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Purchasing food to counteract Mafia in Italy

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Purchasing food to counteract Mafia in Italy

ABSTRACT

Purpose - The study investigates pro-social behaviour of Italian consumers during the decision-making process of buying food produced in lands confiscated from *Mafia-type* organisations. This is assumed as a form of *boycotting*, thus as an ethical purchasing choice to contribute to social change.

Design/methodology/Approach - Data from 339 interviews were elaborated with a cluster analysis. The difference between groups was confirmed using MANOVA, whereas the multivariate multiple regression analysis was carried out to assess the difference between clusters.

Findings - Three types of consumer groups are identified: absolutists, exceptionists and subjectivists. Coherent with previous studies, findings highlight also the relevance of information acquisition and of the self-effectiveness perception as key factors to stimulate pro-social behaviours.

Originality/value - With a social marketing perspective, the paper offers useful suggestions to promote political consumerism as a critical choice to contribute to fight against *Mafia-type* organisations and to spread a culture of lawfulness.

Keywords – Social marketing; Political consumerism; Food activism; *Mafia-type* organisations; Consumer behaviour.

1. Introduction

Since the nineties Italian citizens' movements and civil society organizations (CSOs) have become increasingly involved in fostering social change contributing also to fight *Mafia-type* organisations. Within this research *Mafia-type* organisations refer to any typology of Italian territorial criminal organisations (i.e., Cosa Nostra, n'drangheta, Camorra, Apulian organized crime and other Mafias). As known, these organisations strongly affect Italian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) generating high social costs, and worsening citizens' quality of life (Zamagni, 1993; Brand and Price, 2000; Daniele, 2009; Detotto and Vannini, 2010; Centro Studi Confindustria, 2015). Calderoni (2014) estimated that *Mafia-type* organisations operating in Italy are able to profit from illegal operations approximately €10.7 bn per year (e.g., bribery, blackmail money, contraband), corresponding to 0.7% of Italian GDP. Starting from 1996, consumers could adopt the marketplace as an additional arena to contrast the diffusion of *Mafia-type* organisations (Santino, 2009; Rakopoulos, 2014; Jerne, 2015). In fact, since the Italian law - n° 109/96 - enforcement (Gazzetta Ufficiale website; Libera website)^[1], an increasing number of entities have been able to revitalise goods and lands confiscated from criminal organisations by the Italian jurisdiction. Entrepreneurial, social and cultural projects take place in these lands aiming at promoting their redemption and those of the surrounding ones. Among several projects, *Libera* association (one of the non-governmental organisations most active in contributing to fight *Mafia-type* phenomenon) has given birth to *Libera Terra* co-operatives, which commercialise agro-food products grown in lands confiscated from *Mafia-type* organisations. At national level, they are promoted as “enriched” with “Legality-vitamin” (Forno, 2011, p. 71), to emphasize their ethical concern in contributing to fight against *Mafia-type* organisations“.

Food activism, through ethical food choices, adopted to foster a culture of lawfulness is a kind of political consumerism not adequately explored yet (Stolle and Micheletti, 2013). Indeed, the study focuses on *Libera Terra* food products (hereinafter defined as L-Food). The term political consumerism adopted in this work refers to the promotion of social change through “the consumer's choice of producers and products based on political or ethical considerations, or both”

(Stolle *et al.*, 2005: p. 246 quoting Micheletti *et al.*, 2003). The umbrella of “ethical food” involves several sustainability aspects (e.g., environment, human rights, fair trade, land rights, animal welfare) motivating consumers’ behaviour (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006). However, among academics there is a large consensus about the relevance of “30:3 syndrome” (Cowe and Williams, 2000), specifically that “a third of consumers profess to care about companies’ policies and records on social responsibility, but ethical products rarely achieve more than 3 percent of market share” (Stolle and Micheletti, 2013: p. 48). One of the main determinants of this syndrome is the so-called attitude-behaviour gap of consumers (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006).

In this study the term *buycott*, often defined the flip side of boycott (Yates, 2011; Hoffmann and Hutter, 2012), refers to “the conscious and deliberate decision of consumers to make consumption choices” (Crane and Matten, 2004: p. 290) to reward organizations for their good deeds, excluding premeditated anti-consumption of other brands (Chatzidakis and Lee, 2013).

Given this framework, focusing in the ambit of marketing studies, the investigation of L-Food buycotting as a mean to promote social change needs to be approached in the field of social marketing (Andreasen, 2002; Brennan and Parker, 2014; Gordon, 2011; Hasting and Angus, 2011; Kotler and Zaltman 1971; Lefebvre, 2011a; Lefebvre, 2011b; Saunders *et al.*, 2015). The objective of this study is to conduct an explorative analysis of the behaviour of Italian consumers during the decision-making process of buying L-Food to foster social change. In particular, using a segmentation approach, the study explores consumers’ perceptions and beliefs, and it analyses the relation between attitudes and behavioural intentions toward this form of political consumerism.

The literature review and the research design follow in section two and three; section four and five focus on results and discussion. Concluding remarks provide useful insights about the importance of social consciousness as a key factor to enhance pro-social behaviours and promote social change.

2. Literature review

Among different expressions of political consumerism, market-based actions represent an interesting tool in the hands of citizens to engage in public choices to promote social change.

Given the consolidated disaffection of citizens with regard at traditional means of political involvement and the perceived powerless of voting expression (Maietta, 2004), citizens adopt political consumerism as a mean to explicit political and social values within their private actions. As pointed out by De Pelsmaker *et al.* (2003), the ethical consumer considers her/his critical consumption as a political choice able to contribute and solve problems affecting the society. As highlighted by Sassatelli (2004), within political consumerism, justice, legality, fairness and preservation of common goods, are core concepts.

This consumers' behaviour corresponds to a gradual shifting of the arena in which citizens decide to fight for their values, from the political to the market one. Still it shows consumers' growing consciousness about the power of their actions. In this perspective, Beck and Gernsheim (2001, p. 44) have pointed out as "citizens discover the act of shopping as one in which they can always cast their ballot - on a world scale, no less". The power of the shopping bag as expression of political consumerism is not new, as proved by the increasing offer of fair trade products, or the boycotts of specific goods or brands with the explicit goal of influencing institutional and market ethical practices (Sassatelli, 2004; Holzer, 2006; Forno, 2015). To this extent, firms need to update and improve profiling ethical consumers, exploring relations existing between personal attitudes and behavioural intentions of consumers (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; Newholm and Shaw, 2007; Signori and Forno, 2016). Both empirical and theoretical studies have made important strides in describing how individuals think and behave when dealing with social concerns (Newholm and Shaw, 2007). Several studies have adopted the General Theory of Marketing Ethics (Hunt and Vitell, 1986) or the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) with confirmative purposes on "pro-social behaviours" (Penner *et al.*, 2005). This study, instead, applies an explorative approach to identify different attitudinal profiles of individuals involved in the call to *boycott* L-Food to promote social change.

3. Research design

3.1 Data collection

The collection of data took place during six social events organised in Marche region, located in Centre-East Italy. As pointed out by Calderoni (2011), *Mafia-type* organisations are able to overcome every territorial boundary, thus as every other territory, also Marche region is penetrated by criminal organisations, although their influence might be perceived lower than other areas of Italy. The events were organised within the project “Il Gusto della Legalità” (The taste of Legality) implemented by *Libera Terra* co-operatives and six public Vocational High Schools of Tourism and Hotel Management or Catering. The project was part of the programme “La Scuola per EXPO 2015” (The School for EXPO 2015), promoted by the Italian Ministry of Education, University, and Research.

Participants were students and their relatives, citizens, local politicians, and representatives of *Libera Terra* organisation. Each social event was organised following three phases: at first, there were implemented awareness raising activities, providing an historical overview of *Mafia-type* organisations and the ongoing institutional, private and collective efforts to fight them. At second, participants were involved in tasting meal prepared using products provided by *Libera Terra*, and illustrated by the students involved in the project. At third, questionnaires were submitted to all guests.

The questionnaire, designed by the authors, was organised into four sections: food and nutrition; legality and food aspects; *Mafia* and food issues; sociodemographic information. The first section included questions regarding consumer’s habits (e.g., preferred purchasing places) and purchasing choices (e.g., price, country of production, certifications, visual aspects, organoleptic characteristics). The second section included behavioural intention of consumer to purchase L-Food and consumer’s attitudes towards the consumptions of L-Food. Questions in section three regarded consumer’s awareness of the concept of legality and of *Mafia-type* organisation, and about general legality attitude and intentions at the shopping stage. The last section focused on socio-demographic information.

3.2 Sample

339 questionnaires were collected in December 2014 (94.1 % of interviewed answered the questionnaire). Even though the sample is not representative, it is well distributed in terms of the main socio-demographic characteristics (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample description

Source: Own elaboration.

Majority of respondents are women (59.6%). Approximately 30% of interviewees is less than 40 years old, almost one third is between 40 and 49 years old, and 40.7% is more than 50 years old. About one third of consumers holds an academic degree. Households are mainly composed by 3 or 4 members; “oversize” households (i.e. with more than 4 components) are 14.45%, whereas “small size” households (i.e. with less than 3 members) are 24.78%. Interviewees declaring to be responsible for household purchases are 67.85%.

Majority of interviewees are professionally committed (employees, 40.12%; freelancers, 17.70%; workmen, 14.45%; managers, 5%), students are 22.71%. 96.4% are Italian citizens that come from and live in Marche region.

3.3 Measures

The study analysed seven logical constructs. On the basis of the literature on ethical consumption, multi-item measurement scales were specifically designed to assess the cognitive and emotional aspects of each construct with regard to the phenomenon of *Mafia-type* organisations (see Appendix 1). When not differently specified, respondents evaluated the items using a five point Lickert scale with 1 indicating “total disagreement” with the statement and 5 indicating “total agreement”. All questions were posed in a positive perspective, except from those related to the logical constructs “*involvement*” and “*unawareness of legality concept*”. The values of Cronbach’s coefficient alpha point out the mono-dimensionality and the reliability of all seven constructs.

The level of *personal involvement* (INV) of respondents with regard to *Mafia-type* phenomenon

is the first of the attitudinal variables considered in the analysis. The study refers to Freedman's concept of involvement as a general level of interest in, or concern about an issue, without reference to a specific position (Freedman, 1964).

Social awareness (SAW) of respondents refers to respondents' attitude toward social issues. As pointed out by Dinev and Hart (2006), social awareness represents a passive involvement and show consumers' interest in social issue. It is determinant to stimulate consciousness-raising towards social problems, so to promote pro-social behaviours as well as social actions.

According to Minton and Rose (1997), *moral obligation* (MO) refers to what extent a person feels morally obliged to do, or not to do, in certain situations, supposing that behaviour is coherent and consistent with one's values. This attitudinal variable relates to the personal norm as proposed by Cialdini *et al.* (1990) and tries to describe an aspect of the moral correctness of the respondents. Consistent with the Hunt and Vitell model (1986), variables INV and SAW take into account respondents' awareness about phenomena having ethical content, as in the case of the call for purchasing L-Food to counteract *Mafia-type* organisations. The measure MO, represents one of the personality's aspects that emerge when respondents are involved in ethical relevant situations, as in the case of illicit and opportunistic behaviour.

According to Swidler (1986), culture contributes to shape habits, skills, and lifestyles which determine everyday actions, allowing human beings to reach their life goals. The culture of legality plays a key role in influencing daily actions (Godson, 2000), especially in unsettled cultures and in contexts such as those where *Mafia-type* organisations maintain strong local roots (Cayli, 2013). To this extent, respondent's *awareness of the legality concept* (AWL) and the *unawareness of legality concept* (UAWL) were considered as attitudinal variables. Consciousness of legality represents one of the starting points to favour a culture of legality and to stimulate the related actions devoted to reinforce it. Therefore, these two constructs represent an aspect of respondents' cultural predisposition to legality that may affect their behavioural intentions.

According to Vermeir and Verbeke (2006: p. 175), the study refers to the *perceived consumer effectiveness* (PCE) as the extent to which the consumer believes that his/her personal efforts can

contribute to solve a problem. It must be considered that a high level of perceived consumer effectiveness does not necessarily correspond to a real purchase or a “willingness to pay for”. Indeed, PCE is rather an attitude or a personal predisposition to buy, being one of the antecedents that induce consumers to “open their wallet” when their social conscience “knocks at the door”. The *behavioural intention* (BI) is the last attitudinal variable considered, and it refers to the consumer’s willingness to buy L-Food.

Focusing on the socio-demographic variables, data collected refer to respondent’s age (AGE), gender (GEN), level of education (EDU), number of family components (FAM), and respondents’ responsibility of the family purchases (PURCH). The level of education was obtained by transforming the educational qualification of respondents, which is an ordinal variable, in a ratio scale based on the numbers of years of study provided by the Italian system of education.

3.4 Statistical methodology

The relation between attitudes and behavioural intentions of consumers to purchase L-Food was conducted using STATA version 13, as follows. First, respondents were segmented in groups using a cluster analysis, applying the Hierarchical Ward’s method based on socio-demographic characteristics (AGE, EDU, FAM, PURCH) and three attitudes towards the ethical problem under investigation (INV, SAW, MO). To remove any differences of perception between attitudinal aspects, as well as to ensure their comparability, the scores expressed as unit standard deviations were considered (*z-score* in notation). The number of clusters was determined considering the changes in the *CH-Index* values (Calinski and Harabasz, 1974).

After the sample segmentation, differences between groups were confirmed using four statistics of multivariate analysis of variance (i.e. *W* - Wilks’ lambda; *P* - Pillai’s trace; *L* - Lawley–Hotelling; *R* - Roy’s largest root), whereas the multivariate multiple regression analysis (MMR) was carried out to assess differences characterising each cluster, with respect to a group taken as reference. Adopting MMR, several dependent variables (i.e. INV, SAW, MO, AGE, EDU, FAM and PURCH) were jointly regressed on the same independent variables (i.e. the clusters obtained by the previous analysis). In this case, this analysis was applied to test the null hypothesis that is

that the coefficient of regression of attitudinal and sociodemographic variables of clusters doesn't differ from the coefficient of the regression of the selected reference cluster.

Finally, associations between four attitudinal variables (i.e. MO, AWL, UAWL and PCE) and the behavioural intention (BI) of consumers were assessed with a correlation analysis, whereas a regression analysis provided with a first insight of the attitudinal variables' effects on the intention to *boycott* L-Food.

Scholars' attention on clustering shifted over the time from traditional observable variables (e.g. socio-demographic) to unobservable cluster variables, such as attitudinal and behavioural aspects. Generally, the adoption of unobservable variables provides more homogeneous group of respondents, but frequently hardly identifiable in terms of socio-demographics profiles. Conversely, the adoption of observable variables provides identifiable clusters in terms of socio-demographic aspects, despite they are often characterised by the lack of uniqueness of the cognitive aspects not directly measured (e.g., adoption of multi-items measurements). As pointed out by Tonks (2009), in order to segment a market it is relevant to select those variables that provide a clear-cut differentiation considering the specific objective and the assumptions of the study. Some scholars combine demographic variables with lifestyle aspects at least for two purposes that are: first, to benefit from the increased strength of the two segmenting strategies mentioned above; second, to reach the objective, satisfying both the research assumptions and the research design (Mooi and Sarstedt, 2011). In this study clustering criteria were adopted to satisfy the assumption that observable demographic variables (i.e. AGE, EDU, FAM and PURCH) might represent a proxy of aspects (e.g., cultural aspects, historical memory, level of exposition of specific information, economic aspect on "willingness to pay for) not directly considered using only attitudinal variables. In fact, according to Vitell *et al.* (1991: p. 367), age, "does make a difference in term of ethical belief", thus, should be considered as an attitudinal proxy. Finally, the combination of demographic and attitudinal variables to segment the sample explains the consequent use of MMR to assess comparative differences across the clusters. The use of structural equation models (SEM) is frequently applied by scholars with confirmative purposes

(Nachtigall *et al.*, 2003; Bagozzi and Yi, 2012). However in this study, SEM was not adopted because the study does not based on a specific model, as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) or the General Theory of Marketing Ethics (Hunt and Vitell, 1986). Still, based on the sample size, SEM could not capture the cluster effects.

4. Findings

4.1 Consumer profile

Three consumers' groups are identified (*CH*-index for two, three and four clusters were respectively equal to 603.92, 645.01 and 574.88). The profile of each group is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of clusters and MMR results

Source: Own elaboration.

Absolutists

The first group involves 39.8% of respondents (N=135). On average, this group refers to middle-aged adults, whose the household is composed by 3 members. He, or more likely she (63.7% are female), is usually responsible for household purchases and is distinguished by the highest level of education if compared to the other two groups.

This group includes consumers who have a general high level of social consciousness, with regard to the phenomena investigated (Table 2). Being active members of society, they are involved in social issues (SAW z-score = 0.14 on average) and they believe that *Mafia-type* organisations represent a problem that concern themselves (INV z-score = -0.17 on average). Referring to the logical construct INV, the negative value must be interpreted as a positive involvement of the consumers towards the issue due to the administration of questions to the interviews in the negative sense. Based on what aforementioned, and considering the high level of moral concern, if compared to the other two groups (MO z-score = 0.25 on average), the attitudinal profile of these consumers seems similar to the type that Forsyth has labelled as

absolutists (Forsyth, 1980). *Absolutists*, in fact, are those in which behaviour and attitudes are aligned and coherent with fundamental moral principles, as in the case of legality.

Exceptionists

The second group gathers 38.1% of respondents (N=129). This group is formed by pre-middle-aged adults and their household is mainly composed by 4 members. 61.2% are female, usually responsible for household purchases. Their level of education is significantly lower than the one of absolutists.

The cross-analysis with the reference category highlights how consumers perceive *Mafia-type* organisations as faraway problem from themselves and their families (INV z-score = 0.07 on average). Despite they recognise *Mafia-type* organisations as a social problem (SAW z-score = 0.15 on average) similarly to the absolutists, together with the foregoing statement, it is possible to suppose that these respondents may be suffering from some kind of attitude so called “*NIMBY*” (not-in-my-backyard) syndrome. Furthermore, considering a generic purchasing scenario, and considering the less moral attitude of the respondents, compared to the absolutists (MO z-score = -0.01 on average), this group can be associated to the *exceptionist* typology forged by Forsyth. In particular, despite consumers’ profiles associated to this typology are generally conforming to the essential moral rules, they allow some exceptions. Given the scenario in which they are involved, it is possible to assume that their specific behaviour may be influenced mainly by the economic aspects, rather than a specific ethical pressure.

Subjectivists

Respondents belonging to the last group are 22.1% (N=75) and almost half of them are females (49.3%). On average, they are young-adults with a lower level of education than the absolutists. Their household is usually composed by 4 members, and they are not responsible for the household purchases.

The cross-comparison highlights as the profile of this group is diametrically, and significantly,

opposed to the reference category (Table 2). Differently from the absolutists, the consumers involved in this group perceive *Mafia-type* organisations' influence as clearly faraway from them and from their families (INV z-score = 0.18 on average) and they believe that these phenomena are not a real social problems that could worsen the lives of their families, not even indirectly (SAW z-score = -0.51 on average). The “unethical” behaviour of these consumers (behaviour not concerned with ethical issues) applied in a generic purchasing scenario, due to their lower moral attitude (MO z-score = -0.43 on average), allows to associate them to those that Forsyth (1980) defined as *subjectivists*.

4.2 Attitudes' impact on behavioural intention to buy L-Food

In order to analyse the relation between attitudes and behavioural intentions of consumers to buy L-Food, both correlation analysis and linear regression analysis between the four attitudinal aspects (i.e. MO, AWL, UAWL and PCE) and behavioural intention of respondents to buy L-Food (BI) have been carried out (Table 3).

Table 3. Summary of the results of correlation and regression analysis

Source: Own elaboration.

Focusing on *absolutists*, the perception of consumers effectiveness is the attitude that more than others influences their behavioural intention to buy L-Food ($r = 0.355$; p -value = 0.000). Excluding the personal interpretation of the concept of legality ($r = 0.017$; p -value = 0.999), the remaining two attitudes are significant and equally related with the behavioural intention of consumers. In particular, given equal levels of significance, the association between consumers' moral obligation ($r = 0.296$; p -value = 0.005) and their cultural inclination to legality ($r = 0.273$; p -value = 0.014) towards their behavioural intention to buy L-Food are surprisingly lower than the ones of *subjectivists*. Excluding the personal point of view about the concept of legality, the regression analysis shows that the remaining three constructs significantly predict the behavioural intention of *absolutists* to *buycott* L-Food. The results for *exceptionists* point out as their behavioural intentions are not significantly associated with any of the attitudinal variables

considered. Furthermore, the four constructs predict only 3.6% of the variability of behavioural intention to buy L-food.

Among *subjectivists*, instead, excluding the personal point of view of the concept of legality ($r = 0.243$; p -value = 0.998), all other attitudinal variables are significantly associated with their intention to buy L-Food. The attitude of *subjectivists* that more than others is associated with their behavioural intention to buy L-Food ($r = 0.601$; p -value = 0.000) is the perception to feel able to solve a social problem using their purchasing power. Subjectivists' moral obligation ($r = 0.408$; p -value = 0.000) and the cultural attitude to legality ($r = 0.463$; p -value = 0.000) are significant and equally associated with the behavioural intention of these consumers. Regression analysis highlight as, excluding the personal point of view about the concept of legality, the remaining constructs significantly predict consumers' intention to *buycott* L-Food, explaining 60.4% of the variability of this behaviour.

5. Discussion

Results confirms that awareness and attitudinal aspects are relevant to explain and characterise consumers' pro-social behaviours. This empirical study points out as middle-aged adults are rather highly involved in the social issue concerning *Mafia-type* organisations and lawfulness, and their behaviour as consumers is generally consistent with their principles of legality (*absolutists*).

Confirming what pointed out by several authors, the socio-psychological variables, like attitudes, beliefs and demographic ones, contribute to better identify the consumer's profile involved in ethical situations (Webster, 1975; Minton and Rose, 1997; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006).

Based on the resulting average age, it is assumed that *absolutists* experienced the social context that intensely characterised the nineties (1990s), when *Mafia-type* organisations' criminal actions reached a peak creating a political and social status of emergency in Italy (among dramatic events, the peak was also caused by the murder of several Italian judges involved in investigating on criminal organisations' market power at worldwide level). This emergency situation, widely

covered by national and international media at the time, also contributed to push citizens' movements at national level to react with several peaceful demonstrations and to give birth to associations devoted to improve the culture of legality. This context explains why the level of awareness about *Mafia-type* organisations of these consumers is above the average. Still, this background might have contributed also to the development of a strong social awareness as well as to the alignment of their behaviour to the fundamental principles of legality. This result confirms that deontological aspects such as norms, principles and values are important drivers for consumers' behaviour (also found by Vitell *et al.*, 2001). These respondents feel responsible towards society and express these feeling by means of their purchasing intention (consistently with the notion of ethical consumer provided by De Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2003). They are conscious about ethical and social consequences of their consumption choices, confirming what pointed out by Beck and Gernsheim (2001). The intention of the *absolutists* to buy L-Food does not refer only to a moral obligation, but it reflects the belief that the marketplace is a new arena to counteract effectively *Mafia-type* organisations. Confirming the results of Vermeier and Verbeke (2006), these respondents believe in their effectiveness and for this reason they are more positive towards the intentions of purchasing L-Food, recognising a premium price for the lawfulness value of these food products.

Despite the second segment of respondents (*exceptionists*) has the same attitude of *absolutist* ones towards the social issue of legality, their behaviour as consumers is generally inconsistent with the principles of legality. Differently to *absolutists*, *exceptionists* have slightly breathed the air that characterised the nineties when the murders made by *Mafia-type* organisations were daily morning TV news. This aspect is reflected by their weak social conscience as well as by their lower level of involvement and interest towards the issue of the legality and counteracting *Mafia-type* organisations compared to *absolutists*. Nowadays, he, or more likely she, is pre-middle adults responsible for purchases and the opportunistic behaviour is probably driven by economic motivations that have not been directly addressed in this research. Consistent with their attitudinal profile, these respondents do not believe in the power of their shopping bag as a mean to

contribute to social change. For this reason they are not willing to pay any additional price for “Legality-vitamin” with which L-Food have been “enriched”. Generally, these consumers are less emotionally involved than the *absolutist* ones and this aspect makes them detached from this specific pro-social situation.

Subjectivists are the last profile identified. They are generally the “app-generation”, also referred as the *Generation Y* or *Millennials* (Taylor and Cosenza, 2002; Valentine and Powers, 2013). In the latest decades, the choice of *Mafia-type* organisations to adopt a lower profile has contributed to reduce political attention and media coverage on these issues, thus, together with a lower social pressure and cultural investment on legality awareness, newer generations have been pushed to easily associate *Mafia-type* organisations’ crimes to those fictionalised ones as proposed on TV series (Engebretson, 2004) rather than increasing their awareness on the real criminal power of these organisations. These consumers, in fact, show a very weak social conscience towards the social issue of *Mafia-type* organisations and legality, and a very low personal involvement. Generally they tend to accept a compromise to best guarantee their personal profit even in case of unlawful situations, such as those assumed in this work. However, despite this attitudinal profile, and unlike *exceptionists*, when they are well stimulated about social issues such as the legality (e.g. direct experience of L-Food), they seem able to recognise the legality attribute and they seem inclined to use the power of their purchasing behaviour as an opportunity to show their social values, confirming what pointed out by Back and Gernsheim (2001), and as a modality to conduct the fight against *Mafia*. Consistent with Vermeier and Verbeke (2006), stimulating the perception of consumer effectiveness, these respondents are more positive than others towards the intentions of purchasing L-Food. However, some precautions must be taken into account to adequately interpret this behaviour. First of all it shall be considered that these consumers are in large part students that directly or indirectly took part and organised the social events planned inside the project “Il Gusto della Legalità”. For this reason probably their high level of emotional involvement in these events justifies the high level of association between the attitudinal aspects and the behavioural intention to buy L-Food. At second, since they are not the responsible for

household purchases, they are less concerned about paying for L-food and recognising a premium price for the “Legality-vitamin” with which L-Food have been “enriched”. The profile of these consumers shows two concurrent aspects: their social conscience is still malleable and responsive; their social-conscious consumer profile is still too weak if referred to issues such as legality and the problem of *Mafia-type* organisations.

6. Conclusions

Confirming what pointed out by Vitell *et al.* (1991: p. 367), “the age does make a difference in terms of ethical beliefs”. This aspect is relevant not only from a methodological point of view, but also from an interpretive perspective. However, in order to explain the existence of a generational gap towards issues such as the *Mafia* and legality, it is worth to verify some assumptions. First of all, different consumers’ attitude may be due to the amount and intensity of stimuli acquired: the information and the communication systems, together with the education, can play a pivotal role in raising public awareness and citizens’ social conscience. It must be considered, in fact, to what extent the different exposure of consumers to information contributes to change personal values, and affects the consumers’ purchasing behaviour even if indirectly. Consistently with the assertion of Strong (1996), the findings show that awareness is one of the key elements to promote food activism.

Public Institutions, marketers and in general who aims at promoting political consumerism as a critical choice to fight *Mafia-type* organisations and at spreading the culture of lawfulness, clearly assume a challenging task. In fact, despite the sample considered is not representative of the whole population, the study shows how the strategy to reach consumers shall be able to identify the targets according to the variety of the attitude-behavioural intention gap.

Pro-social behaviour probably is influenced by the disenchantment towards the institutional approach as the prevalent manner to struggle against *Mafia-type* organisations and also by consumers’ perception of food activism effectiveness to contribute to solve these social issues.

Considering the relevance of information acquisition and of self-effectiveness perception, the

strategy to increase political consumerism shall focus on both fostering a culture of lawfulness and improving the recognition of the “Legality-vitamin” quality attribute, through increased consumers’ awareness and pro-social efficacy to fight *Mafia-type* organisations. Certainly, others factors not directly considered in this research may influence the decision-making process of consumers (e.g. cultural, economic). Nonetheless, according to results, it seems confirmed that purchasing intention driven by social-concern increases when consumers are stimulated on awareness raising experiences.

Findings emphasize the new role assigned to the discipline of social marketing aimed at driving ethical behaviour to promote a grounded social change. As highlighted by Hastings (2017: p. 231), “Social marketing has a vital role ... to move us from being passive consumers to become active citizens ... to become rebels with a cause”. To this extent, *think critically, choose consciously*, does not represent a simple slogan, and, in a social marketing perspective, it shall be the key to explore the discrepancy between human values and behaviours so to identify new possible successful solutions to market L-Food, fostering social wellbeing. Several aspects and implications that emerge from this study seem to appear to be applicable not only to Italian *Mafia-type* organisations, but also to other similar criminal organisation spread around the world, so to eradicate any kind of “mafia mindset” (Fiore, 1997).

Further information collection would allow us to increase the data-set to investigate cross-regional and cross-cultural aspects of food activism to struggle *Mafia-type* organisations. Further research would also explore how some deontological and teleological aspects can affect the behavioural intention to purchase L-Food.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire items and construct reliability statistics (Crobach alpha value) ^[a]

Construct / Items	Mean (sd)	Alpha value
Personal involvement (INV)		0.68
1. The <i>Mafia-type</i> organizations are existing phenomena even if does not concerns me and my family.	3.09 (1.65)	
2. The <i>Mafia-type</i> organizations are existing phenomena even if not in the territory in which I live.	2.40 (1.44)	
Social awareness (SAW)		0.66
1. The <i>Mafia-type</i> organizations are phenomena that worsen the society.	4.58 (0.99)	
2. The <i>Mafia-type</i> organizations are phenomena that worsen the life of your family even indirectly.	4.23 (1.19)	
Moral obligation (MO)		0.75
Indicates your behaviour in the following situations concerning the issuance of the fiscal receipt ^[b] :		
^[c] 1. If not issued, ...	3.55 (1.25)	
^[d] 2. If not issued for a discount, ...	3.59 (1.19)	
^[e] 3. Knowing that in this shop the receipt is not issued, ...	3.62 (1.19)	
Awareness of legality concept (AWL)		0.60
State your opinion on the following definitions of legality:		
1. Legality means the observance of the state laws.	4.27 (1.10)	
2. Legality means the responsible exercise of my rights and the fulfilment of my duties.	4.44 (0.99)	
Unawareness of legality concept (UAWL)		0.72
State your opinion on the following definitions of legality:		
1. Legality means to behave according to their own principles.	3.58 (1.45)	
2. Legality means to follow social norms.	3.79 (1.29)	
Perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE)		0.75
1. I believe it is useful to use the assets confiscated from the mafia to create jobs.	4.64 (0.89)	
2. I believe it is right to use the assets confiscated from the mafia to create jobs.	4.64 (0.92)	
3. Knowing that the food that I just ate has been produced with ingredients of "Libera Terra" makes me feel ...	4.18 (0.81)	
4. Knowing that the food that I just ate has been produced utilizing ingredients derived by initiatives to fight against the illegality, makes this food of quality...	4.05 (0.90)	
Behavioural intentions (BI)		0.94
1. I would be willing to buy this food ^[f] , knowing that it is directly produced with by lands confiscated to <i>Mafia-type</i> organizations or using agricultural products grown in lands confiscated to <i>Mafia-type</i> organizations.	3.59-4.31 (1.17-1.46)	

Notes:

^[a] Cronbach's Alpha represents a measure of internal consistency of a multi-items construct. Values equal or greater to 0.6 indicate an internal consistency, meaning that all items measure the same underlying construct. ^[b] According to Italian VAT obligations, invoices must be issued on the date of the supply for goods, and customers must request it. In Italy tax evasion is a diffused phenomenon and its impact can be estimated around 7.5% of GDP (Centro studi Confindustria, 2015). ^[c] 1: I do not claim my receipt, 2: I claim my receipt seldom, 3: I claim my receipt in 50% of cases, 4: Often I claim my receipt, 5: I always claim my receipt. ^[d] 1: I always accept, 2: Often I accept, 3: I accept in 50% of cases, 4: I seldom accept, 5: I never accept. ^[e] 1: I choose it anyway, 2: I choose it often, 3: I choose it in 50% of situations, 4: I seldom choose it, 5: I never choose it. ^[f] The "L-foods" were proposed with an additional price of 17-30% more than the normal price. The products considered, their average scores and their standard deviation (in parentheses) are: Lentils or chick peas, 3.81 (1.43); Fresh tomatoes, 3.65 (1.37); Oranges, 4.31 (1.17); Olive oil, 4.16 (1.25); Wine, 3.74 (1.43); Honey, 3.59 (1.46); Marmalade, 3.90 (1.22); Pasta, 4.00 (1.37); Wine (at the restaurant), 3.75 (1.39); Vegetable soup - at the restaurant, 3.78 (1.40); Pasta with tomatoes sauce - at the restaurant, 4.06 (1.24); Staffed pasta, 3.71 (1.24).

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2. Sample description

	N	%
Gender		
Female	202	59.59
Male	137	40.41
Total	339	100.00
Age		
Up to 19 year old	35	10.32
From 20 to 29 year old	34	10.03
From 30 to 39 year old	27	7.96
From 40 to 49 year old	105	30.97
From 50 to 59 year old	81	23.89
Equal or above 60 year old	57	16.81
Total	339	100.00
Education level		
Primary education	7	2.06
Lower secondary school	107	31.56
Upper secondary school	127	37.46
Higher education	98	28.91
Total	339	100.00
Responsibility of family purchases		
Yes	230	67.85
No	109	32.15
Total	339	100.00
Numbers of family components		
Up to 2 members	84	24.78
From 3 to 4 members	206	60.77
Equal or above 5 members	49	14.45
Total	339	100.00
Job position		
Employee	136	40.12
Frelancer	60	17.70
Workmen	49	14.45
Corporate manager/director	17	5.01
Mainly students	77	22.71
Total	339	100.00

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of clusters and MMR results

Cluster ^[a] /variable ^[b]	n. (%)	mean	sd	median	β -value ^[c]	$P>t$
Absolutists (baseline)	135 (39.8)					
zINV		-0.17	0.98		-	-
zSAW		0.14	0.94		-	-
zMO		0.25	0.81		-	-
AGE		58.62	6.82	58.00	-	-
EDU				13.00	-	-
FAM				3.00	-	-
PURCH				1.00	-	-
Exceptionists	129 (38.1)					
zINV		0.07	0.98		0.24	0.053
zSAW		0.15	0.89		0.01	0.906
zMO		-0.01	1.04		-0.26	0.032
AGE		44.77	4.73	46.00	-13.85	0.000
EDU				13.00	-1.69	0.001
FAM				4.00	0.31	0.030
PURCH				1.00	0.07	0.159
Subjectivists	75 (22.1)					
zINV		0.18	1.04		0.34	0.017
zSAW		-0.51	1.11		-0.64	0.000
zMO		-0.43	1.10		-0.68	0.000
AGE		21.39	5.04	20.00	-37.24	0.000
EDU				8.00	-2.76	0.000
FAM				4.00	0.83	0.000
PURCH				0.00	-0.44	0.000

Notes: ^[a] MANOVA statistics $W=0.11^{***}$, $P=0.98^{***}$, $L=7.36^{***}$, $R=7.24^{***}$ (*, **, *** Significant at $p < 0.10$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$), indicating the existence of some kinds of difference between the three-dimensional mean vector of respondents' profiles; ^[b] Each of the variables considered are statistically significant and their standard R-squared is respectively: $zINV=0.020^{**}$; $zSAW=0.073^{***}$; $zMO=0.066^{***}$; $AGE=0.859^{***}$; $EDU=0.073^{***}$; $FAM=0.067^{***}$; $PURCH=0.185^{**}$ (*, **, *** Significant at $p < 0.10$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$). ^[c] The reference cluster adopted is the first cluster (i.e. absolutists). For all the variables was reported the β -values and the statistical difference compared to that of reference cluster.

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3. Summary of the results of correlation and regression analysis

Variables	Absolutists (N=135)		Exceptionists (N=129)		Subjectivists (N=75)	
	r-values	β -values	r-values	β -values	r-values	β -values
zBI \times zMO	0.296***	0.254***	0.083 ns	0.010 ns	0.408***	0.234***
zBI \times zAWL	0.273 **	0.298***	0.049 ns	0.069 ns	0.463***	0.254***
zBI \times zUAWL	0.017 ns	-0.122**	-0.178 ns	-0.183**	0.243 ns	-0.259 ns
zBI \times zPCE	0.355***	0.330***	0.177 ns	0.191*	0.601***	0.432***
Adj R-squared		0.332		0.036		0.604

Notes: *, **, *** Significant at $p < 0.10$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$.

Source: Own elaboration.

^[1] Gazzetta Ufficiale 109/96 <http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1996/03/09/096G0120/sg>;
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