



# Cultural factors affecting consumer behaviour: a new perception model

Consumer  
behaviour

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to study consumers' perception regarding Calabrian local products and the role of Magna Græcia culture in their buying behaviour, in order to identify a new model which can deliver concrete results for the area as regards marketing strategies and territorial communication, thereby influencing in a positive way the regional development. In fact, many products and artefacts reflect the finds in the region from the ancient Greek era which ran from the eighth century BC to the first century AD (called "Magna Græcia"). Despite this considerable patrimony, Calabria has still not fully exploited its potential.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The research conducted has been developed by using two different approaches: the first qualitative, the second quantitative. In particular, the qualitative method (in depth interviews with marketing experts) has been used initially to find important considerations which constituted the base for the subsequent quantitative research (focused on the questionnaires with consumers) can then build upon.

**Findings** – This research carried out a new consumers' perception model of local products coming from Magna Græcia. In particular, the model shows the most important factors influencing the perception, which are related to cultural value of the products.

**Practical implications** – Calabrian marketers could improve their strategies by focusing on the cultural value of their products, as well as on the link products/territory and on the role of Magna Græcia culture on the creation of the products.

**Originality/value** – An important aspect which has emerged is the key role of culture-related factors (regional image and authenticity) on consumers' perception, which affect consumers' buying behaviour and the total expenditure on local products. Furthermore, the research undertaken is of an inter-disciplinary nature being comprised of elements linked to both marketing and psychology, which combine to produce revealing insights.

**Keywords** Italy, Local economies, Consumer behaviour, Culture, Ancient history

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

The main aim of this research is to study the perception of consumers regarding Calabrian local products and the role of Magna Græcia culture in their buying behaviour.

The basic assumption underlying this research is that such process is characterised by certain variables inextricably linked to the territory. The goal, therefore, is to construct a model useful to identify the main relevant factors. In particular, a model which describes this process could be used to define marketing strategies geared to enhancing the image of Calabria, by promoting its local resources. In fact, many authors (Tellstrom *et al.*, 2005; Lee *et al.*, 2009; Bowitz and Ibenholt, 2009; Sims, 2010) suggest



This research was conducted with the support of Professor P.A. Bertacchini (University of Calabria, Italy) and C.Vignali (Leeds Metropolitan University, UK).

that the use of traditional culture, as well as an efficient promotion of the local products with a high cultural value can create a bond between consumers and a particular area and, as a consequence, provide a competitive advantage for the territory in a touristic perspective.

The research focuses on the analysis of Calabria, due to its enormous inheritance from the point of view of art, culture, nature, history and archaeology, which is often not fully exploited or fully known. In particular, the resources of major interest and importance are those dating from the period of Greek colonisation, which has come to be known as *Magna Græcia* (Pantano, 2008a, b). In fact, many products and artefacts recall ancient Greek traditions and often reflect the finds in the region from the ancient Greek colonisation period which ran from the eighth century BC to the first century AD. In particular, it is possible to easily find close links between archaeology and numerous Calabrian local products (i.e. food and drink).

Nevertheless, Calabria has a very strong arts and crafts tradition involved in the production of local food specialties, as well as gold jewelry and musical instruments, while there is a strong growth in the production of cultural goods and services led by local museums and the universities.

Despite this considerable patrimony, Calabria has still not fully exploited its potential as a tourist destination on account of the low profile outside the region of what the region has to offer – in terms of products and culture – and the lack of promotion and attention devoted to cultural extras such as museums and archaeological parks (Pantano, 2008a, b). In fact, only one enterprise on nine exports outside Calabria (Confindustria Calabria, 2005) and very few businesses invest in marketing or communication strategies. This demonstrates the importance of bringing to the fore such a valuable resource as the region's arts and crafts industries.

Therefore, it is very useful for Calabria in developing of new strategies to promote its local products, by exploiting consumers' perception of these ones.

In fact, the development of a new model of perception that takes into account the cultural influences can have significant repercussions on the development of territorial marketing in the fields of business, tourism and society in general, as well as it can spread this awareness on a national and international level.

To date, many studies shows that cultural aspects (i.e. image and territorial identity) influence the perception of the consumer, but they have not analyzed the extent to which these contribute to the creation of a model of perception of local products; in other words, there remains a gap in the literature. Furthermore, the degree of influence played by the territorial image and other potentially influential factors have not yet been analyzed thoroughly.

These can be built up on the basis of the development of a model of the perception of consumers regarding local products from the Calabria region stemming from *Magna Græcia*.

The aim of this research, therefore, is to analyze the perception of local products from the Calabria region as heritage of *Magna Græcia* period in order to identify a new model which can deliver useful results for improving the current marketing strategies and territorial communication, thereby influencing in a positive way the regional development.

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The research undertaken is of an inter-disciplinary nature being comprised of elements linked to both marketing and psychology, which combine to produce revealing insights.

## 2. Theoretical background

Solomon and Stuart (2005) identify three fundamental aspects of consumer's perception: exposure, perceptive selection and interpretation. After the exposition to a product, consumer perceives the stimuli emitted by the product to his/her own sensory receivers (exposure). During this process, consumer pays attention more to some stimuli rather than others (perceptive selection). Afterwards, he/she attributes a particular significance to the stimuli (interpretation). This interpretation process can be influenced by several associations which consumer makes according to his/her needs and experiences.

Models of consumer's perception currently available in the literature refer to a process of perception of branded products, not linked to a particular geographical place, which focus on consumer's own characteristics (values and beliefs, opinions, lifestyle and so on) (Solomon and Stuart, 2005; Silvera *et al.*, 2008), product characteristics (physical characteristics, brand, price, etc.) (Aaker, 1991; Kukar-Kinney *et al.*, 2007; Kotler *et al.*, 2007) and place where it is sold (in terms of layout, product display, etc.) (Thang and Tan, 2003; Swanson and Horridge, 2006).

The perception of local products process involves also different factors. In fact, these products can be considered as the commercial presentations of heritage and culture, history, tradition and authenticity of a place, which is the consequence of consumers' experience with the territory (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010; Morris and Kirwan, 2010). In particular, several researchers (Dimara and Skuras, 2003; van Ittersum *et al.*, 2003; Mattiacci and Vignali, 2004; Skuras and Dimara, 2004; Chambers *et al.*, 2007; Dekhili and d'Hauteville, 2009; Guerrero *et al.*, 2009; Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009) recognize the value the consumer gives to products associated with certain places or regions.

Indeed, many studies indicate that the knowledge of the country of origin of the local product has a direct influence on the perception of the same product (Schaefer, 1997; Yu and Littrell, 2003; Insch and McBride, 2004; Aiello *et al.*, 2008; Pieniak *et al.*, 2009), therefore it can be considered one of the major factors influencing consumer's perception of the good (Phau and Leng, 2008).

In particular, consumers perceive local food products as higher quality products, if compared to branded products, due to the manufacturing characteristics (hand made, made according to ancient manufacturing process, etc.), as well as to the quality of the materials/ingredients used (Weatherell *et al.*, 2003; Roininen *et al.*, 2006; Guerrero *et al.*, 2009).

Although these authors recognize the importance of territory on the consumers' perception of local products, they do not specify the factors affecting consumers' perception and their main consequences on the subsequent buying behaviour.

In this work, it is considered that factors such as the image and the culture of a region have the greatest influence in the choice of purchasing local products. In particular, the image of the region concerns the reputation of the territory and individuals reaction to their knowledge of and feelings about the territory (Prentice, 2006; Ktonecnik and Gartner, 2007), as well as the culture is linked to the traditions, arts, history and so on.

Hence, if local products are the expression of a place (Swanson and Horridge, 2002; Swanson, 2004), whose characteristics they embody, it is clear that a culture like that

of Magna Græcia can play a key role on the perception of its local products and on consumers' intention to buy them.

### 3. Research methodology

The research conducted has been developed by using two different approaches: the first one qualitative, while the second one quantitative.

On one hand, the qualitative approach is oriented to the interviews of the major producers in Calabria of goods connected with Magna Græcia; on the other one, the quantitative approach has been conducted through a questionnaire with consumers.

The decision to combine the two approaches was made because the qualitative approach can provide useful guidelines for the subsequent quantitative phase. In fact, several authors suggest that qualitative and quantitative approaches can be combined in order to enrich the research and achieve a deeper knowledge on the human behaviour (Cahill, 1996; Mangan, 2004; Yoshikawa *et al.*, 2008).

In particular, according to Vinten (1994), qualitative research allows to bring out the point of view of the interviewee and helps in the development of hypotheses (May, 1996). Furthermore, it allows study of the issue in depth (Burke and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Moreover, a successive phase of quantitative research can go beyond the limitations linked to quantitative forecasts and can proceed to the testing of hypotheses and theories. In fact, the quantitative research is developed through a structured questionnaire that, by and large, follows the most common method utilized for data collection in quantitative research (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Dyer, 2006). Furthermore, the questionnaire allows easy collection of numeric data, that can be subjected to subsequent statistical analysis (Muijs, 2004; Walker, 2005).

During the qualitative analysis, the awareness of the major producers in Calabria on consumer's behaviour helps to find new variables. Afterwards, a questionnaire is drawn up to use with consumers, in order to validate, test and enrich the contents of the initial perception model.

The stage regarding the interviews with the producers lasted just over a month and was completed in November 2008, while the stage regarding the questionnaire with consumers lasted from December 2008 to the beginning of March 2009.

It was considered sufficient to interview ten producers as those involved in the research are the major producers of Calabrian specialties traceable to the Magna Græcia heritage. Furthermore, they have good experience and the firms' dimension are such that they can provide useful results for the research. The firms excluded from research were either too small or lacking in an adequate firm culture in order to possess significant information.

### 4. Qualitative results

The key of the success of one of the most important Calabrian goldsmith is the relationship with the territory (Pantano, 2008a). In fact, the goldsmith underlines in each product the relationship with Calabria, this is a distinctive characteristics of his products, likewise culture, art and traditions own of the region (Pantano, 2008a), which is the reference of the firm.

This is the basic step for the following interviews with marketing experts. In particular, ten marketing experts has been interviewed (CEOs and sale directors).

The data emerged from respondents allowed the individuation of some codes, each of which corresponds to an influencing factor. Each interview has been analyzed with the support of MaxQda software, which allows to carry out the frequency of words in the text in order to identify the most important influencing factors according to the producers response (Figure 1): uniqueness (frequency of code 1), memory (frequency 2), emotional experience (2), brand (2), distribution (3), label (4), tradition (4), point of sale (4), link with territory (4), local (4), price (7), quality (8), territorial image (9) and packaging (15). In particular, each code corresponds to a different color.

From the analysis of the interviews, it emerged that a local product is an object bought as a memento of the place, independently of the emotional experience connected to the place.

Furthermore, the label has a great importance for producers, as it is in their view the first thing which consumer notices and it encapsulates all the characteristics of the product (history, tradition and link with the territory). For this reason, many of them utilize some Greek symbols to recall the link with the ancient culture of Magna Græcia.

Two factors can be removed, following evidence from the interviewees who agreed in saying such factors do not influence their clients' perception: the quality of the product and the emotional experience linked to the location of the product itself.

The quality of the product in the case of local products does not influence consumers' perception (according to the producers) as consumers already consider the local product as one of good quality, due to the good quality of raw materials and traditional and handmade manufacturing process which gives products a higher value.

In the empirical model initially presented, consumer's emotional experience in the location would have an influence on the perception of local products, as it was thought that if consumers had had an enjoyable experience in the place they would have perceived the products as being very good. The producers, on the contrary, agreed on the fact that the experience does not influence the consumers nor their predisposition to buy, as the products are bought mainly during a holiday regardless of the positive or negative emotions experienced therein. Most consumers buy the product in order to take back an object which will remind them of the place, or as a gift as a symbol of the place visited.

	ID del codice	Codice	Tutti i segmenti codificati
■	12	unicità	1
■	10	ricordo	2
■	9	esperienza emotiva	2
■	6	marca	2
■	14	distribuzione	3
■	5	etichetta	4
■	8	tradizione	4
■	3	punto vendita	4
■	13	legame territorio	4
■	1	tipico	4
■	2	prezzo	7
■	11	qualità	8
■	7	immagine	9
■	4	confezione	15

**Figure 1.**  
Frequency of codes  
(factors) emerged from  
interviews with producers

Hence, it is possible to cluster into one single code emotional experience and memories, as they have very similar relations with the other codes. This is justified by the fact that the emotional experience of a place influences the memories of the place. If tourists have a positive experience in a certain place they will take away with them a positive memory, and vice versa if they have a negative experience they will take away with them a negative memory.

It is further possible to cluster into one single code point of sale and brand, as these also have similar relations. This is justified by the fact that local products are usually niche products and are thus not very well known, their brand is usually the same as the name of the shop in which they are sold. Furthermore, this name recalls the link with the territory or the name of the owner. Therefore, the brand is identified with the name of the shop and vice versa.

### 5. Quantitative results

Afterwards, on the basis of results carried out during the qualitative research, a sample of consumers has been interviewed.

The following formula shows the method used to calculate the most suitable sample size to obtain an error of 5 percent:

$$\frac{N}{1 + d^{2*}(N - 1)} = n$$

where:

- n = sample size.
- N = population size.
- D = probability of error.

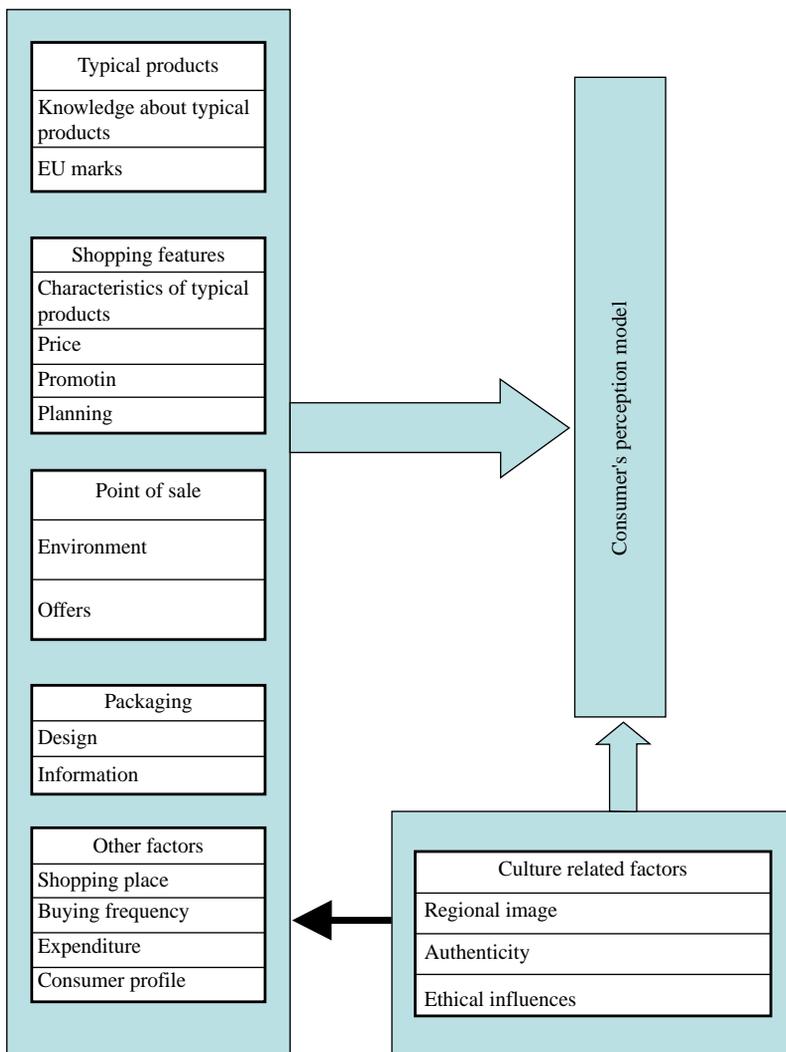
In total, the people interviewed were 536, so the expected probability of error is even inferior. In particular, deriving from the formula the exact value of the probability of error corresponding to 536 interviewees, it has obtained a value of 4.32 percent for the probability of error of the sample examined.

#### 5.1 Structure of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was structured into 64 questions and articulated around three main sections:

- (1) Fundamental components (interviewee's profile, knowledge of the certified guarantees for local European products, point of sale, knowledge of local products and sources of information of such knowledge).
- (2) Potentially influential factors (convenience of the product, product packaging, cultural factors linked to the place of production and place of production).
- (3) Consumer's behaviour concerning such products (frequency of purchase and cost of each purchase).

In the model to be tested, it has supposed that there might be some correlation between culture-related factors and other factors which influence consumer's perception. This hypothesis is tested in the quantitative stage. In particular, the initial model relative to be tested through the quantitative analysis is the following (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.**  
Initial model of consumer's  
perception of local  
products

### 5.2 Analysis of results

The quantitative data have been analyzed with the support of SPSS software.

The first step in the analysis of the results involves evaluating the reliability of the questionnaire.

Initially, a factor analysis has been conducted in order to study, summarize and simplify the relations in a group of variables (Barbaranelli, 2006). In particular, the purpose was to evaluate the suitability of the variables, as well as the factoriability of the correlation matrix (matrix which contains the correlations between the observed variables).

Through factor analysis, it was possible to carry out the Bartlett's sphericity test. This test indicates whether the sample is significant, i.e. if the sample is sufficiently wide

and it is thus possible to carry out factor analysis, if this is not the case the correlations between variables are too low and factor analysis cannot be made.

Further, it is possible to carry out a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy test which provides an index for comparing the dimension of the observed correlations with respect to the partial correlations. In particular, if this index has a value between 0.70 and 0.80, the results are acceptable; if the value is between 0.60 and 0.70, the results are mediocre; if the final value is inferior to 0.60, the results are scarce or not acceptable and thus it is not advisable to proceed to a factor analysis (Field, 2005). Principal components factor analysis was executed with varimax rotation, as this method allows for a better separation of the various factors (Barbaranelli, 2006); furthermore, factors leading less than 0.40 are omitted to improve the clarity of the obtained results.

The results has been reported in Table I.

All KMO values are more than the recommended value of 0.6.

Afterwards, it was important to evaluate the reliability of the scale used. Reliability “means that the scale should consistently reflect the construct it is measuring” (Field, 2005). To evaluate the reliability of the submitted questionnaire, it was necessary to analyze Cronbach’s alpha. This is a coefficient which evaluates the reliability of psychological and educational measurements (Cronbach and Shavelson, 2004). It is “a kind of correlation with a possible range from 0 to 1.00” (Cronbach and Shavelson, 2004). If its value “is near 0 then the quantified answers are not reliable at all, and if it is close to 1 the answers are very reliable” (Leontitsis and Pague, 2007).

Results are presented in Table II.

“The values 0.7 or 0.75 are often used as cut-off value of Cronbach’s alpha and thus for the reliability of the test” (Christmann and Van Aelst, 2006), but in some cases (depending on the number of items involved) even lower values are considered acceptable (Duhachek *et al.*, 2005), particularly if they are in excess of 0.6. As we can see in the table above, all items have a value in excess of 0.6.

Some  $\chi^2$  tests have been carried out in order to evaluate the relationship between two variables. The significance value small enough (conventionally less than 0.05) then the hypothesis that the variables is rejected because they are in some way related (Muijs, 2004;

**Table I.**  
Results item and KMO  
values

Section	Item	KMO
Local products and quality certifications	11	0.784
Product characteristics and purchasing occasions	12	0.654
Point of sale	7	0.624
Packaging	6	0.621
Regional influence	8	0.707

**Table II.**  
Results item and scale  
analysis

Item total correlation	Alfa di Cronbach	Item
Local products and certification marks	0.626	11
Product characteristics and occasion of purchase	0.608	12
Point of sale	0.633	7
Packaging	0.668	6
Regional influence	0.637	8

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Field, 2005). In fact,  $\chi^2$  test can “guide model modifications or adding constraints even when the less constrained model is highly significant” (Yuan and Bentler, 2004).

Only the most relevant  $\chi^2$  tests are reported in detail. For variable age group, a  $\chi^2$  value is 33.52, df is 5 and  $p$  (asymptotic significance) = 0.004. That means that, using a the 0.05 cut-off point, the difference is statistically significance (Muijs, 2004).

The test showed that statistically there is a significant relationship of the variable age between the sample population and the population. For variable provincial group a  $\chi^2$  value is 42.97, df is 18 and  $p$  (asymptotic significance) = 0.001. That means that, using a the 0.05 cut-off point, the difference is statistically significance (Muijs, 2004). The test showed that statistically there is a significant relationship of the variable provincial between the sample population and the total population.

The first significant data that emerged from the descriptive analysis was related to the frequency of purchase. The majority of the consumers interviewed (536) said that they buy Calabrian local products linked to the tradition of Magna Græcia once or twice a month. This value finds confirmation in the fact that the expense incurred is relatively low and that the majority of these products is purchased in supermarkets (although only a small amount of such products is distributed through type of outlet) and it shows how the diffusion of the products under examination has so far only had a slight impact on the habits of Calabrian consumers.

Relatively to the monthly expense, the majority of the people declared they spend less than €50, particularly in the lower age group of the population (under 35s). This also reflects the diverse financial capabilities and the different attention toward local products which lead the older band of the population to spend, as was predictable, sums even in excess of €100. In fact, the average monthly expenditure per age group is higher in the older age groups. These results imply the fact that often such people' shopping involves the support of the whole family nucleus, which in the younger age groups may only be formed by one person.

The data are further confirmed by the average monthly expenditure in relation with the level of education: a greater level of education implies a greater average expenditure. It is assumed, in fact, that a higher degree of education corresponds to higher financial capabilities and thus a tendency to spend more.

Another interesting datum is connected to the place where consumers buy such products. What emerges is the preference on the part of the consumers to buy such products in supermarkets. In fact, only a very small percentage of the interviewees maintain they buy them on the internet (14 percent circa), whereas the rest maintain they never buy them. This value finds confirmation in the fact that only few Calabrian producers have a web site, and among these the majority uses the site only as a virtual display, in contrast with what happens in other Italian regions or in other European countries, such as Germany, in which internet largely supports the sales (Schröder and Zaharia, 2008).

Furthermore, purchases are rarely, if ever, made in the place of production, which in some cases is hard to reach or not adequately taken care of. Most of the purchases of local products deriving from Magna Græcia are made in supermarkets (about 55 percent of the respondents buys often or very often in supermarkets), where only a small quantity of the great variety of such products is available. As regards the occasion for purchase, most of the interviewees do not plan on buying a local product (about 80 percent), in particular the prevalence of the interviewees buy such products whilst on holiday (about 80 percent) or as a gift (about 60 percent).

Furthermore, around half of the interviewees maintain that a particular price can lead to a purchase, even when not previously decided.

Concerning the promotional activities preferred by consumers, most of them claimed the in store tasting. In fact, almost 90 percent answered that this is one of the best promotional activities to make the product known and to induce to a purchase. Many respondents (75 percent) said that reductions in price or particular discounts can incentivize a purchase confirming the data previously collected on the influences of a lower price than usual. Furthermore, flyers distributed in the streets are very important: through these consumers can discover a particular product or the place in which to buy it, which is generally not well known because it addresses a niche public. Finally, regarding the shop sign, only half of the interviewees said they were impressed by it enough to be driven to enter a shop. As regards the packaging of the product, just over half said it should look attractive, whilst almost 80 percent declared that the package should be manageable and easy to open. This data can be justified by the fact that the products under exam are generally bought during a holiday or as a gift, therefore it is particularly important that the packaging can be transported easily.

Furthermore, a high percentage of the respondents (about 80 percent) said that the packaging should also be see-through or have a transparent part through which one can see its contents. This characteristic allows consumers to observe what they buy, also leaving them with a greater sense of security toward such products. Regarding the packaging, the interviewees also expressed their opinion on the information which should appear on the label. In particular, most of them require the presence of detailed information on the manufacturing place (about 97 percent), second, information on the utilized materials (about 95 percent) and finally information on the link with the territory (about 85 percent).

These data are justified by growing consumer's awareness toward the products they buy, and their increasing preference for natural materials, genuine (in the case of alimentary products) and not altered in a laboratory or artificially created.

Another important factor which emerged from the analysis is related to the interviewees' knowledge of local products (certification marks). Over 60 percent know such marks and they consider them certifications of guarantee of the quality of these local products, but only half of the interviewees buy such products on a regular basis or have a particular interest in the products which have such symbols.

In fact, about 50 percent of the respondents agrees in affirming that products with such marks are effectively of superior quality compared to similar ones without the certifying mark.

The subsequent step is related to the regression analysis. This technique allows to examine the relation between one or more independent variables (IV) or between an outcome variable and a dependent variable (DV) (Field, 2005; Muijs, 2004; Barbaranelli, 2006), with the aim of:

- analyzing the effects of the IV on the DVs in function of a certain model; and
- identifying a linear combination of the IV in order to predict in an optimal manner the value assumed by the DV (Barbaranelli, 2006).

In particular, this analysis allows to test the qualitative indications derived from the interviews with the major Calabrian producers.

Moreover, the use of the SPSS software allows researchers to find both the simple correlation coefficient and the collinearity statistics: tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) (Liu *et al.*, 2003), i.e. to what extent the factors are interlinked. Tolerance is mathematical described as  $1 - R_i^2$ , where " $R_i^2$  is squared multiple correlation of  $i$ th variable with other independent variables" (Liu *et al.*, 2003). When its value is close to 0, the variable is almost a linear combination of the other IV (Liu *et al.*, 2003). VIF is reciprocal of tolerance, which implies that "variables with low-tolerance tend to have large VIF, so variables with low tolerance and large VIF suggest that they have a collinearity" (Liu *et al.*, 2003). No variables of the initial model have high collinearity.

None of the variables in the initial model have high collinearity.

Initially, VIF has been analyzed in order to carry out the influence of the local products (VIF = 1,495), shopping features (VIF = 1,373), point of sale (retail point) (VIF = 1,451), packaging (VIF = 1,558) and culture-related factors (VIF = 1,729) on consumer's perception (Figure 3).

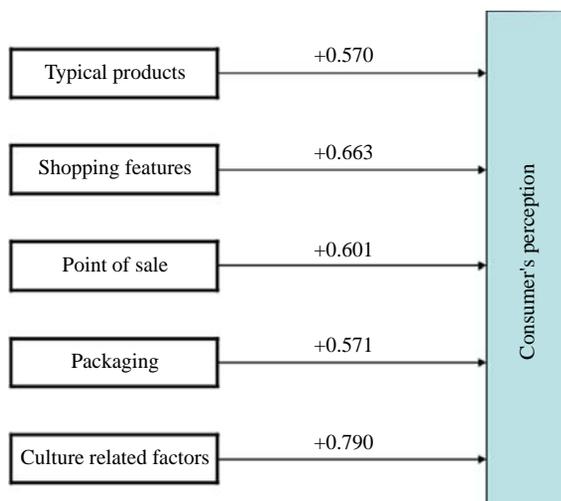
In particular, it is the latter ones that seem to have the main influence.

Hence, VIF has been calculated to investigate the direct influence of culture-related factors on the other ones, by carrying out a further regression analysis (Figure 4). This analysis shows that the ethical influences do not intervene in the perception process in a significant manner, due to the low beta value.

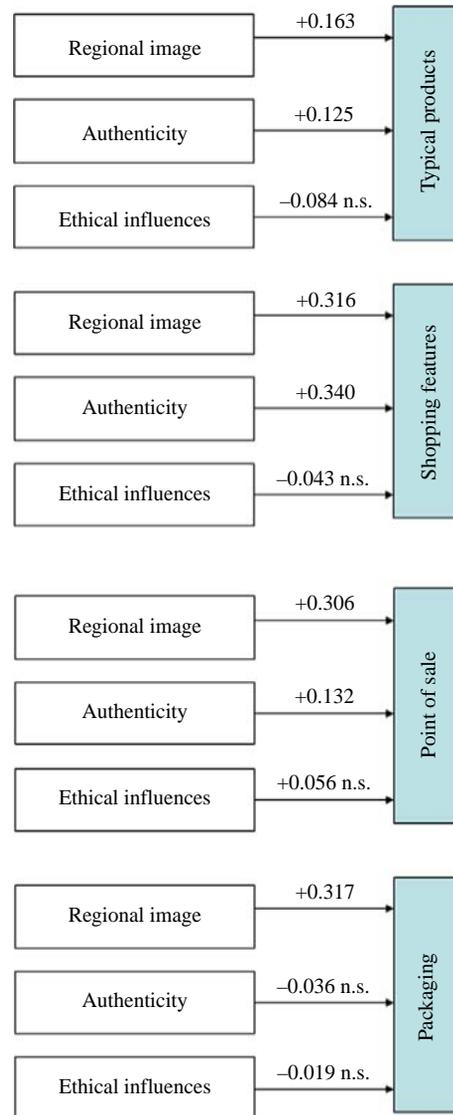
## 6. Consumer's perception of Magna Græcia products

The final step of the research is to investigate the implications of consumers' perception on their subsequent behaviour. In particular, it has been supposed that consumers' behaviour consists of buying frequency (shopping frequency) and expenditure on local products. A linear multiple regression allowed to evaluate this new index for the final model (Figure 5).

In particular, it emerges that the perception does not influence the buying frequency, but only the average expenditure on local products. This result is explained by the fact that if consumers perceive the products as somehow endowed with superior quality,



**Figure 3.**  
Multiple regression results  
on consumer's perception  
influencing factors



**Figure 4.**  
Multiple regression results  
of culture-related factors  
on the other influencing  
factors

it implies that consumers will not buy these products more often, but they will engage more purchases of it during the shopping.

Furthermore, another analysis explains how the other factors can affect consumers' buying behaviour. In particular, among the various factors only the shopping place resulted significant, with the dimensions of manufacturing place ( $\beta = 0.179$ ) and specialized shops ( $\beta = 0.186$ ).

Moreover, only a minority (of the range) of Calabrian local products is sold in supermarkets, this distribution justifies the obtained values.

Table III shows the ranking of the factors which influence the consumer's perception model. In particular, only those factors which directly influence consumer's perception were listed. It must also be stressed that cultural factors are the main influences and that they include regional image authenticity and ethical influence.

Table IV summarizes the values for the influences of cultural factors on the other components of the model, from which it is evident that the main influences are those determined principally by the regional image. It is further possible to note that ethical influences do not influence the other components of the model.

After the regression, it is possible to highlight that ethical influences do not influence shopping features, retail point and packaging. This implies that this variable will be completely eliminated from the final model.

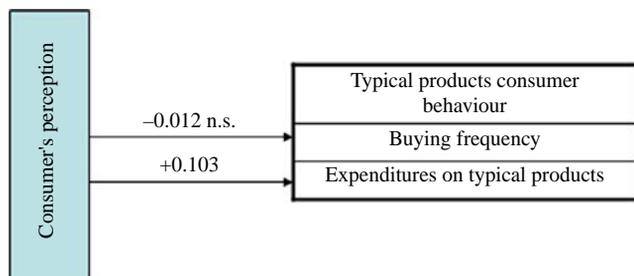
There are no other variables which need to be removed from the final model.

### 6.1 Adaptation of the initial model

Figure 6 shows the final model, after the quantitative validation.

The final model is different from the initial one due to the direct influence of culture-related factors on the ones. In particular, this dimension consists only of regional image and authenticity. Furthermore, the final model shows that consumer's perception influences consumer's behaviour regarding the average expenditure on local products.

Finally, the quantitative research has confirmed that culture-related factors considerably influence the other factors affecting consumer perceptions.



**Figure 5.**  
Multiple regression results  
of consumer's perception  
on consumer's behaviour

Rank	Dimensions	Direct influences	$\beta$
1	Local products		0.570
2	Shopping features		0.663
3	Point of sale		0.601
4	Packaging		0.571
5	Culture-related factors		0.790
	<i>Other influencing factors</i>		
1	Shopping place		0.365
2	Education		0.004 (n.s.)
3	City		-0.044 (n.s.)
	<i>Consumer's behaviour of local products</i>		
1	Buying frequency		-0.012 (n.s.)
2	Expenditures on local products		0.103

**Table III.**  
Ranking of model  
dimensions directly  
influencing consumer's  
perception

**7. Discussion**

The results show the factors which influence consumer’s perception of local products, by underlining the major influence of culturae-related factors (both as territorial image and authenticity). Calabrian marketers can exploit these results to define new strategies which focus more on the link with tradition, so that the new market segment represented by consumers with an interest for local, traditional products made by artisans could be achieved.

Hence, two of results emerge from a theoretical standpoint.

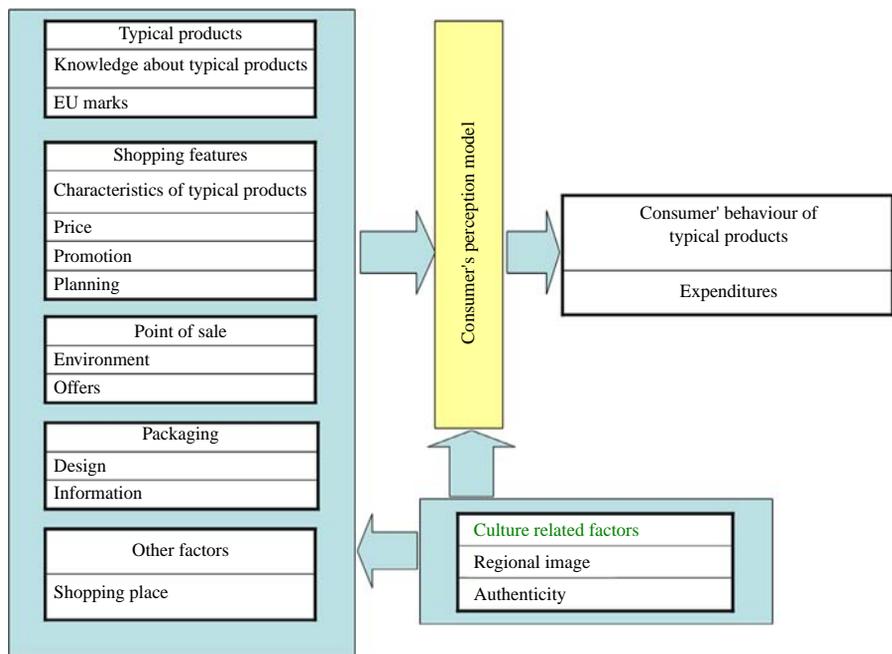
*7.1 The key role of product cultural value on consumer perception*

Literature review suggests the influence of the knowledge of a country of origin and of its history and tradition on the consumers perception the local products, even if it does not explain the implications for consumer’ behaviour, as well as the factors related to the territory which assume a key role during the perception process.

The presented research shows the direct influence of cultural-related factors on consumers’ perception and on the other influencing factors (i.e. packaging, points of sales

**Table IV.**  
Influences of cultural factors on the other model dimensions

	Cultural factors influencing others of model		Ethical influences
	Regional image	Authenticity	
Local products	0.163	0.125	− 0.084 (n.s.)
Shopping features	0.316	0.340	− 0.043 (n.s.)
Point of sale	0.306	0.132	0.056 (n.s.)
Packaging	0.317	− 0.036 (n.s)	− 0.093 (n.s.)



**Figure 6.**  
Adapted perception model for Calabrian local products coming from Magna Græcia

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and shopping features). Furthermore, the cultural-related factors consist of authenticity and regional image.

Moreover, the link product/territory plays a key role in consumer's choice of local products, when the knowledge and the reputation of the territory become a discriminating element in the purchase. In other words, when a country has a high reputation on consumers' mind, they consider the products realized there have a high quality.

In the case of Calabrian local products coming from Magna Græcia culture, consumers perceive these products with a high value, which represents the result of an ancient tradition. In this way, consumers have the feeling to achieve a part of the millenary culture by buying the local product. For this reason, consumers are willing to spend more for these products than for similar ones with a national brand. In fact, a positive perception of these local products will influence a more expenditure. Furthermore, the positive perception of these products does not influence the frequency to buy, but just the total expenditure on local products.

### *7.2 The importance of local products for promotion of local economy*

The results of this research show to what extent the cultural components affect the process of product perception. Such strategies, aiming at the promotion of the Calabrian territory through the valorization of its specificities, may do well to focus on the message that local products have an ancient historical and cultural value as they originate directly from the Greek colonisations period.

In the light of these results, such a connection could be communicated on the wrapping, which should give more information relating to the place of production, the production techniques and the materials used; these information could also be shown in the point of sale, by developing a more traditional atmosphere and by focusing a greater attention on the strength link with the culture of the territory.

Moreover, cooperative associations of local producers could be set up to increase their impact on large-scale retailers and overcome the obstacle of high royalties in the gross distribution.

It has also emerged that over 60 percent of Calabrian businesses do not invest either on advertising or communication strategies as a whole. The setting up of a consortium, with the support of the public administration, could enable businesses to exploit digital communication tools and related studies to promote local resources within a global perspective.

In addition, it is possible to exploit the increasing demand of tourism oriented above all to the consumption and purchase of particular kinds of food and drink, such as wine and beer (Yuan *et al.*, 2008; Kim *et al.*, 2009; Horng and Tsai, 2010). In fact, this new form of tourism focus on gastronomic specialties from a particular region, which it would be difficult to find elsewhere.

In this way, the promotion of local products becomes an important marketing tool for promotion of local economy, focusing on the link product/ancient tradition.

## **8. Conclusions**

The aim of the research was to present a new model of perception of Calabrian products as heritage of the ancient Magna Græcia, by starting from the assumption that the ancient culture underlying these products in some ways influences consumer's perception of them. Another purpose the factors influencing the perception process

in order to single out possible implications for territorial marketing. The research confirms that a close connection exists between the two, and that the factors represented by regional image and authenticity considerably affect product perception and also influences other factors which play a part in the process of perception. Such factors include knowledge of local products, shopping features, points of sale and packaging.

Price turned out to be a minor influence in the perception of local products, while it is a key factor in the perception of brand products, where price has been shown both to affect perception and as discriminating element in the purchase.

Moreover, regional image and authenticity have a direct effect on other factors, as these can underlyne in some ways the connection with territory, traditions and local culture. In fact, cultural factors also influence directly the point of sale, where both the atmosphere and design should recall the territory with special images, colours and materials. These elements affect the characteristics of the packaging too, which should contain all the information necessary to stress the connection with the country, culture and traditions of the place of origin.

Finally, the model shows how consumer's perception of these products influence the subsequent behaviour, by affecting the average expenditure but not the frequency of purchase. In the light of this, it is possible to affirm that consumers do not increase the frequency of purchase of these products, but rather the expenditure they dedicate to buying them. In some cases, consumers prefer to purchase these products instead of similar, as consumers are prepared to justify a higher price with better quality.

### **9. Limitations and future works**

This research proposes a new perception model of local products with specific reference to the case of Calabrian products with their roots in the culture of Magna Græcia. Owing to the particular cultural, social and geographical connotations, as well as the particular image of the region, this model which is fine tuned to the requirements of Calabria might not be applicable or achieve the same results when applied to other regions or countries.

For this reason, the model could be generalized by extending the research to other territories with similar connotations and to a larger sample of consumers with the aim of identifying possible common factors or differences.

In conclusion, this research will perform an analysis of Calabrian producers of goods with the specific characteristics outlined above, but will not study small-scale producers, who have a certain, albeit small, share of the market (on account of the limited size of the firm and the fact that their market is confined to a limited number of areas). Moreover, small-scale producers often lack the developed business culture of their larger competitors which enables the latter to acquire useful information on the purchasing behaviour of consumers of local products. For this reason, the producers involved in the work mostly come from the food sector which is one of the most developed.

Moreover, it is possible to blow up the model, by developing the individual determining factors further, in order to single out the more detailed factors which affect the local product perception.

In addition, the model can be generalized by referring to Calabrian local products in general (not only to products coming from Magna Græcia), and after – by getting foreign tourists involved – identify a model of consumer's perception regarding "Made in Italy" products.

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**Further reading**

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