and pastry	Coatings (in Italian ‘copertura’)	Flavor coating for ice cream bars, cakes and pastries.	脆皮酱 <i>cuì pí jiàng</i> ‘crunchy coating paste’. It is also possible to find: 涂层 <i>túcéng</i> ‘coating’.
Ice cream and pastry	Nutty	Cream for pastries and ice cream.	努提 <i>Nùtí</i> ‘to exert – to rise’. The name doesn't have a connection with the product, but it sounds as “Nutty”.

Ice cream and beverage	Gourmet Sauce	Sauces that are used to garnish for example Cremegelato and cocktails, and for preparing "layered" desserts.	臻品沙司 <i>zhēn pǐn shā sī</i> 'excellent quality sauce' or 臻选沙司 <i>wèi zhēn xuǎn shā sī</i> 'excellent selection sauce' or 甄选沙司 <i>zhēn xuǎn wèi shā sī</i> 'carefully chosen sauce'. The translation of this product is analyzed in detail in the text below the table.
Beverage	Mixyfruit	Fresh fruit pulp for preparing long drinks, milkshakes, or frappes.	水果果泥 <i>shuǐguǒ guǒ nǐ</i> or 果酱原料 富含果肉果 <i>guǒjiàng yuánliào fù hán guǒròu guǒ lì</i> or 果酱 <i>guǒjiàng</i> . The translation of this product is analyzed in detail in the text below the table.
Beverage	Black Gum (in Italian 'Gum Nero')	It is an ingredient for cocktails that combines the characteristics of gum syrup with those of charcoal.	黑甘露糖浆 <i>hēi gānlù tángjiāng</i> 'black sweet dew syrup'.
Beverage	Chococioc Classica	Base powder to make hot chocolate.	热巧克力粉 <i>rè qiǎokèlìfěn</i> 'hot chocolate powder'
Beverage	Chococioc Più	Base powder to make hot chocolate.	加号热巧克力粉 <i>jiāhào rè qiǎokèlìfěn</i> 'hot chocolate powder plus'. In Italian, indeed, the word "Più" in the product name, means 'plus, more'.
Beverage	Gin Fabbri	Dry gin distilled with juniper berries, bitter orange peel, liquorice and angelica roots, coriander and cardamom seeds and Amarena distillate.	金酒 <i>jīnjiǔ</i> 'gin'.
Beverage	Marendry	A liqueur with an Amarena Fabbri note.	阿玛蕾娜利口酒 <i>Āmālěinà lìkǒujiǔ</i> 'Amarena liqueur' or 阿玛蕾娜 Marendry 苦味利口酒 <i>Āmālěinà lìkǒujiǔ</i> 'Amarena Marendry bitter liqueur'.
Pastry	Base for Semifreddos (in Italian 'Base per semifreddi')	Powdered bases to make semifreddo, a semi-frozen Italian dessert.	半冷冻甜点基底 <i>bànlěngdòng tiándiǎn jīdǐ</i> 'semi-frozen dessert base'.
Pastry	Nappage	Glossy, shiny toppings for desserts.	镜面装饰酱 <i>jìngmiàn zhuāngshì jiàng</i> 'mirror decoration paste'.
End consumers	Topping or Top Fabbri	Sauces in its different flavors. They are usually put on pancakes, ice cream, or desserts.	沙司 <i>shā sī</i> 'sauce, topping'. On Taobao we can also find this expression: 家用 <i>jiāyòng</i> 'home-use', followed by the flavor and 酱早餐沙司 <i>jiàng zǎocān shā sī</i> 'sauce breakfast topping'.

End consumers and professionals	Babà in Rhum	It consists in small babas (traditional Napolitan pastry) dipped in an alcoholic rhum syrup.	朗姆芭芭 <i>lǎngmǔ bābā</i> . The translation of this product is analyzed in detail in the text below the table.
End consumers and professionals	Mixybar	Syrups in different flavors and sizes.	糖浆 <i>tángjiāng</i> ‘syrup’. There are those addressed to the end-consumers 家用 <i>jiāyòng</i> ‘home-use’, and those addressed to professionals 商用 <i>shāngyòng</i> ‘for commercial purpose’. They differ mainly in their sizes.
End consumers and professionals	Amarena Fabbri	Amarena Fabbri is a kind of wild cherry: semi-candied and preserved in syrup. It is used, for example, to garnish drinks, pastries, or savory dishes too.	阿玛蕾娜野樱桃 <i>Āmǎlěinà yě yīngtáo</i> The translation of this product is analyzed in detail in the text below the table.
End consumers and professionals	Zenzero Fabbri	Ginger dipped in a syrup with turmeric.	糖渍姜 <i>tángzì jiāng</i> ‘sugar-soak/candied ginger’
End consumers and professionals	Fragola Fabbri	Strawberries dipped in a sweet syrup.	糖渍草莓 <i>tángzì cǎoméi</i> ‘sugar-soak/candied strawberry’.
End consumers and professionals	Ciliege Speciali	Cherries dipped in a low alcohol content spirit.	On Taobao it is possible to find the following expression: 酒渍樱桃酒浸野樱桃 <i>jiǔzì yīngtáo jiǔ jìn yě yīngtáo</i> ‘alcohol soaked cherries alcohol immersed wild cherries’.
End consumers and professionals	Liqueur Choco Cherry (in Italian ‘Choco Cherry al Liquore’)	Cherries dipped in liqueur and chocolate.	On Taobao it is possible to find the following expression: 巧克力包裹樱桃果粒含酒精 <i>qiǎokèlì bāoguǒ yīngtáo guǒlì hán jiǔjīng</i> ‘chocolate covered cherry fruit grains with alcohol’.
Utensils for professionals	Measuring cup for syrups	Measuring cup for syrups bottles to dose the quantity of the product.	压泵 <i>yā bèng</i> ‘pressure pump’.
Utensils for professionals	Small racks for syrups	Three small shelves to place syrups bottles.	糖浆架 <i>tángjiāng jià</i> ‘syrup rack’. On Taobao, the description is completed and specified by adding after 三瓶架子 <i>sānpíng jiàzi</i> ‘three bottle rack’. In the Taobao’s product description, we can also find the word 国产 <i>guóchǎn</i> ‘made in our country’, which refers to the fact that the product is produced in China.

Table 10: Fabbri 1905's products in Chinese, personally drafted, November 2023

From a linguistic point of view, Fabbri 1905's product called *Mixyfruit* should be analyzed more in depth. If we look on the company's official e-shop on Taobao, the product belongs to a section called 水果果泥 *shuǐguǒ guǒní* 'fruit puree'. While, when we look at the single product, it is defined as: the name of the fruit followed by 果酱原料富含果肉果粒 *guǒjiàng yuánliào fù hán guǒròu guǒlì*. For example 法布芮 Fabbri 椰子果酱原料富含果肉果粒 *Fǎbùruì Fabbri yēzi guǒjiàng yuánliào fù hán guǒròu guǒlì* 'Fabbri coconut jam ingredients rich in fruit pulp'.

However, on WeChat promotional posts we find a simpler version: the name of the fruit followed by 果酱 *guǒjiàng* 'jam'. For example, on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023, Fabbri 1905 account has published an article advertising the Mixyfruit Passion Fruit as following: 法布芮西番莲果酱 *Fǎbùruì xīfānlián guǒjiàng* 'Fabbri passion fruit jam'. Although it may seem a little bit confusing, since the product in English or in Italian could never be defined as a "jam", it can be noticed that Fabbri 1905 is not the only brand in the field using this term in Chinese. In fact, the French company Monin, one of the major Fabbri 1905's competitors in China, whose business in the country will be further analyzed, translates the same kind of product with the word 果酱 *guǒjiàng* 'jam'.

In addition, also the translation for the Gourmet Sauce constitutes a peculiar case: it varies depending on the specific source of Fabbri 1905 that we refer to. If we look at the Taobao e-shop, the product belongs to a section called 臻品沙司 *zhēn pǐn shāsī* 'excellent quality sauce', which in turn is a sub-category of the 沙司 *shāsī* 'sauce, topping' product line. However, if we read the description of the single Gourmet Sauce bottles sold on the website, it is possible to find three different versions: 臻选沙司 *wèi zhēnxuǎn shāsī* 'excellent selection sauce', 甄选沙司 *zhēnxuǎn wèi shāsī* 'carefully chosen sauce' or simply 沙司 *shāsī* 'sauce, topping'. As described in the following paragraph, since 臻品沙司 *zhēn pǐn shāsī* is a registered trademark in China, it can be regarded as the official translation for this product.

Fabbri 1905 also sells a product line (belonging to the Gourmet Sauce category) called "Top Gold Gourmet Sauce". The translation of this specific series can be found in a recent WeChat article posted on Fabbri 1905's official account on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023: 法布芮金标系列开心果味沙司 *Fǎbùruì jīn biāo xìliè kāixīnguǒ wèi shāsī* 'Fabbri Gold Label Pistachio Sauce'.

Another product's translation that should be analyzed separately is the *Babà in Rhum*. The only Fabbri 1905's official source where the translation of this product can be found is the Company Profile in its

Chinese version (2020-2021). The snack is translated as 朗姆芭芭 *lǎngmǔ bābā*, where the first two characters mean ‘rhum’, while the other two don’t have a literal meaning, but they sound as “babà” in Italian.

However, although there doesn’t seem to be an official translation for this pastry, if we look on Baidu (the most important search engine in China) we can notice that the most used expression is 巴巴 *bābā*, and not 芭芭 *bābā*, even though the pronunciation is the same. It is important to highlight that the websites where the term 巴巴 *bābā* can be found are not authoritative sources, for instance Wikipedia in Chinese and Xiaohongshu. However, they can be considered as a reflection of the way Chinese people communicate on a daily basis. In addition, the Babà, even though it is a traditional Italian pastry, has Polish origins: the king Stanislaw Leczinsky (1677-1766), an enthusiastic of “One Thousand and One Nights”<sup>40</sup>, named the dessert after Ali Baba (Colella, 2010: 60). In Chinese Ali Baba, is translated as 阿里巴巴 *Ālǐ bābā*, well-known name in China since it is also the name of a leading platform for global wholesale trade born in 1999<sup>41</sup>. In conclusion, considering the origins of the Italian name, it would be more suitable to translate Babà as 巴巴 *bābā*.

Lastly, the word “rhum” in Chinese is a phonetically adapted loanword. Therefore, on Baidu and on Pleco (an English and Chinese online dictionary), we can find different ways of translating it, that vary slightly in their pronunciation: 兰姆 *lánmǔ* or 兰姆酒 *lánmǔ jiǔ*, 朗姆 *lǎngmǔ* or 朗姆酒 *lǎngmǔ jiǔ*, 罗姆酒 *luōmǔ jiǔ*, 莱姆酒 *lái mǔ jiǔ*.

A similar case can be noted for the translation of the product Granitina. While Fabbri 1905 translates it as 格林尼塔 *Gélínnítǎ*, on Chinese search engines the expression 格兰尼塔 *Gélánnítǎ* can be found more frequently. We can observe a variation only concerning the second character, while, from a semantic point of view, in both cases there is no connection between the characters and the product.

Amarena Fabbri deserves a separate discussion since it is the flagship product of the company. In this instance as well, the product in its English version is reported as in Italian. In Chinese, the phonetic adaptation of the word “Amarena” is adopted, which is translated as 阿玛蕾娜 *Āmǎlěinà*. The single characters don’t have any reference to the product and don’t have any specific meaning, but they sound as “Amarena” in Italian. As a consequence, it has been chosen to add after 野櫻桃 *yě yīngtáo*

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<sup>40</sup> A collection of Middle Eastern tales, also known as “Arabian Nights”. One of the most famous stories written is called “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves”.

<sup>41</sup> Source:

<https://activities.alibaba.com/alibaba/following-about-alibaba.php?spm=a2700.trademark.0.0.6692MKDNMKDNGA>



‘wild cherry’, to specify the kind of fruit. In this way, the consumer visualizes a clearer image of the product that is hidden by the jar.

On Taobao, the most frequent expression that describes Amarena Fabbri is 法布芮阿玛蕾娜野樱桃果酱果肉 *Fǎbùruì Āmǎlěinà yě yīngtáo guǒjiàng guǒròu* ‘Amarena Fabbri wild cherry jam and pulp’.

However, it is also possible to find other two slightly different versions: 法布芮阿玛蕾娜野樱桃糖渍果酱果肉 *Fǎbùruì Āmǎlěinà yě yīngtáo táng zì guǒjiàng guǒròu* ‘Amarena Fabbri wild cherry candied jam and pulp’ and 法布芮阿玛蕾娜野樱桃果酱果粒 *Fǎbùruì Āmǎlěinà yě yīngtáo guǒjiàng guǒlì* ‘Amarena Fabbri wild cherry fruit pulp and fruit grains’.

It is worth noticing that at first, as Tiziano Vescovi (2022: 76) describes in his research, Amarena Fabbri was simply described as a 果酱 *guǒjiàng* ‘jam’, which left the Chinese participants to the focus group confused concerning the nature of the product. In fact, words such as 果酱 *guǒjiàng* ‘jam’, 果粒 *guǒlì* ‘fruit grains’ and 果肉 *guǒròu* ‘fruit pulp’, taken individually would lead to a misunderstandings. This is because, Amarena Fabbri includes both pieces of wild cherry and the sweet syrup, giving a consistency only in part similar to jam.

In conclusion, a European company selling in China should always pay attention on the cultural gap, in this case concerning the food sector: considering that most of the Fabbri 1905 products’ packagings are not “see-through”, and they are not common to be found in China, the words chosen play a crucial role.

### 3.2.1. Registration of Fabbri 1905’s trademarks in China

Trademarks are symbols or names that belong to a specific company and distinguish its products or services from the ones of other firms. The registration of a trademark enables legal protection of the enterprise’s intellectual property, commonly referred as IP (Krasnikov, 2022: 1059).

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, between 2018 and 2022, the numbers of trademark applications worldwide exceeded 10 million per year<sup>42</sup>, demonstrating how much it is considered important to protect the company’s creativity and innovation. However, in China only about 3% - 9% of the total trademarks applications has been made by non-resident companies in 2021 (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2022: 60)

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<sup>42</sup> Source: Excel document that can be downloaded by clicking on the section “Trademarks data tables”, Url: <https://www.wipo.int/publications/en/details.jsp?id=4632>

In addition, counterfeit products represent a significant threat to companies: as a consequence, the registration of trademarks is as a potential solution to prevent such issues from arising. In the second chapter, we have, in fact, already seen the case of Fabbri 1905 on trial defending its blue and white vase in China.

From a legal point of view, it is important to underline that the “legal protection of intangible firm assets such as trademarks varies with the strength of intellectual property rights (IPR) in a country, which are determined in accordance with the country’s regulatory framework” (Krasnikov, 2022: 1060). However, both China and Italy agreed to comply with the TRIPs Agreement (Trade-Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights): a multilateral and international pact on intellectual property, issued on 1st January 1995 by the World Trade Organization.

This short premise aims at introducing the situation of the registered trademarks of Fabbri 1905.

By consulting China TradeMark Office website<sup>43</sup>, we can notice that the majority of Fabbri 1905’s registered trademarks are Italian trade names, such as Mixyfruit, SuperSoft! and Marendry. Those Chinese names that are legally protected are the following:

- The company’s name: 法布芮 *Fǎbùruì* and 法布芮 1905 *Fǎbùruì 1905*.
- 阿玛蕾娜 *Āmǎlěinà* and 玛蕾娜 *Mǎlěinà*: referring to the product Amarena Fabbri.
- 法布芮臻品沙司 *Fǎbùruì zhēn pǐn shāsī* and 臻品沙司 *zhēn pǐn shāsī*: referring to the Gourmet Sauce.
- 努提 *nǔ tí*: referring to Nutty cream for ice creams and pastries.
- 速成 *sùchéng* and 法布芮速成 *Fǎbùruì sùchéng*: referring to those products which are ready-to-use and require a few steps to prepare artisanal ice creams. In fact, 速成 *sùchéng* literally means ‘accelerated process; to attain a goal in a much shorter time than usual’. Products’ descriptions and names where we can find this term are Simplé or powder bases for ice cream.

It is important to specify that the above listed names are protected in its different typographical styles and formats.

Fabbri 1905 sells a wide range of products, this shows how the company wants to legally protect only its most unique products, legally recognizing them as owning a distinctive value, as they also stand out among those of its competitors.

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<sup>43</sup> Source: <https://www.chinatrademarkoffice.com/index.php?c=tdsearch&m=owner&owner=法布芮（上海）食品贸易有限公司&IntCls=>

## Chapter 4

### *Fabrizio 1905 and Chinese social media: strategic online branding to establish a direct connection with Chinese consumers*

The digital revolution has changed our lives. We communicate and travel in a different way, we can send a message in real time, book and pay for a plane ticket ourselves. Some professions are disappearing, and new ones are emerging. Internet is also significantly impacting companies and their operational methodologies. Today, it is unthinkable that a major company sells a product without having a website describing and promoting it, or without relying on e-shops.

On one side, companies have had to adapt very quickly to these new patterns of behavior, changing rapidly along with the Internet revolution. On the other hand, Internet represents a huge opportunity for businesses and their economic growth. In fact, the digital revolution has certainly led to lower prices and introduced new forms of selling. Advanced software is, indeed, revolutionizing the shopping experience, creating an immersive environment that establishes a direct connection with the consumer. This enables individuals to make purchases without intermediaries and form and share online their opinions concerning the products, which obviously brings with it both disadvantages and advantages.

Since social networks play an increasingly important role in our lives, companies have learnt how to communicate promotional messages to us through these means. As a consequence, standard television advertisements or billboards are gradually being replaced by online promotion that often relies on influencers or celebrities, who, thanks to their popularity, represent an effective resource for the company to make the brand better known or to strengthen the product image.

In China above all, everything goes through the *online* (especially through WeChat, as we will describe further in this chapter), and consumers give much credit to well-known people's words and opinions concerning a product or a brand. In China, these online celebrities are called Key Opinion Leader or KOL (known in China as 意见领袖, *yìjiàn lǐngxiù*, 'opinion leader') and Key Opinion Consumer or KOC (known in China as 关键意见消费者, *guānjiàn yìjiàn xiāofèizhě*, 'key opinion consumer'). They are usually characterized by their in-depth knowledge on specific products, unique styles, and their active interaction with their followers (Peng and Zou, 2019: 2).

Live streaming stands as one of the most effective tools for online product sales in China, with celebrities playing, in fact, a crucial role in its success. Its effectiveness relies in being an informal conversation, virtually accessible to all, in which the product is shown in all its functions and features. Among the most important live streaming platforms in China for online shopping we can find: 拼多

多 *Pīnduōduō*, 小红书 *Xiǎohóngshū* and 快手 *Kuàishǒu*. One of the first and most successful examples of Western brands exploiting live streaming in China is Louis Vuitton. In fact, in 2020 the fashion blogger Yvonne Ching and the guest celebrity Zhong Chuxi have presented in a one-hour live on Xiaohongshu the summer collection of the brand, answering to the fans' questions and obtaining more than 152,000 views (Bonaccorso, 2020). Another recent and iconic example of successful live streaming deviates from the typical direct where products are presented in detail and fans' doubts are answered: in 2023, the streamer Zheng Xiangxiang (鄭香香) has presented, in a live streaming, several products of all kinds, from clothes to hangers, by showing them for only 3 seconds (while a co-worker rapidly handed them to her in an orange box) and simply telling their price<sup>44</sup>. This unusual method has made the influencer become viral on the web, earning more than 18 million dollars in a week (Zennaro, 2023).

There are other three additional keywords related to the Chinese online world that are worth highlighting. Firstly, 种草 *zhòngcǎo*, literally 'grass planting', refers to the act of recommending valuable goods to others to induce them to buy<sup>45</sup>. Secondly, 拔草 *bácǎo*, literally 'grass pulling', originally it meant to avoid buying something, cancelling the original purchase plan; later, a second meaning has emerged, referring to the act of consumers to buy a product back again, since they enjoyed it the first time they purchased it<sup>46</sup>. Finally, 网红店 *wǎnghóngdiàn* 'internet celebrity store', as the Chinese name suggests, refers to those online shops opened by people with a certain amount of users, called in China 网红 *wǎng hóng* 'influencers, famous people online, internet celebrities'<sup>47</sup>.

Another crucial aspect to consider when discussing the Chinese online landscape is censorship. Harmony has always been, for China, a political prerequisite for social stability. As a consequence, imperial and republican governments have tried to take advantage of this concept for greater political solidity. Under Hu Jintao's government (2002-2012), the much sought-after harmony had to interface with the revolution of the century: Internet. The new presidency aimed at building a harmonious society (和谐社会, *héxié shèhuì*), consisting mainly on an economic intervention to cope with the great disparities following the economic boom of the 1990s, which inevitably affected the community.

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<sup>44</sup> A video recording of the live streaming at issue can be found by clicking at the following Url:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/QbVD09eE0L0>

<sup>45</sup> Source: <https://baike.baidu.com/item/种草/280902>

<sup>46</sup> Source: <https://www.ifanjian.net/jbk/bacao.html>

<sup>47</sup> Source: [https://www.sohu.com/a/277877861\\_120001096](https://www.sohu.com/a/277877861_120001096)

Hu Jintao's social stability was accompanied by another keyword, 健康 *jiànkāng*, which indicates health, in this case also of the “moral” kind. In fact, one facet under which the new government measures were formulated aimed to safeguard the well-being of the younger generations while using the Internet: a harmonious society was also needed on the net, thus resorting to censorship with the campaign 净化网络环境 *jìnghuà wǎngluò huánjìng* ‘purifying the network’ (Fazzari, 2017: 198). This was realized for example in the fight against pornography, to the extent that even Renaissance paintings representing nudes were subjected to censorship (Fazzari, 2017: 200).

Today, government control over the ‘online lives’ of Chinese citizens is still a reality: censorship is enforced through the so-called *Great Firewall of China*, which takes its name from the Great Wall of China. Many words and expressions are censored in China, such as Dalai Lama (达赖喇嘛 *Dálài Lǎma*), Go Hong Kong! (香港加油 *Xiānggǎng jiāyóu*) or dictatorship (专政 *zhuānzhèng*). As a consequence, new, more subtle, forms of oppositions have emerged. To give some examples: the sentences and words that play on the assonance of Chinese characters<sup>48</sup>, or the protest called 白纸运动 (*báizhǐ yùndòng*) ‘white paper movement’ in 2022, when the protestants showed simple blank sheets of paper to express their dissent against the strict rules of the Zero-COVID policy (动态清零, *dòngtài qīnglíng*).

Censorship in China not only concerns individual words, but also entire online platforms. Western media platforms like Google, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and others cannot be encrypted and controlled in their contents, thus their access is restricted by the Great Firewall of China.

Therefore, censorship in China is a crucial factor that companies venturing into the country must consider, ensuring they adhere to regulations and avoid inadvertently violating them.

To conclude, being active on Chinese social media represents an essential and necessary part of the companies’ marketing strategy. However, it may introduce new challenges that require an appropriate management. A double-edged sword that could also create some difficulties to the company, as in the case of the controversial advertising campaign made by Dolce & Gabbana, which led to a digital revolt against the brand who consequently suffered of a severe damage in its reputation and sales in

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<sup>48</sup> One example is the double-meaning song called 草泥马之歌 *cǎonímǎ zhī gē* ‘The song of the grass mud horse’. It has been also reclaimed in 2012 in a video to the tune of Gangnam Style (as we can see in the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LAefTzSwWY>), published by Ai Weiwei (艾未未), a Chinese artist, designer, architect and filmmaker born in Beijing in 1957, who through his art, has always fought for human rights in China. Another example is the term 米兔 *mǐtù* (literally ‘rice rabbit’) which sounds similar to the worldwide online campaign called “Me Too”, a feminist movement against sexual harassment and violence against women.

the Chinese market. Despite some obstacles that might be faced, online branding alongside the offline one constitutes an effective multi-channel promotion approach.

#### *4.1. Overview of Chinese social media platforms*

Among Xi Jinping's goals, one focuses on the technological field: China as a digital global leader by 2030. The objective is expected to be reached through investments in device construction, precision manufacturing, research, Big Data management, with a dense population where the new online products and services can be tested.

In China several activities go through mobile apps, often created in the image and likeness of Western ones. This is because China has decided to keep out over-the-top online leaders such as Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube. Against them, as we have already said above, the Great Firewall of China has been raised: the great digital wall, where many words are forbidden and where a group of propagandists intervene on major issues - not for free, but with small fees - in the direction that the government wants, within a framework that always remains nationalist (Pieranni, 2020: 20).

However, nationalism and control are not the only objectives of the Chinese digital closure: we must not forget that economic sustainability is as important as the country's political resilience. Every social media platform has also been built according to the profits that it will bring: the inaccessibility of many Western media platforms has strengthened the local apps that now own the online monopoly. Chinese authorities have created a model that surely has its flaws, but is certainly competitive, self-sufficient and 100% Chinese.

By now, 90% of Chinese people connect to the Internet via smartphone (Pieranni, 2020: 19), thus living in a world where they can perform a thousand functions and spend their free time. Therefore, since the smartphone and the social networks increasingly play such a crucial role in the daily lives of Chinese citizens, it would be important to describe the most popular social networks in China, before analyzing Fabbri 1905's "online behavior". As a consequence, below are presented the leading Chinese social media:

- WeChat (微信, *Wēixìn*): it is an application developed by Tencent Holding Ltd. Group and launched in 2011, initially created as a Chinese strategic response to the instant messaging application WhatsApp from the United States.

The Chinese version is different from the one accessible in other countries of the world. In fact, in the Asian country, WeChat is a *super-app*, meaning that it offers several different services within a single app. In fact, the Chinese citizen can make payments or transfer money (through the so-called 微信支付, *Wēixìn Zhīfù*, ‘WeChat Pay’), chat with a friend, book a cab, pay taxes, download a prescription and many more. As a consequence, those who do not have WeChat, or Alipay<sup>49</sup>, are basically excluded from many public services.

WeChat is also a social network where users can post or watch videos and photos in the section called “moments” (in Chinese 朋友圈, *péngyǒu quān*, ‘circle of friends’).

In addition, official accounts can choose between three different formats of WeChat: WeChat Subscription (微信订阅号, *Wēixìn dìngyuèhào*), WeChat Service (微信服务号, *Wēixìn fúwùhào*) and WeChat Enterprise (微信企业号, *Wēixìn qǐyèhào*). Official pages can both post long texts alongside pictures in the section called “articles” (in Chinese 消息, *xiāoxī*, ‘news, information’) and videos in the section called “channel” (in Chinese 视频号, *shìpín hào* ‘video channel’). In addition, users, through the official pages, can surf as if it were a network, through the so-called “Mini Programs” (in Chinese 小程序, *xiǎo chéngxù*, ‘little program’): small websites accessible without leaving the principal app. Enterprises usually link to their Mini Programs the online shop or the catalogues of the products.

- Kuaishou (快手, *Kuàishǒu*): through this app, founded in 2011, users can create, watch and share daily life videos. In the entertainment category, Kuaishou is the most popular video sharing platform both in China and worldwide<sup>50</sup>.
- Douyin (抖音, *Dǒuyīn*): it is a video sharing platform launched in 2016 at first with the name *musical.ly*, nowadays known worldwide as Tik Tok. The Chinese version is different from the one that can be downloaded in the other countries of the world. Second only to Kuaishou, Tik Tok (both in its Chinese and non-Chinese versions) is the most downloaded app in the entertainment category<sup>51</sup> and the most profitable one in the world (Moles, 2023).

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<sup>49</sup> Alipay (known in China as 支付宝, *Zhīfùbǎo*) is an online payment platform founded in 2004 by Alibaba Group. This platform offers a diverse range of services, including various payment options, as well as the possibility to buy tickets, to order food, or to book a cab.

<sup>50</sup> Source: [https://www.data.ai/en/apps/google-play/app/com.kwai.kuaishou.video.live/?MEANINGFUL\\_INTERACTION\\_COUNT=4&genre=&alreadyMoreDescription=true](https://www.data.ai/en/apps/google-play/app/com.kwai.kuaishou.video.live/?MEANINGFUL_INTERACTION_COUNT=4&genre=&alreadyMoreDescription=true)

<sup>51</sup> Source: [https://www.data.ai/en/apps/google-play/app/com.zhiliaoapp.musically/?MEANINGFUL\\_INTERACTION\\_COUNT=1&activeTabRank=%23best](https://www.data.ai/en/apps/google-play/app/com.zhiliaoapp.musically/?MEANINGFUL_INTERACTION_COUNT=1&activeTabRank=%23best)

Even the innocent Tik Tok has become a global political issue. Innocent because the content that users post is often futile: selfies, dances, recipes, or challenges that involve hundreds of thousands of people. A treasure from an advertising point of view, a problem from a political one. In contrast, the technology and its algorithm are very complex. In fact, the Chinese company ByteDance<sup>52</sup>, owner of Tik Tok, is suspected of sharing user data with the Chinese government. Denials have failed to erase the distrust, since the Personal Information Protection Law of the People's Republic of China allows the government to examine and collect individuals' private data. This is why authorities in the United States and in other countries like New Zealand or Denmark advise government officials and state employees against downloading the social network app.

- Xiaohongshu (小红书, *Xiǎohóngshū*): also known as Little Red Book or RED, was founded in 2013 and it functions as both a video and photo sharing space, as well as an e-commerce platform. As we said above, live streaming is one of the functions that make the app so popular.
- Sina Weibo (新浪微博, *Xīnlàng Wēibó*): it is a microblogging platform launched in 2009. On Sina Weibo users can read, for example, announcements posted by brands or celebrities.
- Renren (人人网, *Rénrén Wǎng*): launched in 2005, it is a platform whose functions are similar to those of Facebook. In 2011 Renren Wang has obtained a stock market listing (Truzzi, 2020), becoming a real competitor for the Western platform.
- Bilibili (哔哩哔哩, *Bìlǐ Bìlǐ*): it is a video sharing platform founded in 2009. On Bilibili users can find more insightful and cultural contents.
- Zhihu (知乎, *Zhīhū*): it is a forum platform, launched in 2009, where users can ask and answer questions. Therefore, Zhihu predominantly operates within the sphere of education rather than serving as a platform for sharing photos or videos about daily life.

Before concluding this section, it is important to highlight that the difference between WeChat and Weixin, and that between Tik Tok and Douyin, is not the same. While WeChat in its international version simply does not have many of the functions and services of its Chinese counterpart, Douyin and Tik Tok are two distinct applications. To better understand, if we search for popular Tik Tok channels in Italy, for example the one of the influencer Chiara Ferragni with 6.4 million followers, we will find out that on Douyin we do not have the same results: accounts under this name exist,

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<sup>52</sup> ByteDance (known in China as 字节跳动 *Zìjié tiàodòng*) is a Chinese company founded in 2012 and operating in the IT sector, counting 150 000 employees all over the world. The company defines itself as a global company that creates global products and sets its entire marketing communication on this concept (source: <https://www.bytedance.com/en/>).



however they are unofficial, lack of followers, and do not share contents concerning the Italian fashion blogger (consulted in January 2024).

#### *4.1.1. Eye-catching features for Chinese posts*

This section aims at describing the most relevant and common features that we can find in those posts or videos, portraying food and beverage items, focusing on the categories of products that the company at issue, Fabbri 1905, sells and that generated much user interaction online.

In fact, empirically studying Chinese social media may help a company to better understand how to adapt its promotional posts or advertisements to the target market.

By looking on the Chinese social media at the most liked videos that show the process of preparing a drink using syrups or thick sauces, we can notice several common features. The research has been conducted by looking for “cocktail preparation” on Xiaohongshu. Selecting 100 videos and ordering them by clicking on the filter option “最热” (*zuì rè*, ‘the most popular’), 78 of them showed some common features<sup>53</sup>: the videos exhibit simplicity over a neutral background typically with pastel colors or a minimalist kitchen setting. Each preparation step is not explicitly articulated through verbal explanation. Instead, a relaxing background music backdrops the visual demonstration, while the details of the recipe are often conveyed through concise subtitles, explaining especially the ingredient quantities. In addition, in most of videos we can see only the ingredients being blended in a transparent glass and the hands of the person preparing the drink.

Concerning the most liked pictures showing beverages, the research has been conducted by looking for “drink” on Xiaohongshu. Selecting 100 pictures and ordering them by clicking on the filter option “最热” (*zuì rè*, ‘the most popular’), 51 of them showed some common features. The background is whether uniform, refined and minimalist or portraying a bar; the transparent glass, or plastic cup, is the main subject of the picture, with at most the hands of a person holding it. Sometimes, alongside the glass we can usually see some short Chinese words in italics or in a special font for example showing the name of the drink. In addition, it is interesting to notice that very often we can find pictures where the background is adorned with images of flowers, both drawn or in photos.

The three pictures in the next page show some examples of this kind of contents.

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<sup>53</sup> The analysis on Xiaohongshu concerning drink, cocktail preparations and ice cream related contents has been conducted on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024.



Figure 18: Example of a popular content showing the steps to prepare a drink - Screenshot of the video made by the user 饮滴乜嘢 Yīn Dī Miē Yě , Url: <https://www.xiaohongshu.com/expl ore/62aee0f90000000001027e25>



Figure 19: Example of promotional image showing a beverage product, Lavazza – Url: <https://www.xiaohongshu.com/expl ore/63ae60e0000000001f0215a3>



Figure 20: Example of a popular content showing the steps to prepare a drink - Screenshot of the video made by the user 是梨酱呀 Shì Lí Jiàng Ya, Url: <https://www.xiaohongshu.com/explor e/64f0a8e1000000001e02b67c>

By looking at popular pictures showing ice cream, we can notice that the vast majority concerns ice cream in tubs, rather than industrial ice cream in bars. In fact, if we look for “ice cream” on Xiaohongshu, among 100 pictures (ordered by clicking on the filter option “最热”, *zuì rè*, ‘the most popular’), 48 of them showed ice cream in tubs, mostly served in a cone or a cup, with, at most, the hands of the ice cream maker or customer. This greater attention towards artisanal products over industrial ones reflects the tastes of the rising middle class in China, demonstrating, given the higher cost associated with artisanal products, an increased inclination to invest in premium-priced goods. In addition, the pictures are colorful, characterized by the bright shades of the different ice cream flavors.

Concerning the videos showing ice cream, a similar pattern emerges: if we look for “ice cream” on Xiaohongshu, among 100 pictures (ordered by clicking on the filter option “最热” *zuì rè* ‘the most popular’), 75 of them show ice cream in tubs, mostly served in a cone or a cup, in its colorful flavors. In contrast with the videos of drink preparations, in several of these ice cream-focused videos the users talk a lot, describing in detail the experience of eating artisanal ice cream. Notably, the subtitles in Chinese are always provided and accompany the video. In addition, another interesting element to note is that across the some of these clips it is used the Italian term “gelato”<sup>54</sup> to mention the product.

<sup>54</sup> “The Italian style of ice cream [...], made from milk, cream, sugar, and fruit or other flavors mixed together and frozen” (source: Cambridge English Dictionary)

Although most of the photos and videos we can see on Chinese social media show ice cream in tubs, it would be reductive not to mention the Chinese brand Chicecream (known in China as 钟薛高 *Zhōngxuēgāo*): a company, founded in 2018, that sells ice cream in bars, much more expensive than even its Western competitors. In 2019, Chicecream has been the most searched item on Xiaohongshu, popular thanks to its traditional Chinese references: the ice cream bars are crafted in the likeness of a Chinese roof tile, featuring the design elements reminiscent of both the tile itself and the character 回 *huí* ‘to return’ (Chang, 2021).

Different is the case of pictures depicting both the product and the Key Opinion Leaders, Key Opinion Consumers or other Chinese celebrities sponsoring the product. As we can see in Figure 21, in most of the pictures of this kind, the celebrities are placed in the foreground, half-length and centered, with the product in their hands. In addition, their autograph is almost never missing.

Moreover, in China every year several holidays are celebrated, culturally and traditionally fundamental for the Chinese population. These can represent a valuable opportunity to launch customized products or targeted advertising for the Chinese market.

The most important festivity is the Chinese New Year, which doesn’t have a fixed date in the Gregorian calendar since it follows the Chinese lunar calendar, although it always falls between January and February. Each year is symbolized by an animal, according to the twelve Chinese zodiac signs. This is why many companies, from wine to clothing ones, adapt their products or advertisements focusing on the animal of the year (as we can see in figures 22 and 23). For example, Coca Cola releases every year a video to sponsor the product, where the protagonist is, indeed, the animal of that specific year, as in Figure 24. The videos have always the same pattern: the bottle of Coca Cola stands as the element of cohesion and reunification of the family composed by animals. In fact, the brand plays on the concept of family, which is one of the most important institutions in Chinese society, a reflection of the collectivist nature of the culture and of the Confucian influences.



Figure 21: Nestlé, example of a Chinese post depicting a celebrity and the product – Source: <https://weibo.com/2240206400/NhOUXjgUf?type=reply>



Figure 22: Masi Costasera Classic Amarone – special bottle for the Chinese New Year 2023, year of the rabbit - Source: <https://www.amazon.it/COSTASERA-Valpolicella-Classico-Appassimento-Expertise/dp/B0BS6QRF3V>



Figure 23: Gucci Campaign for the Chinese New Year 2023, year of the rabbit - Source: <https://www.gucci.com/ch/it/st/gifts>



Figure 24: Screenshot of the promotional video made by Coca Cola for the Chinese New Year, year of the rabbit – Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0lOoeCMxJ0>

Opportunities to increase sales go beyond traditional festivals and sometimes encompass specifically created events, such as Singles’ Day (also called “Double 11”). This event, which occurs on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, was born as an anti-Valentine’s Day, yet nowadays it is known to be the world’s biggest online shopping day. Double 11 has been launched by the Chinese e-commerce leader Alibaba through Tmall: a shopping festival with massive discounts, promotions, and special offers on a wide range of products, similar to the Black Friday.

#### 4.2. Fabbri 1905 on Chinese social media

The present paragraph aims at describing the behavior of Fabbri 1905 on Chinese social media: the language used, the formats of its posts, the frequency of publication and various other relevant aspects. But before going deeper into the topic, it is worth analyzing Fabbri 1905 official website.

The official website offers multiple languages versions: (obviously) Italian, English, Portuguese, Spanish, German, Polish and Chinese. The latter doesn’t show the same information as the other language versions (such as the description of the products or the company’s history), it is composed almost only by QR codes that redirect the user to the social networks’ accounts and to the online shop platform. On the official website, the first image we can see is the one of the Chinese lady wearing

the blue and white *qipao*, the one that we have already seen in Chapter 2, alongside a sentence in Chinese: “Fabbri 1905: 20 多年来持续为中国带来我们的创意和创新” (*Fabbri 1905: 20 duōnián lái chíxù wèi Zhōngguó dàilái wǒmen de chuàngyì hé chuàngxīn*, ‘Fabbri 1905: continuously bringing our creativity and innovation to China for more than 20 years’). Subsequently, another sentence follows: “中国总部位于上海，专业的法布芮中国团队一直致力于为店铺和终端消费者提供全套饮品、烘焙及冰淇淋解决方案” (*Zhōngguó zǒngbù wèiyú Shànghǎi, zhuānyè de Fǎbùruì Zhōngguó tuánduì yīzhí zhìlì yú wèi diànpù hé zhōngduān xiāofèizhě tígōng quán tào yǐnpǐn, hōngbèi jí bīngqílín jiějué fāng'àn*, ‘The Chinese headquarter is located in Shanghai. The professional Fabbri China team has been committed to providing stores and end consumers with a complete set of beverage, pastry, and ice cream solutions’). The remainder of the website comprises only QR codes and contact details, all written in Chinese. The prevalent use of QR codes, which might seem unusual to us in Western countries, shows how the Chinese primarily navigate the internet via mobile apps. For example, even payments and handouts are made through QR codes, underlining the mobile-centric nature of Chinese activities. In addition, the multiple language versions of Fabbri 1905’s official website show the importance, for those companies who export in foreign countries, of localizing the online platforms, adapting them both in terms of consumer preferences and from a linguistic point of view.

Returning to the initial question of Fabbri 1905 on Chinese social media, the company from August 2023 has been joined by the Chinese marketing agency *Digirepub* to manage the online branding on Chinese platforms, as already mentioned in the first chapter. Although they are targeting both B2B and B2C markets, a smaller share of the resources is allocated to gather new contacts and sales from end consumers, focusing primarily on establishing connections with chains and wholesalers of ice cream, pastry shops, and cafeterias.

Even though Fabbri 1905 is registered also on Sina Weibo<sup>55</sup>, the company’s goals are achieved through three other Chinese channels: WeChat, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu.

On both Xiaohongshu and WeChat the description of the accounts is the following: “品质，意式，传统，创新，尽在法布芮。FABBRI IS ITALY, QUALITY, TRADITION AND INNOVATION”.

The English sentence conveys an equivalent meaning, almost a literal translation, of the Chinese characters 品质，意式，传统，创新，尽在法布芮 *pǐnzhì, yì shì, chuántǒng, chuàngxīn, jǐn zài*

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<sup>55</sup> Fabbri 1905’s Sina Weibo account is called “FABBRI1905 法布芮” (*FABBRI1905 Fǎbùruì*). It counts 30 000 followers and the last post dates back to the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

*Fǎbùruì* ‘quality, Italian style, tradition, innovation, all in Fabbri’. The description of Fabbri 1905’s WeChat and Xiaohongshu accounts synthesize the core values and main characteristics of the company, attempting to describe itself in just four words, whereas on Douyin we find a more detailed and more complete account description shortly presenting the company and the types of products it offers.

Following this short premise, the next subsections will focus more specifically on the behavior exhibited by Fabbri 1905 on the three Chinese social media platforms at issue.

#### 4.2.1. *WeChat*

Fabbri 1905’s official account on WeChat is currently called “FABBRI1905”. The official WeChat account, unlike those that will be described below, was created on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018 under the name of 法布芮 FABBRI 客户之家 *Fǎbùruì FABBRI kèhù zhī jiā* ‘Fabbri Fabbri customer’s home’. However, it had a break in operations between the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 and the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023. In addition, between March 2023 and September 2023 only five articles were published. The substantial shift in online activity started, in fact, from September, facilitated by the collaboration with the Chinese marketing agency. In fact, the company now publishes one article per week, more specifically almost every Friday.

On WeChat we can find another official account under the name of “Fabbri1905”, which, however, is not active: the last post dates back to 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and, at the moment, Fabbri 1905 and *Digirepub* are not working on developing this account.

WeChat, generally speaking, is aimed at everyone, both end consumers and professionals. However, Fabbri 1905 has elected it as the most suitable social channel for communicating to the B2B target group, mainly to professionals for ice cream shops, bars, and hotels. For this purpose, the account presents different sections redirecting the user to websites showing products’ catalogues, recipes, the history of the company, contact details and the QR code to access the e-shop page on Tmall. In addition, the account offers the possibility to surf on Fabbri 1905’s Mini Program, however at the moment the page hasn’t been updated and we are only able to see the logo and the layout of the webpage (consulted in January 2024).

While the *channel section* shows very few and relatively old videos (the last one dates back to the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021), the *articles section*, as we said before, is constantly updated.

The articles help to maintain the relationship with the professional customers who, in this way, can receive detailed information concerning the company, its operations and its products. In addition, at the end of each article we can find two QR codes: one redirecting the user to the Tmall online shop and one which invites the customer to register to the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software. In this way, on one side Fabbri 1905 collects contacts of potential customers from bars, distributors and from the catering field, on the other side the user receives updated information concerning the company and recipes created specifically for professionals.

The layout of the articles is refined with white and blue as predominant colors, which remind the company's logo and the floral patterns, as we can see in Figure 25.

However, in some cases, the color of the article's layout is coordinated with either the product or the event being highlighted. For instance, in the two posts promoting the passion fruit syrup and some special recipes for Halloween, the predominant color used is orange.

The text is composed usually by concise sentences accompanied by several pictures of the product and its usage. In addition, taking into consideration the preferences of the target market, we can note that Fabbri 1905 has chosen to give much space to pictures representing savory preparations, rather than solely sweet ones.

Furthermore, it is common practice that official WeChat accounts send an automatic message whenever a new user starts following the page. Messages which usually include a welcome sentence, a short overview concerning the subdivision of the official page or a discount code. However, although Fabbri 1905 have been providing it until approximately October 2023, presently the automatic message on the official page is not provided (consulted in January 2024). This absence may be attributed to the possibility that the company is currently working on improving this function.



Figure 25: Example of Fabbri 1905's article on WeChat – Source: article posted on the official WeChat account of Fabbri 1905 on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023

The article that received the most views (consulted in January 2024) is the one that dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023 with 3437 readings (on WeChat called 阅读, *yuèdú*), showing a clear difference in numbers compared to the other publications. The post concerns the competition Lady Amarena in China, an event, as we have already seen in Chapter 2, that helps the company to be better known both on Chinese social media and in the Asian country. Whereas the least read articles are the ones written in English: several times (before the collaboration with the Chinese marketing agency) the same article happened to be published twice in its Chinese and English versions. Those in English show fewer and fewer readings, not reaching many users and taking away visibility from other articles.

From a linguistic point of view, we can note a sophisticated and poetic way of communicating the messages. To better understand, it could be useful to look at these two sentences: “历经时光沉淀 / 重释经典新生”<sup>56</sup> (*lìjīng shíguāng chéndiàn / zhòng shì jīngdiǎn xīnshēng*, ‘After time, to reinterpret the rebirth of classics’), source: post of the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023 sponsoring the recently launched Fabbri Gin; “百年经典 / 焕新呈现” (*bǎinián jīngdiǎn / huàn xīn chéngxiàn* ‘A century-old classic, newly presented’), source: post of the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023 sponsoring the liqueur Marendry.

In addition, we can notice that it is common to find sentences consisting of four characters, composed by two disyllabic words, as in the two examples that follow: “卓越品质, 美味诱惑” (*zhuóyuè pǐnzhì, měiwèi yòuhuò* ‘excellent quality, delicious temptation’), source: post of the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023 sponsoring Nevepanna Belpanna 50 CF; “添加风味 愉悦味蕾 / 精致造型 视觉享受” (*tiānjiā fēngwèi yúyuè wèilěi / jīngzhì zàoxíng shìjué xiǎngshòu*, ‘Add flavor, delight the taste buds / Delicate shape, visual enjoyment’), source: post of the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2023 sponsoring Chocolate Gourmet Sauce. As we can observe from the examples, these Chinese phrases consisting of two words, each composed of two characters, are often followed by the same pattern. This method, which, in simplified terms, can be expressed as (2+2)+(2+2), imparts symmetry to the slogan, making it more captivating and stylistically refined.

By looking at the last example we can also notice another interesting element: the word 味蕾 *wèilěi* ‘taste buds’ is used several times throughout the articles of Fabbri 1905. For instance, another example can be found in the post of 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023 sponsoring Delipaste Caramel Salted Butter: “尝一口甜蜜焦糖, 打动客户的秋日味蕾” (*cháng yīkǒu tiánmì jiāo táng, dǎdòng kèhù de qiū rì wèilěi* ‘A taste of sweet caramel to impress customers' autumn taste buds’).

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<sup>56</sup> Here and in the following examples, the slash indicates that in the original text the sentence starts in a new line.



In addition, by looking at the following sentence taken from the article published on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023 sponsoring Nevepanna Belpanna 50 CF, we can notice another interesting way of saying of the Chinese 网民 *wǎngmín*, ‘netizens, web user’: “解锁意式手工冰淇淋? 有 TA 就够!” (*jiěsuǒ yì shì shǒugōng bīngqílín? Yǒu TA jiù gòu!* ‘Unlock the Italian artisanal ice cream? *TA* is enough’). The word “TA” refers to the the three characters 她 *tā* ‘she’, 他 *tā* ‘he’ and 它 *tā* ‘it’. As we can see, the wordplay is based on the fact that in Chinese the three personal pronouns *she*, *he* and *it*, although they are written differently, are pronounced in the same way: “*tā*”. As a consequence, the use of this expression creates a feeling of curiosity and mystery in the reader toward the subject of the article.



Figure 26: Delipaste Creamy Italian Hazelnut for the Chinese New Year, year of the dragon - Picture posted on the official WeChat account of Fabbri 1905 on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Lastly, we can also notice that recently Fabbri 1905’s communication approach towards the Chinese audience is changing and increasingly adapting to cultural nuances. For instance, in the WeChat article of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024 promoting the flavoring paste Delipaste Creamy Italian Hazelnut, we can observe the prevalence of the color red, lucky color according to the Chinese culture, and background decorations depicting dragons, symbolizing the animal of the upcoming Chinese New Year, as we can see in Figure 26. In addition, we can notice another wordplay in the sentence written in the picture at issue: 新年“龙”重来袭 *xīnnián “lóng” zhòng lái xī*. The third character means ‘dragon’ and it sounds the same as the character 隆 *lóng* of the Chinese word 隆重 *lóngzhòng* ‘grand, solemn’.

As a consequence, the sentence 新年隆重重来袭 *xīnnián lóngzhòng lái xī* means ‘the new year is coming grandly’, but, in the WeChat post, the third character has been replaced by its homophone 龙 *lóng* referring to the animal of the Chinese New Year.

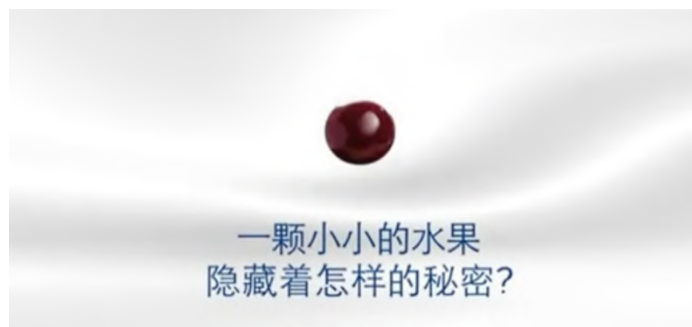
#### 4.2.2. Douyin<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> The official Fabbri 1905’s account on Douyin can be consulted at the following Url: [https://www.douyin.com/user/MS4wLjABAAAop3Q04X\\_3bkXN5Ici0YcWN1KcrnBsMI2LoI3tS11DEcaaoYJNGYhpUbPB6BVXmvz?showTab=post](https://www.douyin.com/user/MS4wLjABAAAop3Q04X_3bkXN5Ici0YcWN1KcrnBsMI2LoI3tS11DEcaaoYJNGYhpUbPB6BVXmvz?showTab=post)

Fabbri 1905's official account on Douyin is called “法布芮（上海）食品贸易有限公司” (*Fābùrui (shànghǎi) shípǐn màoyì yǒuxiàn gōngsī* ‘Fabbri (Shanghai) Food Trading Corporation LTD’). The first video ever published on this platform was uploaded on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

Taking into consideration the difference between Douyin and Tik Tok explained in Section 4.1.1, we can notice that on Tik Tok the account of Fabbri 1905 shares different contents compared to the Chinese platform. In addition, the Italian page was activated earlier in 2022.

Fabbri 1905's Douyin account is addressed both to end consumers and to professionals. Its main function is to attract new followers and customers through quick and concise videos presenting the company and its products. This approach aims at stimulating the brand's influence and foster brand awareness among the audience.



*Figure 27: Screenshot of the promotional video showing Fabbri 1905's products with the wild cherry as primary ingredient – Translation: 'What kind of secret can a small fruit be hiding?' - Source: Video posted on the official Douyin account of Fabbri 1905 on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 2023 , Url: [https://www.douyin.com/user/MS4wLjABAAAop3Q04X\\_3bkXN5Ici0YcWN1KcrnBsMI2LoI3tS1IDEcaaoYJNGYhpUbPB6BVXmvz?modal\\_id=7258153715058658572](https://www.douyin.com/user/MS4wLjABAAAop3Q04X_3bkXN5Ici0YcWN1KcrnBsMI2LoI3tS1IDEcaaoYJNGYhpUbPB6BVXmvz?modal_id=7258153715058658572)*

On Douyin, Fabbri 1905's published contents are mostly quick videos with a rhythmic and dynamic background music and short subtitles in Chinese (in some cases also in Italian or English). In addition, the videos usually show the steps for preparing cocktails, savory and sweet dishes using the products of the company.

To conclude, the video, posted on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023, promoting the candied ginger Zenzero Fabbri and its different usages, ranging from garnishing cocktails to accompanying cheese, has obtained the highest number of likes (consulted in January 2024). Nevertheless, due to the recent activation of the account, the level of interactions remains relatively low in absolute terms.

### 4.2.3. Xiaohongshu<sup>58</sup>

Fabbri 1905 official account on Xiaohongshu is called “FABBRI1905”. The first content ever published on this platform has been uploaded on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

Given the characteristics of the social network at issue, Fabbri 1905 actively engages with end consumers through Xiaohongshu, employing retail strategies and operating within the B2C sphere.

On the platform at issue, Fabbri 1905 aims at making the brand better known in China by promoting its products through both images and videos.

However, an important role is also played by the user experience, which helps to build the brand’s reputation. In fact, it is worth noticing that several private users have posted (also before the creation of the official page) pictures of some of the products of Fabbri 1905, mainly syrups (consulted in December 2023). The users have shared their experience, recommendations, recipes, and questions concerning the items purchased. Here are some interesting examples: the first user recommends the product Amarena Fabbri and tries to describe its taste and consistency “recommendation: black cherries by Fabbri [...] the consistency of the jam is not bad, it's not mushy, it's syrupy and fruity”<sup>59</sup> (post of the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021, user’s name: “「山行手作」s 银票” *shānxíng shǒu zuò s yín piào*, my translation); the second user describes its preferences concerning three different flavored syrups “elderflower, this one is by far my favorite flavor [...]. Lime, lemon, and ginger, I didn’t like it much, too sour. Wild black cherry, good to drink [...] nothing out of the ordinary”<sup>60</sup> (post of the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022, user’s name: “evilDNA”, my translation).

By analyzing Fabbri 1905 behavior on this platform, we must consider that the target audience on Xiaohongshu is different from the one on WeChat, as a consequence the language and the style used are not as refined and formal. In addition, as we can see in the example of figure 28, the font used is more playful, roundish, and informal.



Figure 28: Mochi filled with Amarena Fabbri - Picture posted on the official Xiaohongshu account of Fabbri 1905 on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023, Url: <https://www.xiaohongshu.com/explore/656ecbbd000000003a0092a5>

<sup>58</sup> The official Fabbri 1905’s account on Xiaohongshu can be consulted at the following url: <https://www.xiaohongshu.com/user/profile/5e075bd20000000001000bcc>

<sup>59</sup> Source: <https://www.xiaohongshu.com/explore/6123966b000000002103e553>

<sup>60</sup> Source: <https://www.xiaohongshu.com/explore/62cf387f000000000102d766>

Furthermore, also the way of addressing to the reader on Xiaohongshu differs from the one on WeChat, where the text is addressed to professionals and we can find expressions like “惊艳您的客户” *jīngyàn nín de kèhù* ‘amaze your customers’ (source: WeChat post of the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023 sponsoring Nevepanna Belpanna 50 CF). On the contrary, the language on Xiaohongshu is exclusively directed towards the user.

To conclude, the pictures, posted in the post of the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023, showing the “明星产品” *míngxīng chǎnpǐn* ‘star product’ of Fabbri 1905, Amarena Fabbri, has obtained the highest number of likes and comments (consulted in January 2024). Nevertheless, due to the recent activation of the account, the level of interactions remains relatively low in absolute terms.

## Chapter 5

### *Digital dynamics: analyzing the online presence of Fabbri 1905's competitors*

In this chapter, we will analyze Fabbri 1905's competitors in China, with a specific emphasis on selected counterparts. The focal point of our investigation centers on their strategic engagement on Chinese social media platforms, stressing once more the importance of these channels as strong tools for establishing an effective local presence.

#### *5.1. Official website translation and account registration on Chinese platforms: the position of the competitors of Fabbri 1905*

This section provides a summary table illustrating the presence of Fabbri 1905's competitors on Chinese social media platforms and indicates whether their official websites have been translated into Chinese. In addition, the section specifies the sector in which Fabbri 1905 competes with each specific brand, since the companies at issue frequently offer a wide selection of products. To conclude this short premise, it is important to specify that the data have been collected in December 2023 and that the selection of competitors is based on indications received from the company Fabbri 1905 itself.

*Table 11: Overview on Fabbri 1905's competitors on Chinese social media – personally drafted, December 2023*

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Competitor</i>	<i>Website in Chinese</i>	<i>Douyin 抖音</i>	<i>WeChat 微信</i>	<i>Xiaohongshu 小红书</i>	<i>Additional remarks</i>
Beverage	France	Monin	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Beverage	France	Giffard 1885	No	No	Yes	No	The company has not posted on WeChat since the 3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2016. Considering that it has been inactive for an extended period, it is likely that the account has been abandoned.
Beverage	Italy	Amaro Montenegro	Yes	No	No	No	
Beverage	Italy	Mixer	No	No	No	No	

Beverage	France	Maison Routin 1883	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	On Chinese social media platforms, the company at issue can be found under the name of 1883糖浆 (1883 <i>tángjiāng</i> , '1883 syrups').
Pastry and beverage	Italy	Toschi Vignola	No	No	Yes	Yes	The company has not posted on WeChat since the 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2021. In addition, the account on Xiaohongshu doesn't seem official.
Pastry and beverage	Italy	Dr. Oetker	Yes	No	No	No	The company is known in Italy as "Cameo" and in China as "欧特家博士" <i>Ōutèjiā bóshì</i> 'doctor Oetker'.
Pastry and beverage	Switzerland	Nestlé	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	The company is known in China as 雀巢 <i>Quècháo</i> , literally 'small bird's nest'.
Ice cream and pastry	Italy	Leagel	No	No	Yes	Yes	The account of the company on WeChat doesn't seem official.
Ice cream and pastry	Italy	Comprital	Yes	No	No	No	
Ice cream and pastry	Italy	Irca	No	No	Yes	No	Based in Hong Kong under the name <i>Dobla Chocolate Innovations</i> , known in Chinese as 多焙乐 <i>Duōbèilè</i> . The company's account on WeChat is called Dobla 多焙乐, however, it has not published on WeChat since the 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2020.

Ice cream and pastry	Italy	MEC3	No	No	Yes	Yes	The company has two accounts on Xiaohongshu, however they both don't seem official.
Ice cream and pastry	Italy	PreGel	No	No	Yes	Yes	The company's accounts on WeChat and Xiaohongshu don't seem official.
Ice cream and pastry	Italy	Sammontana	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	The company's accounts on Douyin and Xiaohongshu don't seem official. Moreover, it is worth noticing that the company is registered in China with a brand name completely different from the original Italian one: 吉拉托食品(上海)有限公司 <i>ji lā tuō shí pǐn (shànghǎi) yǒu xiàn gōng sī</i> , where the first three characters sound as 'gelato' ('ice cream') in Italian.
Ice cream and pastry	Italy	Babbi	No	No	No	No	
Ice cream and pastry	Italy	Elenka	No	No	Yes	No	The company has not posted on WeChat since the 4 <sup>th</sup> of May 2019.
Ice cream, pastry	Italy	Giuso	No	No	No	No	

As we can see by analyzing the table above, the presence of the listed competitors of Fabbri 1905 on Chinese social media platforms appears to be quite weak. In fact, only few brands are registered on the three platforms WeChat, Douyin or Xiaohongshu. The accounts that do not seem to be official have been classified as such because they either do not have the *blue tick* or publish content not related to the company's business. In addition, there are also few companies that have decided to translate their official website.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that many of the companies listed above, although they are not formally present on Chinese social networks or do not have official accounts, often rely on distributors to facilitate the sale of their products within the Chinese market. As a result, it is frequent that the distributor itself takes care of the promotional aspect of the products, by publishing insights and information in its WeChat articles or through other social media platforms.

In addition, by examining the table, it is evident that the primary competitors of Fabbri 1905, considering the products they offer, are predominantly from France and Italy, particularly from the Italian region Emilia Romagna.

Thanks to a recognizable brand and packaging, Fabbri 1905 has managed to enter the complex Chinese market, however, in recent years, it has found an Italian competitor, or rather an Emilian one. It is Toschi Vignola, a company founded in 1945 and headquartered in Savignano sul Panaro (Modena, Emilia Romagna). Toschi Vignola produces, like Fabbri 1905, the sour wild black cherry amarena and sells it in a not too different packaging, as we can see in Figure 29. The company has a turnover of 27 million euros, it has 90 employees and exports in more than 70 countries<sup>61</sup>. It recorded a 41% increase in turnover during the first half of 2022, compared to the first half of 2021, with 60% of its turnover coming from exports<sup>62</sup>. Its target markets are Europe and North America, while in recent years it has been trying to expand its sales in China.



Figure 29: Amarena Toschi by Toschi Vignola – source: <https://www.toschi.it/amar-ena-toschi/>

Despite the fact that most of Fabbri 1905's competitors are Italian, noteworthy success can be observed also among various Asian brands. The case of *Métier* is particularly interesting. *Métier*, founded by CJ Cheiljedang, is a Korean food brand selling gourmet products (mostly syrups), which, however, carries a French name. *Métier* in French, among its various meanings, in this case refers to 'the experience in the field, work experience', or as the official website suggests: "expertise to display innate talent and technology"<sup>63</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> Source: <https://www.confindustriaemilia.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/103243>

<sup>62</sup> Source:

<https://www.confindustriaemilia.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/99440#:~:text=Bilancio%20più%20che%20positivo%20per.%25%20export%2C%2040%25%20Italia>

<sup>63</sup> Source: <https://www.cj.co.kr/en/brands/metier>



In conclusion, among the companies above listed it is worth analyzing Monin: the following chapter is indeed focused on the French company.

The company Monin should deserve a separate discussion first because it is one of the major competitors of Fabbri 1905 within the Chinese market; secondly because its activity on WeChat specifically tailored for the Chinese audience and its products specifically designed for the Asian market, stand as a significant and noteworthy example of a company that successfully managed to adapt its promotional activities to the culture of the target market.

## *5.2. Focus on Monin and WeChat: a successful example of Chinese-oriented communication*

Food is particularly sensitive to culture; this is why advertisements should be adapted and localized according to the target market. When promoting Italian products or items deeply linked to its country of origin, precision in flavor descriptions and product details is essential. In fact, there is a potential risk that if not accurately conveyed, the product may not be comprehended or may be overlooked by the audience.

Moreover, as we have said before, WeChat stands as one of the most effective tools to promote goods, in support of this statement it is worth mentioning Xinyu Cui's research of 2022, concerning the influence that WeChat articles have in consumers' purchase decisions. More specifically, the research was based on a sample composed by 107 people over the Fendi ski series products launched on WeChat articles through the official account. As a result, the survey showed that the advertisement attracted more than 80% of the respondents (Cui, 2022: 1116).

Although Fabbri 1905's communication approach towards the Chinese audience is changing and is increasingly adapting to cultural nuances, the company has given limited space to its more exotic products, such as tamarind syrup. On the other hand, the company Monin has gained many positive feedbacks thanks to its localized posts. As a consequence, this paragraph aims at describing Monin's Chinese-oriented way of communicating and promoting its products on WeChat's articles.

Monin (known in China as 莫林, *Mòlín*) is a French family company founded in 1912 in Bourges, selling syrups, fruit mixes (or pulps), sauces, frappes, liqueurs and smoothies liquid and powdered

bases<sup>64</sup>. The French company operates in more than 140 countries, including China, and in 2017 it has established its own production line in the Asian country<sup>65</sup>.

Before going deeper into a more detailed analysis of Monin’s specific articles, the table below provides insights concerning the number of feedbacks that Monin has received on WeChat. The following list shows, in fact, the level of interactions (readings and likes) that the articles published by the official WeChat account of Monin have obtained. The data have been personally collected between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023. Additionally, they refer to a time range of one-year, from the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022 to the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The table is organized based on macro topics, in turn divided into more specific themes. In addition, the list is structured according to an ascending order based on the total readings obtained per macro topic.

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Likes</i>
<b>Recipes for special drinks</b>	<b>14641</b>	<b>70</b>
For Western New Year’s Eve	2913	14
For Chinese New Year	1601	13
For Christmas	1302	6
For Valentine’s Day	1203	4
To celebrate in general	1098	4
Refreshing drinks	1096	1
For Halloween	982	4
For the 1 <sup>st</sup> of May	918	4
For Mother’s Day	870	2
For Women’s Day	669	6
For Chinese National Day	669	6
For holidays	667	4
For the health	653	2
<b>Syrups</b>	<b>13208</b>	<b>53</b>
Different flavors	2386	6
Tamarind	1535	14
Black sugar ginger	1327	4
Osmanthus	1190	2
Chestnut	1066	5
Gardenia	1037	6
The most liked flavors of syrups in summer	840	2
Syrups and recipes for China	685	5
Camelia	481	1
Several lemon products	375	1
Caramelized nut	350	1
Peach’s flower	321	1

<sup>64</sup> Source: <https://monin1912.com/pages/our-history>

<sup>65</sup> Source: <http://monin.com.cn/zh-hans/pin-pai-jie-shao>

Purple potato	321	1
Chinese blackberry	311	1
Lemongrass	302	0
Elderflower	271	2
Jasmine	256	1
Rose	154	0
<b>Contests, several</b>	<b>8902</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Fruit syrup</b>	<b>6988</b>	<b>26</b>
Lychee	1523	4
Pomelo	1243	7
White peach	1091	3
Cinnamon apple	965	5
Passion fruit and others	900	2
Watermelon	384	1
Grapefruit	344	3
Pink grapefruit	315	1
Cantaloupe	223	0
<b>Alcoholic syrups</b>	<b>6770</b>	<b>23</b>
Green plum wine	1839	6
Butterbeer	1451	3
Kyoto grape liqueur	1350	8
Different products	1162	2
Dark beer	968	4
<b>Fruit pulp</b>	<b>6129</b>	<b>12</b>
White peach	1809	4
Ananas	1191	3
Fig	1131	0
Coconut	932	2
Kaki	454	1
Mango	335	1
Peach	277	1
<b>Events, several</b>	<b>3360</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Tea syrups</b>	<b>3109</b>	<b>12</b>
Yashi Phoenix Oolong tea	1716	6
Hojicha	1393	6
<b>Offers</b>	<b>3105</b>	<b>13</b>
Registered member's day	1537	5
Discounts	748	2
Syrups on offer	426	2
Free calendar	207	2
Delivery	187	2
<b>In-depth articles</b>	<b>1894</b>	<b>6</b>
Tea	739	0
Milk beer	459	3
Spices	350	2

Hot drinks	346	1
<b>Coffee</b>	<b>1667</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Biscuit</b>	<b>1421</b>	<b>6</b>
Ananas flavor	1205	6
Chocolate flavor	216	0
<b>Topping</b>	<b>1356</b>	<b>1</b>
Matcha	1356	1
<b>Candy</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>2</b>
Plum	884	2
<b>Job offers</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>3</b>

Table 12: Focus on the articles of Monin on WeChat: interactions in a one-year range – personally drafted, data collection between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023

As we can notice by looking at the table, among the products that Monin has promoted, the tamarind stands as the most appreciated. The tamarind is, in fact, a tropical plant originally from Africa, yet also appreciated in some Asian countries, including China where it is both consumed and cultivated. Furthermore, by analyzing the table, it is possible to notice two syrups adapted to the Asian food culture: the Red Bean Syrup and the Yashi Phoenix Oolong Tea Syrup. The first product can be found in the promotional article published on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019, where the company proposes a recipe called 红豆鲜奶茶 *hóngdòu xiān nǎichá* ‘red bean milk tea’, with its red bean syrup standing as the major ingredient. Concerning the second product, it is in the article published by Monin on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2023 that the new tea syrup Yashi Phoenix Oolong is promoted. The Oolong tea is a variety of tea widely used in China and in other Asian countries, such as India and Japan. This product has attracted the attention of the Chinese public: it has been one of the most read articles in the past year (1716 readings).

Two additional examples of products distinguished by familiar tastes for the Chinese consumers include the Hojicha Syrup, a type of Japanese tea, and the Lychee Syrup.

In addition, it is interesting to analyze an article published by Monin on its official WeChat account on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2023, suggesting twelve different recipes, with the French company’s syrups as primary ingredients, dedicated to twelve different Chinese areas. For example the recipe dedicated to the Chinese region Zhejiang 浙江 is called 金华蜜瓜火腿 *Jīnhuá<sup>66</sup> mìguā huǒtuǐ* ‘Jinhua honey melon ham’: the drink, as the name suggests, is garnished with some slices of ham; or the recipe dedicated to the Chinese region Guangdong 广东 called 佛手柑汤力 *fóshǒugān tānglì* ‘bergamot tonic’.

<sup>66</sup> Jinhua is a prefecture-level city in the Zhejiang province.

To conclude this brief presentation on Monin and its culturally adapted strategy for the target market, it is spontaneous to ask oneself, especially from the point of view of a Chinese customer, what advantages there might be in choosing the syrups of the French company over the Italian counterpart. To better understand the Chinese perspective, it can be useful and interesting to read the question asked by the user 阿珍 *Āzhēn* on the forum platform Zhihu: “莫林 monin 和法布芮 fabbri 糖浆的区别?” (*Mòlín monin hé Fǎbùruì fabbri tángjiāng de qūbié?*, ‘What is the difference between Monin’s and Fabbri’s syrup?’)<sup>67</sup>. Fabbri 1905’s after-sale service is said to be more efficient compared to the one offered by Monin. Monin, on the other hand, is renowned for its extensive range of syrups in various flavors. In contrast, Fabbri 1905 is perceived to offer a more limited and more conventional selection, even though the flavors are considered to be less sweet and more natural. Furthermore, the products of the Italian company are seen as more fitting for coffee and pastry, while the French company is recommended for bartending applications. Lastly, Fabbri 1905’s prices are judged as slightly higher in comparison to the products of Monin.

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<sup>67</sup> Source: <https://www.zhihu.com/question/314129543/answer/611455029>

## Conclusions

Fabbri 1905 is one of the few Italian companies to have successfully won a case in China, opposing to the copying practices implemented by some Chinese companies. Fabbri 1905 should indeed continue in this direction enhancing its inimitable packagings and highlighting the value of its food and beverage products labeled *Made in Italy*. However, as we have attempted to explain in this thesis, understanding China requires an immersion in its cultural context and in its local social media platforms, where we can find trends, tastes and, of course, also a certain nationalistic sense that could decree the success or failure of a product.

It can be said that Fabbri 1905, as any foreign company operating in China, in order to achieve in entering successfully in the local market, should focus on a range of strategic factors that resonate with the Chinese consumer base. The following elements stand, indeed, as key pillars for promoting the brand effectively and cultivating a strong presence in this dynamic market.

The first strategic element is the emphasis on the *Made in Italy* label and the *Italian style*. The globally widespread interest towards Italian craftsmanship and design is indisputable: by pushing on the authentic Italian essence, that can be also found in Fabbri 1905's goods, it is possible to create a narrative that could more easily attract Chinese consumers.

Secondly, the product quality and the refinement of Fabbri 1905's packagings are fundamental elements to focus on: both meeting the client satisfaction and reinforcing the premium image of the brand. In fact, the middle class is increasingly gaining space in the Chinese society, and its purchasing power is evidently pushing the trend towards the premiumization of several different products, from clothes to food.

Particularly, the packaging of the flagship product Amarena Fabbri holds huge potential for bridging cultural connections between China and Italy. Its design, that recalls traditional Chinese porcelain decorations, can be understood as more than a mere product, becoming a cultural bridge: a harmonious blend between Italian food culture and Chinese art.

In addition, tradition and culture are deeply rooted in Chinese society; however emerging trends and the curiosity towards Western fashions could represent an opportunity of economic growth for those foreign companies operating in the local market. Nonetheless, localization of products, promotional means, language, and communication stand as an important prerequisite. To give an example, it

would be more effective to promote types of food products that align with the Asian culinary preferences, using the Chinese social media platforms, such as WeChat or Xiaohongshu, as main tools to make the item better known. Considering that the most popular Western social networks are not easily accessible in China, knowing how to manage the Chinese social media platforms and their main characteristics is an important element to take into consideration before entering in the market. Moreover, the communication on these platforms needs to be adapted, both culturally and linguistically.

In addition, cross-cultural exchanges between Italy and China and collaborations with leading companies or online celebrities in the Asian country could represent a profitable opportunity for foreign organizations in order to establish credibility and make the brand better known. In fact, by creating strategic partnerships, Fabbri 1905 could improve its visibility and position as a trusted player in the Chinese market.

However, it must be considered that China can't be approached with a single, national, and standardized approach. In fact, oversimplifications or generalizations may negatively affect the economic operations of a foreign company entering in this dynamic market. To approach China with a singular perspective means to overlook the variety that lies within its regional variations and dimensions: landscapes, languages, and traditions, which need a tailored understanding and approach. As a consequence, marketing and sales activities should focus on and depend on the target of costumers at which the company wants to aim, identifying for example whether to target first tier or third tier cities, depending on the type of product or service being offered.

Taking into consideration the premium price, type, and characteristics of Fabbri 1905's products, which significantly deviate from the Chinese tradition, it is evident that the company's target audience may not primarily come from rural regions such as Gansu. On the contrary, the products are more likely to appeal to more industrially developed and wealthy cities, such as Shanghai or Beijing. Certainly, on one side e-commerce changes the game, granting accessibility to the product across the entire territory. However, on the other side, it is important for the internal marketing operations of a foreign company to be strategically aligned with specific objectives.

To conclude, operating and exporting in China, a country which is culturally and linguistically very distant from Italy, could represent a profitable and valuable opportunity that of course brings with it some challenges. The right products, precautions, localization, and a competent and experienced team stand as necessary elements to enter in the Chinese market.

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