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Foreign Products Influence on Consumers in Japan: Values of Made in Italy Olive Oil as Symbol of the Italian Culture

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**Alla vita che mi è stata donata.
A tutte le persone incontrate,
che hanno reso il mio percorso avvincente e appassionante
offrendomi il dono più grande:
l'insegnamento.**

要旨

本研究はメイドインイタリー製品、ことさらイタリア産オリーブオイルがどのように日本の消費者に影響を与えるのかを明らかにすることを目的とする。

特定の国を原産とする製品に対する日本の消費者の態度を説明するために用いる概念は原産国効果(以下、「COO」と記す)である。当該原産国のイメージがどのように称しに影響を与えるのかを議論する。

第1章は、研究の背景、問題意識、および論文の構成を説明する。

第2章は既存研究を整理し COO が与える製品イメージ、および伝統や経済や習慣に関わるその国のイメージ(Country Image)が消費者の購買意思決定に影響を与えるのかを説明する。

さらに、具体的な調査対象として、本研究は、消費者がメイドインイタリー製品、なかでもイタリア産オリーブオイルに対するイメージ、たとえばファッションナブルや家庭的といったイメージを形成しているのかを明らかにする。

オリーブオイルに関する調査を実施するために、既存研究を通じてオリーブオイルの歴史、および栄養学的特性と地中海ダイエットとの関係を議論する。

日本におけるオリーブオイル市場に着目し、日本に輸入されているオリーブオイルの原産国のデータと日本におけるオリーブオイル消費の現状を把握する。さらに、海外製品に対する日本の消費者の特性を議論する。

本稿は延岡(2008)の議論に依拠し、製品は機能的価値と意味的価値という2つの特性を有していると主張する。機能的価値は客観的で本質的な価値であり、意味的価値は主観的で個人的な価値である。

消費者行動の側面からは、Belk(1988)の拡張自己概念にもとづき、本稿は心

理学的かつ人類学的視点を通じて製品に対する消費者の購買意思決定を説明する。

既存文献の整理から導き出された本稿の仮説は以下の通りである。すなわち、イタリア産オリーブオイルの消費を通じて、日本の消費者はイタリア文化の起源を知り、イタリア文化を身近に感じることができる。このイタリア文化の身近さが消費者の拡張自己として知覚される。消費者はオリーブオイルの消費を通じて、イタリア文化を経験することができるのである。

第3章は、仮説を検証するために実施した調査の方法論を説明する。オンライン調査によってデータを収集した。

第4章は、収集したデータを分析および仮説の検証を行う。

2つの点が明らかにされた。第1に、消費者がイタリア産オリーブオイルを購入するのは、メイドインイタリアという原産国効果による品質保証によって安心感を得ているからである。第2に、イタリアを身近に感じることができる消費者の半分は、イタリアの文化と習慣に共感している。

第5章は、本稿の発見物を議論し、理論的および実践的貢献を述べ、本研究の今後の課題を説明する。

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

1.1. Background

Olive oil is a pivotal ingredient of the Mediterranean Diet, registered by UNESCO as World Food Heritage and worldwide known for its healthiness.

A common element in the Mediterranean traditions since the first settlements, olive oil use has influenced the everyday life: from the cuisine use, to the body care as a beauty treatment secret. Olive oil importance was so strong that has been used also in religious rituals, being considered as a religious symbol.

In the Mediterranean area Olive oil, has always been appreciated and praised for its important benefits and use versatility. Its diffusion and versatility has motivate the Phoenician appellation “green gold”, underlining its unavoidable uniqueness.

Since the Roman Emperor, olive oil is deep-rooted within the Italian culture and traditions. It symbolizes Italy, its country its lifestyle and its healthy gastronomy, through the Made in Italy label.

Nowadays Olive oil appreciation, thanking also to the spread of the Mediterranean diet healthiness, is growing globally. Many non producing countries with different culinary traditions, knowing about olive oil features and benefits, have the needs to import olive oil and assimilate it in their diets.

1.2. Research Question

The purpose of this research is to analyse and explain how Made in Italy products, in particular the Italian olive oil, influence consumer behavior and how the Italian olive

oil consumption could change Japanese culinary tradition. In order to build the study hypothesis, this study has taken into consideration previous studies regarding Country of Origin effect towards consumer behavior, particularly the specific researches about consumer trend in Japan towards Made in Italy products; moreover, this study analyses olive oil features and health benefits in order to justify its growing demand in the world market and in the Japanese market, and in which way, Italian olive oil attracts consumer interest influencing their purchasing behavior.

1.3.Paper Configuration

This study aims to understand the feelings and ideas of consumers in Japan when consuming Italian olive oil: if consuming it they are able to feel close to Italy feeling empathy with the Italian culture, while feeling safe for the high quality certified by Made in Italy label.

In chapter II the study take into analysis the existing researches, developing a theoretical base as a support of the hypothesis of this study. Among the chosen researches are included the COO (Country of Origin) effect general theory and its relatives CI (Country Image) and PI (Product Image) concepts, through which are represented a country traditions, cultural and economical habits, that are able to influence consumer choice when purchasing a certain country label or product. Moreover, the Literature review continues in examination of Made in Italy product perceived image by consumers in Japan, in particular regarding Italian olive oil. Consecutively, the study focuses on olive oil historical and cultural background referring to the Mediterranean culture and Italian one, lighting up its essential place in

the Mediterranean diet's healthiness, thanking to its nutritional features and benefits.

Furthermore, the study concentrates upon the olive oil market in Japan, by analysing the export and import data in Japan and the consumption percentage. Consumption data are focused on consumer behavior regarding their taste, price or provenience preferences, underling their attention to the quality value in foreigner products evaluation.

三浦(*Miura*) (2002) study, has been taken into consideration, to explain the Japanese consumers' distinctive characteristics among the world costumers. In order to focus on the explanation of the relationship between products and consumers, the study will refer to the analysis of 延岡(*Nobeoka*) (2008), regarding the functional value and the symbolic value: the functional value concerns objective and qualitative value; the symbolic value is the emotional and the subjective value. This study underlines that, high quality value depends on product technology or functionality, and also on customer need satisfaction. Going deeper on the consumer point of view analysing their relationship with products, this study takes roots on Belk (1988) "Extended self" theory, which explains consumer behavior and feelings about products through a psychological and anthropological point of view.

Chapter III is devoted to the explanation of the Research Methodology. A survey has been sent trough internet to consumers in Japan, both female and male between the ages of 20 up to more than 50 years old. The study aim was to focus on consumers in Japan knowledge and feelings towards Italian olive oil when consuming it. After thinking about the study hypothesis, in order to create the questionnaire focused on

consumer perception and feelings concerning Italian olive oil, previous research data have been taken as an example and have been unified to the research purpose based on Belk's "Extended Self" theory. Therefore, the survey has been made to gather answers able to confirm the hypothesis and, understand consumer feelings and images about Made in Italy olive oil.

Chapter IV analyses every gathered data through the perceived outcomes. Percentages and graphs about the research are available. All the data have been analysed and this chapter covers the Appendix number 1.

The final chapter, compare and contrasts the findings of this study, and argues both the practical and theoretical implications, pointing out the limitations of this research. Through the gathered data of the online survey, it is almost possible to confirm the proposed hypothesis in relation to consumer feelings when consuming Italian olive oil. Therefore, the obtained results just for a small percentage difference may not be able to confirm totally the expected findings.

CHAPTER 2 Literature Review

The aim of this research is to understand which kind of feeling consumers have toward Italian olive oil, and if thanks to Made in Italy label they are able to feel safe when purchasing. For this reason, in order to build a general knowledge background regarding the importance of product provenience and the country image, the first step of analyses have been focused on the development of the COO (Country Of Origin) Effect concept, and its lead part on consumers and market influence. Following the provenience importance, the study explains the main features of Made in Italy label and about its long-lasting tradition, and how its mark it is recognisable on the World market, thanking to its distinctive characteristics.

The literature review continues examining the image that consumers in Japan have towards Made in Italy products, analysing the behavior depending on people who have been to Italy and who did not.

The study goes on focusing on the olive oil kinds, features, health benefits and its link with the Mediterranean diet healthiness.

Moreover concerning the olive oil market, the research analyses the World market and consequently the Japanese market, with percentages examination, regarding olive oil production and consumption. Concerning the Japanese market, olive oil differences, features and benefits knowledge as well as the imports and consumption quantity has been analysed, turning the attention on consumers olive oil perception and use.

In order to explain the main features of consumers in Japan, Miura (2002) theory has been taken as a example to justify consumer expectations and demand tendency

when purchasing products.

In connection with consumer demands and needs, the literature review exposes the importance of the subjective and objective values in product evaluation. In order to support this concept, the study makes reference to 延岡(*Nobeoka*)(2008)theory of functional and symbolic value, underling that it is necessary propose on the market quality product made by technology or functionality, which aim also to consumers needs satisfaction.

Finally, consumer behavior towards Non-traditional product as Italian olive oil, have been examined, in order to get the idea of consumer feelings when consuming Italian olive oil and if Italian olive oil consumption is able to arouse the feeling of experiencing the Italian culture, generating an empathy sensation with it.

2.1. Country of Origin Effect

The growing global market competition has brought an increasing consideration of the Country of Origin effect in the International marketing. In the past decades the increasing global competition and consumer exposition to a usability expansion of foreign product variety, have induced to a higher consideration of the Country of Origin image, concerning product qualities and consumer behavior in the International business (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993 p.39).

The COO image of a certain country can affect positively or negatively in the marketing of a product, depending on its producing country image. A brand that is positively linked with its COO, would have a positive outcome. The intention to buy a product from a certain country is linked to the country overall good image and to the

components of COO image such as workmanship, design and prestige, ensuring the quality. Thus, a certain brand product, positively connected with a good COO image, should use the COO guarantee on its packaging to benefit of it in the Global Market, ensuring a possible success for the product (Matarazzo M., 2012, p. 36).

In other words, COO operates as an allowed stereotype in the Global Market, in order to make a product value of a certain country recognisable for consumers. COO is conceptualized as a synthesis of stereotypes, experience and knowledge concerning a certain country and its products (Matarazzo, 2012 p.36).

1) Country of Origin Effect Theories

The first studies regarding the Country of Origin effect have origin in the 1960s period. In the early 1960s, International Marketing Scholars, inspired from the growth of globalization, created a definition of what the COO (Country of Origin) was and started to research and analyse the Country of Origin Effects in the Marketing strategy field (Matarazzo 2012, p23). According to Velergh (2001), Schooler (1965) was one of the first researchers who, dedicating his studies to the COO effect concept, was able to notice differences regarding the examined products, depending only on the producing country information through a “made in” label (Verlegh W.J., 2001, p.7). This has led to the development of one of the most important topics of the last decades.

Globalization has brought a different company management system. With Globalization more and more consumers came in contact with foreign products and National companies begun to expand their business overseas. From those circumstances came out the need, by producing countries, to focus on the characteristic and quality of

a product to make it recognisable among the competitor ones (Matarazzo., 2012 p. 23).

However, Globalization has changed the perspective for the company production and for the consumer choice as well, giving to product provenience a higher importance.

Globalization has increased the opportunities for companies to distribute their goods to consumers all over the world. At the same time, consumers are able to choose from a broad range of products and services in almost any category. Therefore, COO is an important variable to consider when studying consumer evaluation of foreign product¹.

Furthermore, to understand COO influence over the consumer behavior, the COO concept has to be analysed in its complexity. As mentioned by Roth et al. (2009), COO has three different levels to take into consideration, when it comes to analyse its consequence on consumer purchase intention: the first level is the Country Image (CI), focusing on the definition of factors influencing the creation of the country image, such as cognitive trust and emotions; the second level is the Product- Country Image (PCI) that consists of the country image effect on products manufactured in a certain country; the third level is the product image (PI) that regards the quality evaluation of products, made by a certain company of a specific country.

In the COO effect system, CI factors are linked to the consumer psychological and emotive part towards country image and products. While cognitive beliefs are made of

¹ Nadia Huitzilín Jimé'nez , Sonia San Martí'n, "The role of country-of-origin, ethnocentrism and

stereotypes² and few information perceived about a specific country, the affective components are the feelings and the emotions that a Country, through its characteristic aspects, can spread to consumers or possible buyers; the last is the conative concept, that shows consumer intended behavior on purchasing a product rather than another one (Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009, p. 730). According to Matarazzo (2012), the cognitive component refers to the country's name, flag, people, culture and exported products, through which comes out the affective components that evocate consumer emotions, culminating in the conative components that consists in consumer behavior when purchasing.

Moreover, Country of Origin effect could be also linked to consumer experiences. "Country of origin is not merely a cognitive cue for product quality, but also relates to emotions, identity, pride and autobiographical memories"(Verlegh, 2001 p.8). Fournier indeed (1998), found that country of origin relates a product to national identity. Such a link can generate a strong emotional attachment to certain brands and products³ (1998, p.9).

Therefore, consumer attitude towards a certain country product, is influenced by its opinions formed during different situations and experiences. Pursuant to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) there are three main processes in the belief formation towards objects: the descriptive, inferential and informational. The descriptive belief is based on the direct experience that a consumer had with a product; the inferential is formed by

² Country aspects stereotypes: politics, economy, culture, landscape/environment; and people characteristic: competence, creativity, standard of living, labour etc.

³ Fournier (1998, p.9) has analysed an Italian second generation woman, which shows her emotional attachment to the Italian traditions in particular regarding food consumption by purchasing just Italian branded products. (It would be further analysed that case in the 2.4 part of this research).

correct or incorrect deductions had through a past experience with a product; the informational one is related to outside information had through friends, advertising or news (Fishbein et al., 1975 pp. 132- 139).

The three experience processes are the base on which arise consumer product evaluation, in particular in the case of foreign products perception. The interest towards a product would depend on their connection to this product or a certain country image concept. It is necessary underline that consumer evaluation towards foreign products could depend on two main feelings: product familiarity and consumer nationalism. Product familiarity regards the important role of the Country Image on products and its consequent influence on consumers choice behavior; while the second point concerns the nationalism feelings, influencing consumer preference for domestic products(Matarazzo M., 2012 pp 28-29).

Concerning consumers approach towards PCI of foreign products, the familiar feeling formation could be based on two phases: referring to Han (2001), a foreign product becomes familiar (summary process), after the “halo” process (unfamiliar). During the halo process, a consumer bases his evaluation of a Country image through the general knowledge about that country, including its cultural economical and political situation (Matarazzo M.,2012).

Therefore, knowledge and news regarding a certain country and its COO, represent the first step that may move consumers interest in choosing a certain foreign product and brand. Through general information, consumers would have the support in the difficult evaluation process of foreign products and enterprises linked to a certain

producing country (Huitzilin et al., 2009). Consequently, from product news and advertisements, consumers would get in touch indirectly with it almost every day, even without buying it, and in this way the familiar feelings with a product would come out (Fournier, 1998).

Consequently, if the country has a good reputation and a good PCI, it could develop consumer trust feeling, and create the familial feeling for a certain PC (Country Product). The trust feeling formation, depends on a marketing relationship based on sharing with partners the same values and the firm social responsibility, as happens in the CI and “Made in” processes, that could guarantee to consumers less risk probability and more satisfactions (Hunt D. Shelby, Arnett B. Dennis, Madhavaram S., 2006 p76). According to Jimenez et al. (2009) “Trust involves the consumer’s willingness to be vulnerable, and to believe that the chosen exchange partner (the firm) will act in the interests of trusting person (the consumer) and will behave responsibly and with integrity” (Jiménez Huitzilin N., San Martin S., 2009 p3).

The CI would act as a halo in the consumer influence when they are unfamiliar with the product, and also CI would acts as a summary factor when they will become familiar with the country products. The halo and the summary process spread the purchasing decision regarding a certain CI (Matarazzo M., 2012 pp 31-32).

As a result of the familiar feeling, consumer interest and evaluation towards a certain product would depend more on COO information. According to Jiménez et. al. (2009, p5) “Familiarity can be an important factor in explaining the propensity to use COO information and its effects on other variables”. In opposition Maheswaran (1994),

affirms that COO, conditions more beginner consumers, influenced by COO related cognitions, rather than expert ones, with an attribute-related cognition (Maheswaran, 1994, p. 355).

Otherwise, referring to the nationalism feelings, consumer patriotic emotion influences their purchasing choice towards national product brands. This would show preferences for a domestic production brand, rather than for a foreign one (Matarazzo M. 2012, p. 32). For what concerns the nationalism feeling, Dinnie (2003, p.17) refers to the ethnocentrism behavior concept, affirming that this preference would act as a support of the national economy. The ethnocentric behavior, consists in the feeling of superiority of the own group identity that symbolizes the nation. From the COO point of view, the ethnocentrism from an economic base, is increased in particular by the international competition of globalization.

Among different variables such as nationalism or familiar feelings, the COO effect depends also on the consumer gender and age. Bilkey and Nes (1982) referring to Scholer (1971), have underlined that the COO effect, influences more female consumers which have more tendency on purchasing foreign products than the male consumers, showing a higher percentages in evaluations and attention toward product quality. Moreover, Bilkey and Nes (1982) refer to Scholer (1971) research underlining that people with more educational background have the tendency on rating foreign products with a higher evaluation rather than people with a limited education.

Finally, is possible to affirm COO and CI dominium on customer purchasing choice. CI is not influenced by the market, but on the other hand, it can influence

market strategies and consumer behavior in choosing a product of a specific country in the same way in which price and quality can influence consumers and consequently satisfying market needs (Matarazzo M. 2012, p. 23).

As for COO and CI influence, the “Made in” label as well depends on the widespread image of a certain country, and plays a part in determining purchasing choice.

The “made in” image is the picture, the reputation, the stereotype that businessman and consumers attach to products of a specific country. This image is created by such variables as representative products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history and traditions. It has strong influence on consumer behavior in the international market, as it is associated with mass communication, personal experience, and view of national opinion leaders⁴.

2) Italian Country of Origin Effect: Made in Italy features

Italy production has long traditions and it is well-known for its Fashion, Food, Home furniture and Mechanical sectors. The Italian producing features are concentrated in two business areas, the “traditional” and the “specialized suppliers” industries (Pavitt, 1984), that are noticeable in the so-called four As’ of the Italian production: Agro-Alimentare (Food farming), Abbigliamento-moda (Fashion clothing), Arredamento – casa (Home furniture), Automazione meccanica (mechanical automation) (Bertoli et al., 2012, p.7).

The Italian traditional industries (such as food, clothing, leather etc.), focuses

⁴ Akira Nagashima, “A Comparison of Japanese and U.S. Attitudes Toward Foreign Products” *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1970, p. 3.

more the attention on product quality rather than cost efficiency and volumes. In all the fields, Italy tries to create a mix between innovation, creativity and luxury. The Italian product high-quality image, has attracted the International marketing attention but, today it suffers for the increasing competition coming from the emerging countries. Even if the income growth of the Global Market demands are more focused on volume and speed productions there is an increase in the quality request, Made in Italy is able to face the challenge, trough the product quality certification, ensuring consumers or potential consumers and satisfying their needs (Bertoli et al., 2012, pp.7-9).

Even if the Globalization points at the massive production, Made in Italy still focuses its policy on product quality. According to Urso, in the ASSOCAMERE research (2006), the globalization represents a good chance to develop better the Made in Italy values, but that could happen only if we take care of our identity and the quality of life typical of the Italian tradition, producing and offering goods in order to satisfy consumers and their needs (Urso, 2006, p. 1).

In order to support this evaluation of Made in Italy, Italy should improve the Made in Italy brand and Italian enterprise images. Assocamere study (2006) shows that, in order to sell at full blast Made in Italy product image, it is necessary affirm Made in Italy as a lifestyle. Moreover, another important point in the promotional process, consists into fix Made in Italy features through its main points in the marketing plan: the image, that Made in Italy spreads to consumers influencing their idea regarding its products; the identity concept, that depends on enterprise measures, in order to obtain an outstanding representation of Made in Italy brand features(Assocamere, 2006 pp. 6-7).

According to Fantoni et al. (2014), since Italy is an industrially advanced country recognizable for its production excellencies among different industries, Italian enterprises should offer a high value production based on the quality leadership, price and business (Fantoni et. al. 2014).

3) The image of Made in Italy products in the eyes of consumers in Japan

Consumers in Japan have demonstrated during the years to have a strong interest and a good image of European products. Nagashima (1970) has focused his research on consumers in Japan perception of “Made in Japan”, “Made in America” and some European “made in”. The research outcomes indeed, have showed the high consideration that consumers have of European products: “The Japanese feel little pride in owning their own products: they take much more pride possessing both U.S and European products” (Nagashima, 1970, p.70).

Therefore, referring to Nagashima (1970) opinion of consumers in Japan, it is possible to affirm that, in the Japanese market, there is a high consideration of European brands, and this success could be linked to consumer interest and appreciation of products representing somehow the European lifestyle (Nagashima, 1970, p.70).

Among European products, there are Made in Italy labeled products which are strictly linked to the Italian lifestyle and cultural aspects. According to D’Emilia (2006), referring to the data collected through a research made by NetRatings Society⁵ for the Italian Chamber in Japan, the country image of Italy among consumers in Japan, it is

⁵ The NetRatings Society research has been conducted through the Web. The sample selection has been based on criteria such as gender age and living area: for these information, the research has referred to population census data. Moreover, the samples of the research have been selected casually using the NetRatings computer system.

strong, positive, and this opinion is shared by different generations. Regarding the Italian production idea among consumers in Japan, Italy is identified as high quality producer by 61% of the general average of interviewed people, more in the specific by the 72% of those who have been in Italy. Depending on the gender preference, the higher percentage is held by women with 66%, confirming the theory that the Country image when purchasing, influences more women than men (D'Emilia, 2006).

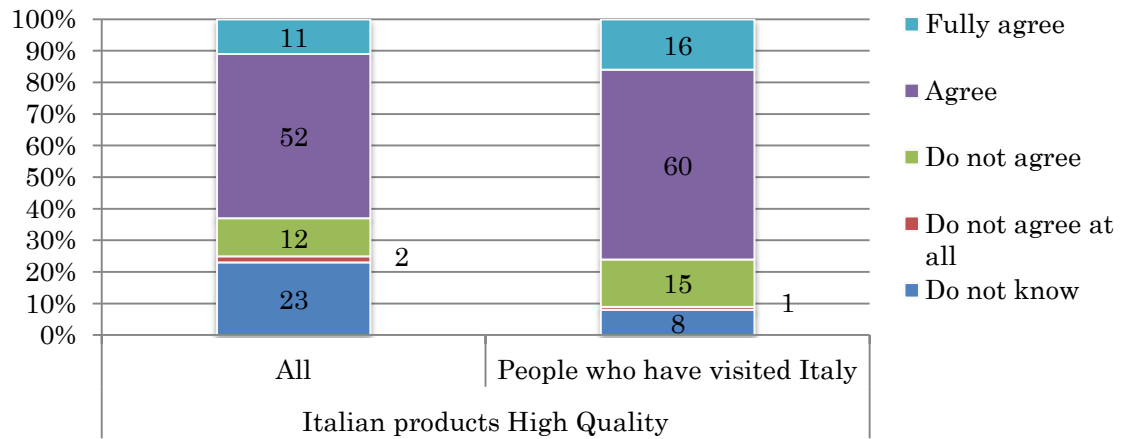
The Country Image concept, linked to the country lifestyle, is influenced as well by the people living the country. The image of Italy, is linked to a general idea of the country and of Italian behavior that mostly, is influenced by stereotypes. From the research appears that, people in Japan have a positive idea of Italians considering them for their amusing, creative, fashionable and resourceful behavior tendency. On the other hand, for what concerns Italian lacks, the higher percentage regards negligence and reliability of Italians' behavior. In particular, the higher average, correspond to people that have already been to Italy showing an appreciation and a critique about those typical characteristics (D'Emilia, 2006 p.35-37).

Moreover, the high interest in visiting Italy or the desire of living in Italy underlines a significant appreciation of the Italian country and its traditional lifestyle. The higher percentages collected by the research of the Italian Chamber in Japan, show that people in Japan feel close to the Italians, and consider Italy as a place in which they would like to live (D'Emilia, 2006). Those data are confirmed by Fantoni et al (2014) that, referring to the Eurostat research on 2013, taking into consideration the Asian countries, affirm that the higher number of visitors choosing Italy as a touristic area, is

still corresponding to Japan rather than other Asia countries such as China or Korea (Fantoni et. Al., 2014).

Focusing on Made in Italy brand image perceived in the Japanese market, quality appears as the main symbolic feature. Among the collected percentages of the questionnaire made by the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (2006) (Fig. 1), 76% of the people which have been in Italy, consider the Italian brands products as high quality products. Despite that, a positive evaluation towards Made in Italy quality has been given also by 52% of other people in Japan which have never been to Italy, proving the consistency of quality value as distinctive characteristic of Made in Italy brand (D'Emilia P. 2006, p. 36). Moreover, 60% of people that have visited Italy, affirm that Italian products are suitable for the market in Japan. However, among the interviewed people, the ones who have been to Italy consider Italian products too expensive (36%), and the same idea is supported also by people that never visited Italy (32%).

CHAPTER 2. Figure 1. Italian products image: High Quality Value.



Reference: ICCJ, Mad for Italy 2006, p.36.

Made in Italy high quality feature is well-known around the world as in Japan. According to Sesia (2006), Made in Italy products are recognisable among the others, thanking to its famous quality mark guarantee (Sesia 2006, p.53).

Made in Italy high quality value concerns also the Italian food. 宇田川(Udagawa) (2008), affirms that from the outside point of view, the perceived Italian food features are the healthiness, its familiar value and its wealthy image, perceptible when eating. The Italian cuisine it is considered in its “casual” mood with natural flavor products of its cuisine with his core feature of the so called “mum’s touch” that recreates the familiar atmosphere image (2008, p.7).

Made in Italy image abroad corresponds to some typical products symbolizing Italian traditions. Mostly Italy appreciation depends on its culinary tradition represented by some Italian typical food product or iconic dishes. This attitude has been confirmed by consumers in Japan, according to the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan research

(2006), choosing pasta as the product symbol representing at most Italy, and this evaluation is almost equal for people in Japan who have visited Italy (92%) and people and people in Japan in general (90%). The Italian gastronomy variety has a good reputation and appreciation among the consumers, and in the ranking appears at the 5th level depending on the evaluation of people who visited Italy (58%) which have showed a higher appreciation, and people in Japan (46%)(ICCJ, 2006, pp.38-39).

Although the Italian product appreciation average is collective, consumer product evaluation, changes depending on the age as well as taste and needs. In Japan, the trend towards Italian products such as pasta, wine, food, design, etc., is more evident among young people rather than the older ones which shows preferences for the “Made in France” products (ICCJ 2006, p. 41).

This attitude among the younger people comes from a global market influence which motivates their attention on alternative lifestyle choices linked to a higher interest on being acquainted with foreigner products. This trend depends on the *lifestyle* point of view, that is Made in Italy main feature, and attracts mostly young people attention (ICCJ 2006, p.41). As Sesia affirms (2006), in particular are the female consumers in Japan around thirty years old, showing a particular interest towards high quality and luxury products, thanking also for the time disposition to read up about Made in Italy and other foreign products. This attitude in researching about brand new products, and high quality products it is pushed in order to affirm their individuality among the society (Sesia D. 2006, pp.52-53).

Despite the previous data were exalting in general Made in Italy quality importance among consumers in Japan, new outcomes identify the main characteristics that mark the

Italian production quality. Referring to the recent data collected by the ICCJ (2013), the main points characterizing consumers in Japan evaluation regarding Made in Italy brand perception are based on the traditional value, artisanal production and authentic characteristics, trustworthy, lasting, and expensive. Moreover, what could surprise from those data, is the evaluation of Italian products as suitable for not young taste (ICCJ, 2013).

2.2. Existing researches regarding olive oil

Concerning olive and olive oil origins, there are different researches confirming that the Mediterranean basin has been the cradle of its origins and cultivation. Olive oil is a link between the different Mediterranean cultures, representing a fundamental product of their culinary traditions too. Moreover, olive and olive oil consideration as a religious symbol in the Christian, Islamic and Jewish cultures, highlights olive oil value and significance among those cultures (WhyOliveoil, 2013)⁶.

From ancient times, up to today, olive oil prestige has always been due to its different way of use and to its health benefits. In recent years, different researches regarding health care or disease attribute to olive oil the ability for prevention of cardiovascular disease as well as cancer or Alzheimer's disease. Even though speaking about olive oil features, the word "fat" may influence negatively consumer choice, in recent years, scientific studies about olive oil composition, have enhanced olive oil's fat benefits.

Among the olive oils the extra virgin one is the most nutrient for its features, such as vitamins, and according to its composition, represents the best quality among the different olive oil types. Olive oil and specially extra virgin olive oil healthiness meets the

⁶ *Olive oil in Religion*, in WhyOliveOil, Copyright 2012-2014, <http://www.whyliveoil.com/olive-oil-religion/> (Referred to, October 9, 2014).

Mediterranean diet purpose, and represents one of the most typical products within it, acting as a central symbol of the diet.

1) Olive oil History

Olive is a millennial tree and its precise origins are unclear, but it is possible to recognize their presence back to 5000, 6000 years ago in the Mediterranean areas. According to the webpage Molino de Quiros⁷ olive leaf fossils datable to 53,000 BC, have been identified in Africa but in the Neolithic has been started the olive oil exploitation in Anatolia near Persia (Siriya- Iraq territories). The olive tree (*Olea europaea* var. *europaea*) is considered as the domesticated version of the wild oleaster of the Sylvester variety, in about nine different times: the first challenges are dated to the Neolithic migration into the Mediterranean basin, around 6000 years ago (About, 2014, referred on September 21, 2014)⁸. The olive pressing process to obtain olive oil indeed, it is datable around 2500 BC (About, 2014). Vossen (2007) affirms that olive oil origins can be traced going back to the early Bronze Age (3150 to 1200 BCE) in the Mediterranean coasts of recent countries such as: Turkey, Siria, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon. These news, have been reported by a document of 2000 BCE founded in Siria which indicates the high value of olive oil towards wine.

The presence of Olive oil is noticeable in the Christian religion origins. It is reported in the Old testament Book of Genesis when the Noah Ark landed after the flood, a dove came to Noah with an olive-leaf in her mouth (cf Gen 8,9). Consequently, the olive oil and

⁷ *The History of Olive oil*, in Molino de Quiros:
http://www.molinodequiros.es/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=68&Itemid=79&lang=en
(Referred to October 9, 2014).

⁸ Hirst Kris K., *Olive history: Domestication of Olea Europea*, in About.com, 2014:
archaeology.about.com/od/oterms/qt/Olive-History.htm (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

the olive⁹ plant became symbolic images for the Christian and also for the Jewish culture (Imparato, 2008 p.1).

The diffusion of olive oil in the Mediterranean areas was due to the commerce trades attested by archeological findings. Vossen (2007) indeed says that the olive oil commerce moved from Syria to the west part of the Mediterranean area: Greece, Egypt and west Turkey. Regarding those movements there are many findings connected with olive oil and regarding olive oil such as paints and writings. Moreover, in Crete island, has been founded tables with registration of the olive oil trade around 1700 BCE (Vossen, 2007, p. 1093).

Olive oil has continued going on moving in the west part on the way to Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Morocco. 池上(Ikegami) affirms that the cultivation of olive oil trees have been started in the territory between Palestine and Syria more than 6000 years ago and around the 8th Century have been brought to Italy by Greek immigrates (Ikegami, 2003, p.68). Following the historical movement of olive oil cultivation it is possible to affirm that, referring the first agronomic writings have been started by the Romans and, during the Roman Empire, with the territories expansion have been spread olive plantings and olive oil processes within the Mediterranean area (Vossen, 2007, p. 1093). According with IOC (2014)¹⁰, the Romans continued the expansion of the olive trees to the countries around the Mediterranean, using it in their occupation plans. Mostly during the Roman times the techniques and the tree cultivation have been expanding mostly in Spain and North Africa (Grigg 2001, p.166). After the discovery of America territories, live cultivation knew a

⁹ The olive oil represents our Christian being. The word Christian comes from the Greek word Messiah, that means anointed (a person to whom has been applied oil), anointed by God, becoming a God son. The oil is not the material one, and represents the Saint Spirit (Benedetto XVI, 2010).

¹⁰ International Olive Council, *The Olive tree*, in "International Olive Council", 2014, <http://www.internationaloliveoil.org/estaticos/view/76-the-olive-tree>, (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

development also outside the Mediterranean area. The first olive trees have been brought from Spain to the Indies and later to America. In modern times, olive oil cultivation came to southern Africa, Australia, Japan and China (IOC, 2014).

The olive cultivation is typical in the Mediterranean area thanks to the environmental and climate aspects of those countries. Olive oil trees need long and warm and dry summer, but not with high temperatures, and rainfall during the winter, surviving to some frost, but not long lasting low temperatures (Grigg, 2001, p. 166). According to Fontanazza (2004) from a geographical point of view, among the Mediterranean countries Italy represents the main country in olive oil high quality, first for its environmental features¹¹, and second for its historical background such as Magna Graecia (Great Greek) and the Roman Empire (Fontanazza 2004, p.13).

During the Roman Era different types of goods and food have been brought to Italy, such as olive oil. According to 池上(Ikegami)(2003), during the Ancient Rome time, great value products have been brought to Italy as olive oil, and in this period has occurred an intensive cultivation of olive oil trees, and this practical cultivation has been expanded to the Mediterranean area. Through the Roman time, not only the interest towards the olive oil but also its cultivation and quality has seen a development. Roman and Greek people were consuming a great quantity of olive oil for its nutritive characteristic and its high quality (Ikegami, 2003, pp. 67-68).

Italian olive oil origins are traceable in the Roman Empire. As Ikegami (2003) affirms,

¹¹ “The prime area of Italian olive production is located between 30 and 45 °N, which in general is the geographical distribution of suitable areas for olive-tree production in the northern hemisphere” (Fontanazza 2004, p.13).

during the centuries it became stronger and it has no rivals among other nations thanks to its taste, delicacy and the quality of its products (2003, p.71).

Olive oil cultivation and consumption, has been characterizing Mediterranean population habits and traditions. The strong link that Mediterranean culture has been having with olive oil, is shown through the mythological stories that recount its importance 池上 (*Ikegami*) (2003 p.68). Regarding olive oil influence over the Mediterranean countries, Zampoulis (2006) states that olive oil has represented the foundation of Mediterranean culture influencing each aspect of life. This strong link is shown through myths, religious ceremonies, and traditions.

2) Olive oil features, its nutritive substances and the Mediterranean diet

Olive oil world, consists of a different kind of olive oil. The Italian Trade Commission Research (ICE) (2013, p.14), proposes a distinction of olive oil types depending on a different production process: the first kind is virgin olive oil that is divided between “extra virgin” and “ordinary virgin”, and it is obtained through a mechanical process with a particular temperature which does not influence the product quality. The second type is the “refined olive oil” from which it has been removed smell and acidity through a refining process, and it is the olive oil type used in the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industry. The third kind is the “blend olive oil” or “pure olive oil”, that is a mixture of virgin olive oil and refined one, it is transparent with yellow reflexes with delicate taste and smell.

Olive oil has always offered many different ways of use, but during the years new products have replaced in some of its functions. Grigg affirms that olive oil was not just a simple edible product, but could be used also as: fuel, lubricant and soap. After the

introduction of petroleum use for lubrication and illumination, olive oil production became 90% for the food use (Grigg, 2001, p. 169)

Toward the human body olive oil, is focal for its health benefits such as antioxidants and vitamins. Olive oil characteristic indeed, are made by mono saturated oleic acid and antioxidants such as vitamin E and phenolic components (Visioli et al. 2001, p.66). Those benefits are important in particular towards body disease, such as heart disease or cholesterol. According to VOLOS (Virgin olive oil study) (2004), even if the coronary heart diseases, cholesterol or high blood pressure are similar to the people from the Mediterranean area or North European countries, it is possible to individualize that in the population of the Mediterranean area the coronary heart diseases are lower, and that is a result given by the high consumption of olive oil rich in polyphenols, vitamins e. g. and antioxidants (Visioli et al., 2004, p.125).

Understand the value of olive oil and in particular the Extra Virgin one, comes through the taste, color and smell which represent for the consumer an important occasion to interact with senses. This is one of the main purposes for Slow Food: giving the importance to the “taste” and creating a knowledge for consumers: in Extra Virgin Olive Oil indeed, is really important to get in contact with the product analyzing all its features to better understand its quality through the acidity which is the main Extra Virgin Olive Oil characteristic (Menley A., 2004, p.172).

Extra Virgin Olive Oil, among the Olive Oil products, is the best product for its healthy and nutritional uniqueness. The analytical markers of Extra Virgin Olive Oil

(EVOO) such as antioxidants, monounsaturated oleic acid¹² and squalene¹³ are the main features creating a gap between EVOO and the other common vegetable oil that are being consumed in the world.

Olive Oil benefits, are fundamental in the Mediterranean Diet for its monounsaturated fats. According to the research made by the Spanish Scientific journal Diabetes Care, the Mediterranean Diet rich in olive oil consumption reduces the risk of type II Diabetes (the most common type of Diebet) for 50% compared to other law fats Diets. Thus a diet, such as the Mediterranean one, with monounsaturated fats present in olive oil nuts and seeds could help disease prevention like diabetes, cardiovascular problems or cancer, which on the other hand are increased in high fat diets (Paravantes E., 2012¹⁴). Olive oil features, contribute to the purpose of the Mediterranean Diet, which promotes nutrition for good body health (Serra-Majem et al., 2003, p.2). Olive oil indeed, is perceived as the symbol of the Mediterranean diet (Mili, 2004).

The Mediterranean Diet unifies the type of nutrition and products which represent Mediterranean Basin territories' culinary tradition. The Mediterranean Diet has long historical origins trough the past centuries, and it is important to underline that it concerns not only the Italian food and products but it regards all the products that are produced in the

¹² “The monounsaturated oleic acid, has been always linked with the EVOO nutritional aspects. In the last decade that component had a new variability (traditionally fixed to 55-83%) related to the expansion of olive cultivation areas were the oleic acid is lower than 50%”(Servili M., 2012, p).

¹³ Olive oil contains between 0.4-0.7% squalene. Squalene is chemopreventive cancer agent, especially effective against breast, pancreatic, and colon cancers. In combination with polyphenols, it also provides protection against coronary heart disease.(Squalene Olive Oil Sharks, in “Slick Extra Virgin”, http://www.aromadictionary.com/EVOO_blog/?p=426, 2010, (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

¹⁴ Elena Paravantes, *Top 5 Health Benefits of Olive Oil*, in “Olive Oil Times”, <http://www.oliveoiltimes.com/olive-oil-health-news/top-5-health-benefits-of-olive-oil/31463>, 2012 (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

Mediterranean area Nations such as, for example, Spain, Greece and Morocco. The Mediterranean Diet has its origins in the Phoenician and Ancient Greek world, which were colonizing all the territories around the Mediterranean basin area. During these times, through the trading traffics, they have brought some of their typical food or products in the colonized territories. Throughout the Magna Graecia period and the Roman Empire, have been imposed new products in the conquered territories, modifying countries dietary habits. Despite that, Arabians have protected diversity spreading technical knowledge and that practice led to the development of different regional culinary expressions (Padilla M., 2001 p. 263).

Therefore, within the Mediterranean countries even if the culinary art differs between each others, the fundamental products are the same. Among the Mediterranean area, have been noticed different Mediterranean Diets linked by common features such as olive oil, cereals, fruits, whole grains, fish, meat and spices (Gamboni et. al, 2012, pp. 255-256). Huang et al. (2008) confirm that even if the Mediterranean Diet differs regionally, it is mainly based on the same principle food products such as whole grains, vegetables, fruits, red wine and olive oil, which guarantee a healthy nutritional model and contribute to a percentage reduction of heart coronary disease (p. 407).

As the Mediterranean diet varies depending on countries culinary traditions in the same way olive oil consumption in the Mediterranean regions, has a different importance. The countries in which the olive oil consumption have a relevant importance over the diet are the ones confined in the Mediterranean area¹⁵(Grigg, 2001, p.164). However, Grigg (2001) referring to a contemporary FAO research, affirms that even though olive oil is an

¹⁵ The countries in the Mediterranean region are: Portugal, France, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Yugoslavia (1990), Albania, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Lybia, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Malta and Cyprus.

important product in the Mediterranean diet, within the Mediterranean area only in Italy, Spain and Greece olive oil is the most used in the diet; that result is due to the concentration of consumption in the same producing territories (Grigg 2001, p.165).

Among the Mediterranean countries, Italy is often recognized as the best place in which is possible to have a good quality life. According to Gamboni et al. (2012) among the European and Global countries, Italy for its climate, ecosystem variety, for its culinary tradition and sustainable diet model, represents the ideal country lifestyle (Gamboni et. al., p. 268).

The Mediterranean diet importance, is due not only to its body benefits but also, for its respect for the nature and seasons cycle, thanking to its food variety. Over the centuries, the Mediterranean Diet has represented the perfect combination between the nutritional quality of its products and consecutive health benefits, that is given not only thanking to the product of the Diet but, also for the food cooking techniques. The Mediterranean Diet has also been recognized as a sustainable diet, according to its respect for the seasons cycle, lands and the low consumption of animal products (Padilla et. Al., 2012). The sustainability aspect, is one of the main points in the Mediterranean Diet, its value is linked to the economical and social point of view¹⁶.

The sustainable food system concept, taking care of natural environments and respecting the seasons, it is able to offer food security and high quality products to consumers. According to FAO indeed, sustainable diets are the one with low environmental

¹⁶ The sustainability is certified through the GI, Geographical Indications sign, which guarantees the origin and the quality of the product of a particular European region, supporting the local producers of goods from deep-seated traditions while protecting the cultures and the geographical aspects (European Commission 2013).

impact guaranteeing health care and a high level nutritional products, protecting nature and human resources and at the same time acceptable from the cultural and economical point of view (FAO 2010¹⁷). Thus, in 2010 by UNESCO, has been recognized to the Mediterranean Diet the ability to maintain the healthy aspects, good practices and protecting its cultural aspects against the globalization purposes¹⁸ (Gamboni et. Al, 2012, p.265).

Also Extra virgin Olive oil supports this action. According to Menley (2004) indeed, Extra Virgin Olive Oil is one of the products that stands for the local production and identity against the globalization and mass productions. Therefore, has become one of the products branded Slow food, that protects the artisanal production and its producing phases against the fast food era priorities(Menley, 2004, p.165).

The Mediterranean diet finds a valid healthiness competitor on the Japanese diet. According to Weil (2014)¹⁹ among the world diets the Japanese and the Mediterranean diets, offer a good balance for health care and longevity. The Japanese diet²⁰ 和食 (*Washoku*) and Mediterranean diet and lifestyle are similar, according to Ling et al.(2009), and in both lifestyle is emphasized the importance of physical activity. The main products of the Japanese and the Mediterranean are similar in the consumption of cereals, vegetables,

¹⁷ *Food-based approaches for improving Diets and Raising level of Nutrition*, International Symposium, in FAO, 2010 : <http://www.fao.org/ag/humannutrition/23973-0b9c048fb705b0f7cb8f02703c8b08d37.pdf> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

¹⁸ The main features of the Mediterranean Diet have been recognized on 2010 from UNESCO that has integrated the Mediterranean Diet on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (FAO 2012).

¹⁹ Andrew Weil, *The two healthiest Diets in the World* , in Dr. Weil.com, 2014:<http://www.drweil.com/drw/u/VDR00100/The-Two-Healthiest-Diets-in-the-World.html> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

²⁰ Inscribed in 2013 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. (*UNESCO to recognize Japanese food culture* ,in The Japan Times News,2014 : 2014www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/23/national/unesco-to-recognize-japanese-food-culture/#.U69Dcj5_vZ0 (Referred to: October 9. 2014)).

beans and nuts, and lean meat such as fish one. However, both diets differ in products use and kind of relish; in the Japanese diet for example, even if the olive oil is a non-traditional product, vegetable oils have been used in the diet since years(2009 p.407).

2.3 Olive oil production and consumption

Olive oil success in the world, has been emphasized by the spread of Mediterranean diet benefits information, which consequently has been stimulated by the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and diet.

This has led, year by year, to the olive oil market increase, representing one of the fastest growing sector of the World food industry (2014)²¹. The European producing countries are affirmed as the main olive oil producers in the World, with Spain and Italy as the leading countries in this production branch and in the export area.

Among the top importers in the world market, Italy appears at the first level (World TradeDaily,2012). This data confirms the presence of Italian olive oil mixed up with other countries olive oils and that could be the reason which leads up to counterfeiting product problems and consumer purchasing choice swindle (la Repubblica, 2014)²².

Among the world olive oil importers there are Non-traditional olive oil countries, including some European countries, which knowing olive oil values and health benefits, seek olive oil presence in their everyday diets. Among those NT countries there is Japan.

The olive oil market in Japan is expanding year by year, and also consumer

²¹ Olive Oil Market - Global Industry Analysis, Size, Share, Growth, Trends And Forecast, 2012 – 2018, in Trasparenza Market Research, 2014: <http://www.transparencymarketresearch.com/olive-oil-market.html> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

²² Paolo Berizzi, *Olio italiano ma solo sull'etichetta, ecco la truffa che indigna l'America*, in Repubblica.it, 2014: http://www.repubblica.it/salute/alimentazione/2014/01/31/news/olio_truffa-77344619/ (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

knowledge and interest for olive oil products is increasing. This business growth, is supported by Mass media sponsoring the Mediterranean diet and olive oil benefits, influencing consumers demand (ICE, 2013). From recent researches, it is showed that consumers are aware of different olive oil features, being able to recognize extra virgin olive oil and appreciate its characteristics (Voices from the Blog, 2014)²³ .

1) Olive oil production and consumption quantity in the World and in the Japanese Market.

The market internationalization has led to an increasing interest for producers and their business. Among the food market expansion, the olive oil market as well has grown. The Globalization rhythm and the stable consumption in olive oil producing markets, has attracted operators mind to look for new chances in the global market. During the years the international market expansion, has led to a change of food habits. Recently there has been registered a health care interest growth due to the increased world demand for healthy and quality products. This is perceivable also in the olive oil success in the world market due to the fame of Mediterranean diet healthiness. This result is noticeable also in olive oil Non-Traditional markets (Mili, 2006, p.27).

The global consumption and production of olive oil, has grown in the last years. The crop estimation for the 2011/2012 furnished by IOC (2014)²⁴, shows an olive oil production quantity around 3,098,000 tons, while olive oil consumption was supposed to reach a record

²³ *Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Japan: A Growing Thirst*, in Voices From the Blog, 2014:

<http://voicesfromtheblogs.com/2014/05/18/extra-virgin-olive-oil-and-japan-a-growing-thirst/> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

²⁴ *2013/2014 Crop year*, in IOC Market Newsletter n.80, 2014 :

<http://www.google.it/url?url=http://www.internationaloliveoil.org/documents/viewfile/8596-market-newsletter-february-2014&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&sa=U&ei=wHZPVKaMBeSV7Aamy4C4CA&ved=0CBQQFjAA&sig2=m4i0JqPoSOzX6NyKRQC1sg&usg=AFQjCNFUm-6GqggL6CWSRt51NE8MZwguTw>, (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

level of 3,078,500 tons. During the last year 2012/2013, production output totaled 2 425 000 tons and regarding the current year, the estimation shows that will be higher than the last years and probably will be around 3 050 000 tons, according to the latest data received from some IOC member countries (IOC, 2014, p.1). The IOC newsletter (February 2014) affirms that the World olive oil production expectations for the current year are much higher than the 2012/2013 production aroused at 2.425.000 tons. In the year 2013/2014, the production quantity has been estimated around 3.050.000 tons.

Respectively to international olive oil market, it is possible to notice that the Mediterranean and European areas are the most famous olive oil producers. Among the Mediterranean countries, Spain and Italy are the two main countries in producing and consuming olive oil. According to Anania et al. (2007), from the world point of view, Spain since '90s has been the principle producer while Italy is the main consumer of olive oil. As it is represented in the graph (Fig.2) that shows the higher percentages of the IOC²⁵ (International Olive Council) (2014) ranking analysing the crop period 2009-2012, is noticeable that the European producing countries have totaled up 2071.9 tons over the total 2848.7 tons produced in the world. Spain, is confirmed at the first place in the ranking, as the main olive oil producer country with a production average of 1256.2 tons from 2009 up to 2012 and while at the beginning of the 2013/2014 crop year the estimation was around 1.536.000 tons, will collect 1.595.400 tons against the expected ones. Italy follows Spain with 421.2 tons ascertained in the period 2009-2012, pursuant to the 2013/2014 estimation, Italy during the year should collect 450 000 tons. At the third place there is Greece with

²⁵ International Olive Council, Market newsletter N.80 February 2014,p.1.

318.400 tons in 2009-2012 years, and the expectation for the 2013/2014 in October 2013 was up to 230.000 tons due to a difficult drought, but the latest data show a lower quantity, 157.500 tons, signing a lower estimation average than Spanish and Italian ones.

CHAPTER 2. Figure 2. Global Olive oil Producing Countries. (10³ t)

Production	Average (2009/10-2011/12) (t)	Est. (2013/14) (t)
EU Countries, of which:	2.071,9	2.244,3
Spain	1.256,2	1.536,6
Italy	421,2	450,0
Greece	318,4	157,5
Portugal	65,2	85,0
Other IOC countries, of which:	803,6	647,0
Tunisia	168,0	80,0
Syria	181,5	135,0
Turkey	173,3	130,0
Morocco	122,5	120,0
Algeria	49,8	62,0
Argentina	21,5	30,0
Jordan	21,3	25,0
Non-IOC producers	73,1	93,0
TOTAL	2.947,7	2.984,3

Reference: International Olive Council, Market newsletter 2014,p.1.²⁶

²⁶ 2013/14 Cropyear , in IOC Market Newsletter February 2014 ,p. 1 (Referred to:

The Mediterranean countries, as it is noticeable from the graph (Fig.2), are the leaders in the world olive oil production. Among the Non-IOC producers are included all the others producing countries in the world, which account a low percentage in the worldwide production. In the IOC online chart²⁷, are also showed each world countries except the European ones, proving trough production percentage that has been recorded since the year 1990 up to 2013/2014 that are countries active in the olive oil production. On the chart it is perceivable also of non producing countries: Iraq, Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, Norway, Russia, Switzerland and Taiwan. Moreover, there are countries that during the years, have started the olive oil production like: Croatia on 1997/1998, Australia 1998/1999, Chile in 2006/2007, Albania and Saudi Arabia in the year 2007/2008.

The international olive oil market, is made by producing countries and non producing countries, and depending on it, towards the olive oil consumption there are different behavior, such as the price evaluation. According to Mili (2006) the price limit, depends on: country, Traditional Markets or Non-Traditional (NT) markets, and consequently on consumer product knowledge. The price limit is the price that, consumers of a certain country, are wanting to pay and that usually is not so high: consumers of producing countries for example, consider olive oil as a everyday life product, a high quality product, for which they do not want to pay a price without justification. The reference price concept, gives a more complex example than the price

October 9: 2014).

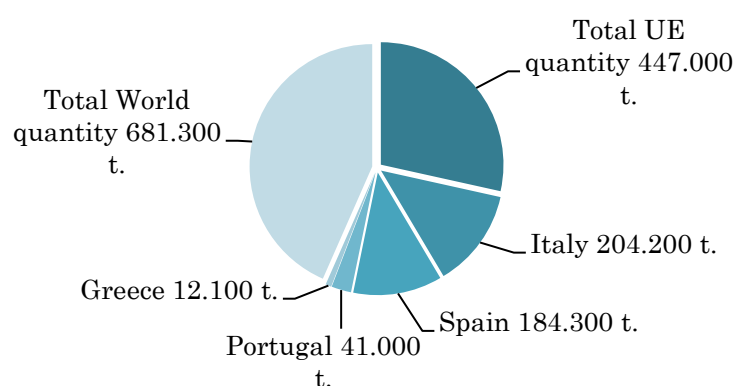
²⁷ *World Olive oil Figures*, in International Olive Council, 2014 :<http://www.internationaloliveoil.org/estaticos/view/131-world-olive-oil-figures> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

limit. While the price limit, consists in the relationship between the objective price of a product and consumer willingness to pay, the reference price consists in consumer willingness to pay influenced by the real price and the reference one. In that way, as the real price rises it is reached a limit point trough which negative reference price effect counterbalances the positive product value. This system, according to Mili (2006), could represent an important point in olive oil marketing strategy that, thanking to a promotion activity, would register the sale increase, due to a shift of references point in the traditional market, or a push up in the NT markets (Mili, 2006, p.29).

Within the olive oil market Spain and Italy are the main countries in the world production and export. Anania et al. (2007) research states that, Spain and Italy towards the world market, are able to stand out production percentages as well as the export ones. Through the IOC²⁸ ranking (Fig. 3) indeed, taking into consideration the period 2007/08-2011/2012, it is noticeable that among the Global olive oil exporting values 681.300 tons, the European countries are affirmed as the main exporters with 447.000 tons. Within the European area, Italy Spain, Portugal and Greece are the producing countries confirming as the top exporters. Italy and Spain are the leading countries registered with 204.200 tons Italy, while Spain 184.000 tons.

²⁸ *World Olive oil Figures*, in International Olive Council, 2014 :<http://www.internationaloliveoil.org/estaticos/view/131-world-olive-oil-figures> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

CHAPTER 2. Figure 3. World Export Values.

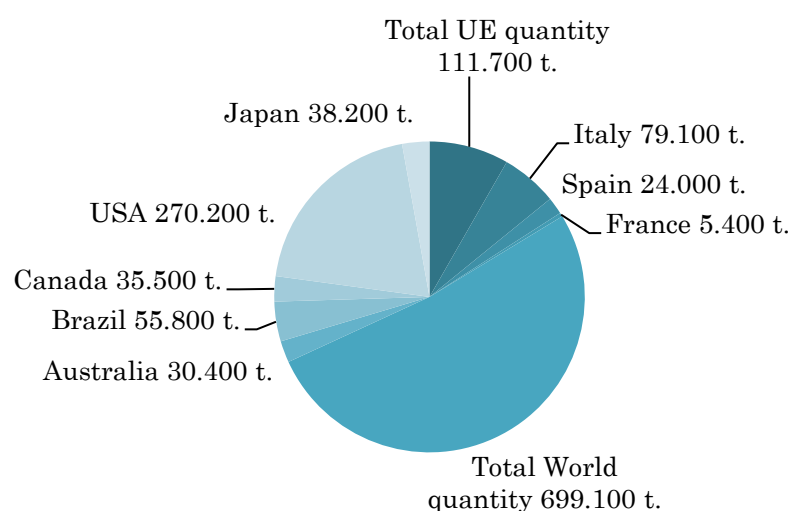


Reference: International Olive Council, 2014.

Considering the olive oil imports, it is unexpected to notice that the main olive oil producers and exporters, have been registered also among the importer countries. As it is showed by IOC world imported ranking²⁹ (Fig. 4) among the World import value 699.100 tons, the European countries import 111.700 tons, among which Italy appears at the first point as the top importer with 79.100 tons even tough is a producing country. Moreover, it is important to underline that also Spain has been reported by IOC research, as the second EU country among the European olive oil importers with 24.000 tons. This situation is due to a distribution of olive oil more extended than the production (World Trade Daily, 2012).

²⁹ *World Olive oil Figures*, in International Olive Council, 2014 :<http://www.internationaloliveoil.org/estaticos/view/131-world-olive-oil-figures> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

CHAPTER 2. Figure 4. World Import Values.



Reference: International Olive Council, 2014.

The import and export data confirm the olive oil consumption growth. Year by year olive oil quantity demand is increasing. According to IOC data³⁰ regarding olive oil worldwide consumption, taking into consideration the period from the year 2007/2008 up to 2012/2013, have been registered 2,945,9 tons from total world consumption, representing 100% of the world average. Among the total average in the same period, it is showed that Japan represents just 1,3% of the average with 38,2 tons

³⁰ *World Olive oil Figures*, in International Olive Council, 2014 :<http://www.internationaloliveoil.org/estaticos/view/131-world-olive-oil-figures> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

of olive oil consumption.

The satisfaction of this high olive oil demand appears as a positive result for the olive oil producers but, in the same way, could lead to a production quantity increase and to a quality guarantee loss. This problem is traceable for example in the Made in Italy in Olive oils counterfeiting scandal. This process is based on cheaper olive oil imports from other producing countries such as Greece, Spain or Africa, and a consequent combination with Italian olive oil, while on labels appears Italian production. This system, is linked to big olive oil enterprises in the middle-high section of the market, usually are multinational enterprises which have bought Italians brand. However, it is important to underline that within this market range, there are also Italian medium enterprises owning historical and ancient brands (Repubblica, 2014)³¹.

Despite that, there are institutional systems such as the Italian Economic Ministry, controlling and protecting Made in Italy products. In order to obtain the Made in Italy 100% certification based on the Italian law, production processes are controlled checking if the entire production cycle has been made in Italy. Made in Italy certification, is given by the Institute for the Italian products protection, Istituto per la Tutela dei Prodotti Italiani co – operating with the Italian Economic Ministry (Made in Italy, 2014)³². Moreover, this control is present even abroad, thanking to Italian authorities such as the Italian trade commission, working under the control of the Italian

³¹Paolo Berizzi, *Olio italiano ma solo sull'etichetta, ecco la truffa che indigna l'America*, in Repubblica.it, 2014: http://www.repubblica.it/salute/alimentazione/2014/01/31/news/olio_truffa-77344619/ (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

³² *Certificazione 100% Made in Italy*, in 100% Made in Italy, 2014: <http://www.madeinitalycert.it/> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

Foreign Ministry and Economical and Financial Ministry, and the Italian Chamber of Commerce in the World, which through some supervision processes, certify and protect Made in Italy products in foreigner market³³.

Moreover, in order to guarantee protection of olive oil production and provenience, the European Community has decided to use the two denominations DOP and IGP to differentiate olive oil production processes. The DOP sign represents products made through an entire producing cycle³⁴, from the raw material to the production end, in the same territory geographically delimited, leading to protect the exclusive production of that territory. The IGP sign, refers to a product obtained through a producing cycle in which just one part of this process is linked to the geographical area of reference (Consorzio Olivicolo Italiano, Unaprol, 2014)³⁵.

³³ Ital Trade, 2014: http://www.italtrade.com/about/about_us.htm (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

³⁴ The DOP farmer has to respect producing rules such as olive cultivation, harvest and packing and depend on the control of a certifying body under the control of Ministry of Agricultural and Forest policies (Unaprol, 2014).

³⁵ *DOP e IGP*, in Consorzio Olivicolo Italiano, 2014: <http://www.unaprol.it/index.php/normativa/oli-certificati/dop-e-igp.html> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

2) The olive oil market in Japan

In Japan culinary history there was no presence of olive oil, but the vegetal olive oil. Since the Nara Era indeed, there was a dish called “*aburai*” that means fried, that consisted of a rice dish fried in the sesame oil, but through the introduction of the Chinese cuisine tradition brought by Buddhist monks during the Muromachi Era, oils and fats have appeared in Japanese cookery(ICE Japan, 2013, p.5).

Even though through the IOC research Japan appears among the non-producing countries, exist Japanese olive oil producing companies³⁶. Nippon Olive oil Co., has been mentioned in the Japan Times article by Shinichi Tokuda³⁷, as one of the national companies producing olive oil from its property plantation in Spain. Moreover, Ushimado Olive Garden³⁸ is another Japanese company owning an olive oil plantation in Spain able to guarantee a growing demand satisfaction offering a good quality olive oil. Inoue Seikoen in Shōdo Island (Shikoku)³⁹ is another area of olive oil farmer enterprise since three-generation, that like the other Japanese olive oil companies, due to the small dimension of the plantation and the growing needs to buy olive oil products, has started a cooperation with a Spanish farmer family using a natural cultivation of olives without agricultural chemical use.

Moreover, in Japan there are big olive oil distribution companies, working with

³⁶ The olive oil with a Japanese label, it is an Italian or Spanish olive oil, and those data are pointed out in the bottle label, including the geographical provenience and the area map (ICE 2013, p.17).

³⁷ Shinichi Tokuda, *Olive oil seen enjoying second boom in Japan*, in Japan Times, 2014: http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/05/business/olive-oil-seen-enjoying-second-boom-in-japan/#.VAQwVj5_vZ1 (Referred to: October 9, 2014)

³⁸ “Supein Torutosa Oribu Kōen” スペイントルトサオリーブ公園, (The olive oil garden in Tortosa, Spain), in 牛窓オリーブ公園(Ushimado Olive Gardern), 2014 : <http://nippon-olive.info/about/tortosa/> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

³⁹ 井上誠公園(Inoue Seikoen) 2014 : http://www.inoueseikoen.co.jp/fs/seikoen/01141#cart_name (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

the main olive oil producing countries and, the success of a certain olive oil on the Japanese distribution channel, depends also on their mediation. The most famous are Nisshin and J Oil Millis, selling different type of olive oil (JAPAN TODAY, 2013)⁴⁰.

The olive oil market in Japan, is made by imported olive oil from the world producing countries, with Italy, Spain and Greece as import leaders. In Japan, the olive oil market it is considered a niche market in which Italian and Spanish olive oils, are the main producing countries (Mtimet et al. 2011, p.3). As it comes to notice by the ICE data (2013, p.21-22), in 2012 the higher percentage of olive oil an extra-virgin olive oil importation, were from Italy with 56,7% (quote) value, followed by Spain with 35,8% and Turkey with 3,7% which has seen an increase on Japanese market importation for its lower price (Mtimet et al., 2011, p. 2).

Concerning imports, the main producing countries are: Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey. As it is reported in the IOC newsletter⁴¹ (2013) (Fig. 5), at the end of the 2011/2012 crop year, in Japan olive oil imports were around 45.571 tons showing an increase of 23% confronting with the previous season total. Most of these imports came from European producing countries: Italy was the leading exporter representing 51% of the total, followed by Spain 43% and Greece 1%; the remaining 5% of Japan imports in 2011/2012 came from Non European countries, in particular Turkey.

⁴⁰ Japan Today, *Market continues to expand and will reach 30 billion yen by FY2013*, in Foodex Japan 2015, 2014: <http://www3.jma.or.jp/foodex/en/sc/category04.html> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

⁴¹ *Focus on Imported Tends (Olive oil and Pomace Olive Oil) in Japan and India*, in IOC MARKET NEWSLETTER, 2014: http://www.oliveoilmarket.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/NEWSLETTER-April-2013_ENGLISH.pdf (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

CHAPTER 2. Figure 5. Import Values in Japan.

Country	Average (2011/12) (t)
EU	
Italy	23.267,00
Spain	19.502,00
Greece	505,00
France	57,00
World	
Turkey	1.841,00
Argentina	111,00
Australia	63,00
Chile	61,00
Tunisia	32,00
USA	29,00
Israel	20,00
Others	33,00
TOTAL	45.571,00

Reference: *International Olive Council*, Market newsletter .71 April 2013,p.1.⁴²

⁴² *Focus on Imported Tends (Olive oil and Pomace Olive Oil) in Japan and India*, in IOC MARKET NEWSLETTER, 2014:
http://www.oliveoilmarket.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/NEWSLETTER-April-2013_ENGLISH.pdf
 (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

Japan has seen the spread of olive oil consumption in the 80s with the international boom of Made in Italy, for fashion and cuisine. According to Olive oil kyouryoku, from 1989 up to 1997, the import percentage has grown of 10%. ICE (2013), affirms that in Japan, the first olive oil boom was in 1997/1998, brought through the Italian cuisine success and for its healthy features⁴³. A second boom was around 2007, when the olive oil benefits were shown through TV cooking programs, mass media instilling knowledge, helped to increase olive oil consumption. The olive oil market increase in Japan was in particular due to the Italian cuisine boom, with the following opening of Italian restaurants and Italian food restaurants; the mass media were attracted by that trend and magazines as well TV programs were publishing recipes with olive oil use, sponsoring in that way olive oil brands (ICE, 2013, p. 15).

The olive oil consumption in Japan is growing year by year due to the mass media influence. In 2007, thanks to the increasing knowledge spread about olive oil benefits, through TV culinary programs, has led to an increasing consumption that in 2008, has been registered at 30 thousand tons (ICE 2013, p.15). Moreover, in the last years, according to Japan today (2013), the olive oil market is keep growing on, in particular in the domestic consumption. In 2013 sales increasing was in particular due to TV programs that have featured olive oil use, and thanks to those healthy TV programs influence and the price revision of edible olive oil, the peak of the olive oil demand for home use, reached 20% in the period between April 2013 to June 2013. These results are linked to each handling company's management achievement, distributor promotional

⁴³ In regard of the Italian cuisine healthiness spread, the slogan which has been used by the restaurant Ventimiglia in Tokyo, to underline the healthy importance in the Italian lifestyle: "Eat, Sing, Love, Health" (Di Russo M., 2000, p.52)

plans and TV programs (Japan Today, 2013)⁴⁴.

Olive oil success in the Japanese Market is due to its health benefits spread. The olive oil healthy image spread, is motivated also by the good medical results that Mediterranean countries, have towards heart diseases (Japan Olive seed process Association, 2010⁴⁵). From consumer point of view, the factors that incentives their interest and purchasing behavior toward a product indeed, are also fat levels and its nutritional values, which influence consumer product selection among the food market (Solheim et al. 1995).

Olive oil more and more came into the everyday life in Japan. According with ICE, in 2011/2012, olive oil domestic consumption have seen an increasing use around 3,7% a year. Through this data, it is possible to confirm that olive oil, has entered the everyday Japanese cuisine habits and has become a regular item in family kitchen⁴⁶.

Olive oil indeed, became more and more familiar to consumer taste, and Japanese culinary habits. Olive oil use in Japan is common not only in restaurants but also at home. Regarding the domestic use indeed, olive oil usage reasons are three: olive oil use growth motivated by an increasing attention towards health care, a higher quantity consumption, and more occasion to taste it due to the Italian pasta success and consumption in everyday life. Concerning the restaurant use, the increasing request of foreign meals,

⁴⁴ Japan Today, *Market continues to expand and will reach 30 billion yen by FY2013*, in Foodex Japan 2015, 2014: <http://www3.jma.or.jp/foodex/en/sc/category04.html> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

⁴⁵ 「オリーブオイルはキッチンの新定番」 “Oribu oiru ha kicchin no shin teiban” (Olive oil as a new standard in the kitchens)、in 社団法人日本植物油協会(Japan oil seed processor Association), 2010 HP: <http://www.oil.or.jp/info/8/tokushu.html> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

⁴⁶ Shinichi Tokuda, *Olive oil seen enjoying second boom in Japan*, in Japan Times, 2014: http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/05/business/olive-oil-seen-enjoying-second-boom-in-japan/#.VAQwVj5_vZ1 (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

such as the Italian ones, led to an increasing use of the olive oil: to cook it is used olive oil mixed up with vegetal oils, while the extra-virgin one it is used to complete the meal and its flavor (ICE, 2013 p.16).

Olive oil cooking use is spread among people in Japan. Thanking for its taste, is used to give flavor to dishes such as fish and meat (ICE, 2013, p.15), but as it is affirmed by Voices From the Blog (2014), there is a spread cooking usage variety. Mostly olive oil is used as dressing by 24,6% of consumers, 21% tend to use it for cooking pasta, 17,2% in soups and 14% uses it as seasoning. Moreover, lower percentages regard the extra virgin use, are represented by sauce preparation use 8,7%, on pizza 7,8%, while 3,2% uses it in a fry cooking; the 2,6% of consumers use it without particular food preferences and just 0,9% uses it to make cakes replacing butter use. This use tendency of the extra virgin olive oil is confirmed by the Japan Olive oil seed Association⁴⁷ 社団法人日本植物油協会 (*Shadanhōjin Nihon Shokubutsuyu Kyōkai*) (2010), showing that consumers Japan know that, since extra virgin flavor and taste is more rich is better to use it to prepare mayonnaise, for a marine or as a flavoring sauce on pan or cheese. While consumers tend to use pure olive oil to cook or fry.

Olive oil use is sponsored through recipes on TV programs, but also on the web by cooking blog or olive oil producer website, and also by fashion magazines or cooking ones. Olive oil is often used to represent Italian, Spanish and French recipes, but surprisingly, Inoue Seikoen website⁴⁸ proposes dishes from the Japanese culinary

⁴⁷ 「オリーブオイルはキッチンの新定番」“Oribu oiru ha kicchin no shin teiban” (Olive oil as a new standard in the kitchens)、in 社団法人日本植物油協会(Japan oil seed processor Association) , 2010 HP : <http://www.oil.or.jp/info/8/tokushu.html> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

⁴⁸井上誠公園(Inoue Seikoen) 2014 : http://www.inoueseikoen.co.jp/fs/seikoen/01141#cart_name

tradition with olive oil use. Seems that the Japanese culinary tradition 和食(*Washoku*), show an affinity with olive oil characteristics: when a season food of the *Washoku*, meets olive oil, it gives rise to good matches, which lead to the creation of tasteful recipes(Inoue Seikoen website, 2014). From a specialized point of view, the sommelier Kumiko Arai through an interview for the Japan Times⁴⁹ (2014) affirms as well that olive oil tastes good when added in Japanese dishes as miso soup, or at the top of tofu, confirming that olive oil for its features and taste has introduced perfectly in the Japanese everyday diet.

Even though in recent years, on the olive oil market in Japan exist different olive oil types, the substantial knowledge about the different features seems that it is not so clear. According to Mtimet et al. (2008) research, consumers in Japan knowledge concerns the three olive oil type difference, extra-virgin, virgin and olive oil (refined olive oil)but, the analysis has showed a lack of knowledge regarding the feature differences among the different olive oil type, showing a tendency for the “secure option” represented by olive oil labeled products (Mtimet et al. 2008, p.7). While players on the market are more diversified, consumer knowledge it is still limited (Mtimet et al. 2011). This idea is confirmed through the Japan Today article on Foodex Japan website: “Although the market is growing, the consumer's degree of recognition and purchasing experience rate for olive oil are not so high.”(Japan Today, 2013)⁵⁰.

(Referred to: October 9, 2014).

⁴⁹

Shinichi Tokuda, *Olive oil seen enjoying second boom in Japan*, in Japan Times, 2014: http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/05/business/olive-oil-seen-enjoying-second-boom-in-japan/#.VAQwVj5_vZ1 (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

⁵⁰ Japan Today, *Market continues to expand and will reach 30 billion yen by FY2013*, in Foodex Japan 2015, 2014: <http://www3.jma.or.jp/foodex/en/sc/category04.html> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

Regarding olive oil products provenience, consumer unclear knowledge could be due to the lack of product information spread and also to consumer lack of attention when purchasing. Mtimet et al. survey (2008), shows that consumers were able to identify Italy and also Spain among the olive oil producing countries but, regarding Tunisia just the 7% of the people were knowing it was a country producing olive oil (Mtimet et al. 2008, p.6). Moreover, the outcomes of that research has showed that almost the 30% of consumers in Japan declare their carelessness⁵¹ to the product origins when purchasing (Mtimet et al. 2008, p.7). This situation it is cause by the presence in the Japanese market of products with “Made in Italy” label containing Italian olive oils mixed up with some from other countries but that have been bottled in Italy⁵² (ICE, 2013).

In order to contrast this lack of recognition towards the product origin and olive oil characteristics, it is important to increase the knowledge diffusion also through the label settings. Since Country of origin and olive oil information have influence in consumer demand and behavior (Mtimet et. al, 2011, p.2), in order to guarantee a clear identification of a product and avoid consumer incomprehension when purchasing olive oil, the Ministry suggests to the importers the product country of origin as well as the raw material provenience (ICE 2013, p.28). This purpose is supported also by the JAS

⁵¹ It is important to underline that consumers carelessness when purchasing olive oil, could be due also to the purchasing conditions: buying at the supermarket consumers are not able to experience the sensory properties of the olive oil, and that brings them to focus on extrinsic factors such as packaging materials, bottle material and label design (Delgado and Guinard, 2011) .

⁵² “Regarding the olive oil production, in Japan there are still not clear the guidelines that should define in what consist the production processes” (ICE, *Il mercato dell’Olio d’Oliva in Giappone*, Japan, 2013, p.28).

(Japan Industrial Standards) law, for a safe knowledge spread, imposing the use of label with news regarding the product such as: product name, ingredients, food additives, net content, the expiring date, way to conserve, the country of origin, importer name and address.

Despite the previous researches have stressed a negative results regarding consumers olive oil recognition, during the years with information spread the olive oil and extra-virgin olive oil demand has increased, leading to import growth. This olive oil information increase, is linked to an increasing interest in olive oil variety. Previously the attitude was towards olive oil labeled products, but with the 1998 the preferences has started to turn upside down towards extra-virgin olive oil. From the crop year 2005/2006 the extra virgin has started to lead the import data among the other olive oil types, and in 2012 67% of the imported volume was extra virgin (IOC 2013, p.1)⁵³. In 2012 the gap between the preferences of extra-virgin olive oil and olive oil became bigger, and the higher percentage of imported oil was for extra-virgin one (71%).

The main extra-virgin furnishing country is Italy, that shows a long-term import value at 56,7% while Spain is the second one(ICE, 2013, p.21). According to Voices from the Blog⁵⁴ (2014) research, the most mentioned extra virgin olive oil in Japan is the Italian one, mentioned by 69% of consumers; following the Italian extra virgin, there is the Spanish one with 19,1%, the Greek extra virgin with 6,8% and 5% is for the

⁵³ International Olive Oil Council, Olive Oil Market Newsletter, 2014:
http://www.oliveoilmarket.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/NEWSLETTER-April-2013_ENGLISH.pdf
(Referred to: October 9, 2014).

⁵⁴ *Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Japan: A Growing Thirst*, in Voices From the Blog, 2014:
<http://voicesfromtheblogs.com/2014/05/18/extra-virgin-olive-oil-and-japan-a-growing-thirst/> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

Portuguese production. The higher percentage, regarding positive comments towards extra virgin olive oil country origin are: Spain 80,7% and Italy 80,2%, followed by Greece 78,9% and Portugal 78,3% (Voices from the blog, 2014).

The extra virgin demand growth, shows a knowledge spread in Japan concerning olive oil and extra virgin oil healthy features, benefits and purpose variety. According to Voices from the blog website data (2014), in Japan the 58,7% of consumers use extra virgin olive oil to cook, 16,8% to cosmetics base or make up remover; 11% of consumers affirms to use it for its healthy features (anti-aging, anticholesterol) and 7,4% uses it for the body care (skin care, hydration). Its healthy features due to oleic acid, which reduces the cholesterol levels LDL without touching the HDL cholesterol, are known by consumers in Japan (ICE 2013,p.16). The lower percentages for extra virgin olive oil use are divided in: 2,3% lubrication use, 1,8% for cleaning and 1,2% as a medical remedy, for example as anti-psoriasis, anti-pediculosis. (Voices from the blog website, 2014).

Olive oil success depends on its benefits, and its health care ability. This olive oil appreciation and success, is due to the nutritional and health features spread knowledge, that came out trough the Mediterranean diet features spread (Mtimet et al., 2011 p. 2). The Mediterranean diet purposes, meet consumer attention towards health care, in particular those who lives in the metropolitan areas where life rhythm is faster and often they have to choose to dine out⁵⁵ (ICE, 2013, p.16).

Olive oil attributes preferences among consumers in Japan, depend on different olive oil feature perception. Perception influences their product evaluation and

⁵⁵ This increasing healthy trend, has brought to the invention of quality brand, “special healthy product”, by the Board of Health in Japan. This brand has been used by some vegetal olive oil producers(ICE 2013, p.16)

purchasing behavior. Mtimet et al. study (2008), represents in order of importance, consumers olive oil characteristics preferences: olive oil Colour, Origin, Price, Olive oil type and Taste. Moreover, consumers have showed a preference for a bland taste olive oil and a green colored one (Mtimet et. Al. 2008). However, through Voices From The Blog data (2014), it is showed that nowadays, consumers in Japan know and appreciate also the main extra virgin olive oil characteristics: 71,4% of consumers show appreciation for its acidity, 70,4% likes the spicy taste and the 66,7% of consumers like its density. As it is showed in the Voices From The Blog ranking⁵⁶, 64,1% of consumers in Japan recognize in a positive way, the bitter taste typical of extra virgin olive oil.

Olive oil taste and features choice criteria, depends also on information regarding flavor and taste. If consumers could be informed towards those features, they would be able to recognize the differences and qualities of olive oil, such as the fruit flavor, that are possible to feel when consuming olive oil (Mtimet et al., 2011).

This knowledge growth, is due to the increased interest of consumers in recognizing olive oil type and characteristics. Olive oil feature knowledge, is promoted with olive oil events (JOP⁵⁷, FOODEX Japan), and also by sommelier courses around the country, such as the lessons of the Tokyo-base association. Olive oil sommelier courses are not only oriented to people in the food industry, but also to ordinary consumers (Japan Times, 2013)⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ *Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Japan: A Growing Thirst*, in Voices From the Blog, 2014: <http://voicesfromtheblogs.com/2014/05/18/extra-virgin-olive-oil-and-japan-a-growing-thirst/> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

⁵⁷ Japan Olive Oil Prize, 2014: <http://joooprize.com/> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

⁵⁸ Shinichi Tokuda, *Olive oil seen enjoying second boom in Japan*, in Japan Times, 2014: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/05/business/olive-oil-seen-enjoying-second-boom-in-japan/#>.

As affirmed before, Japan is an olive oil NT market, and this reality influences consumers perception and feelings towards products. One symbol, that represents a difference on consumer behavior of an NT market, is price evaluation and attribution. Mtimet et. al study (2008), underlines a different price perception for “heavy” consumers, which consume almost every day olive oil, and for the “light” one, which consume rarely or are potential olive oil consumers. The “heavy” ones, which knows more about olive oil origins and features, are more sensitive to price variation in particular when it increases, such as olive oil traditional market consumers. This tendency is noticeable on olive oil type preference when purchasing. Consumers informed about olive oil features indeed, want to pay more to shift from the virgin olive oil choice to extra-virgin one (Mtimet et al., 2008).

This purchasing shift it is expected in the current years. With the current second boom of olive oil import and consumption, there is the expectation of a switch from discerning consumers, moving to a higher level of the market, and a growth of the total consumption quantity. This change is linked to the pasta consumption trend diffusion, in particular among the consumers of young generations (ICE, 2013 p. 16).

Furthermore, since Japan is a Non-producing country and NT market, its market is olive oil is an imported product and this justify some market characteristics such as high prices, or prefixed settings for bottle contents, size and type that. Regarding bottle settings, for the Japanese market the glass bottles are distributed in 250 or 500 ml, and 1Lt in glass or PET. Concerning price issue, depending on selling places, price changes (ICE 2013, p.17). In the supermarket distribution channel, the price average of the most

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popular Made in Italy EVOO (Extra virgin olive oils) in Japan⁵⁹, for 250 ml range correspond to 1.190-1.250 Yen, while for 500 ml size are around 459-720 Yen (ICE 2013, p. 19). Otherwise, in olive oil specialty shops, prices and also the quality are higher, offering a wide range of choice such as for the provenience. In specialty shop such as Olioteca in Tokyo, the prices for a 250ml bottle range, are around 1.600-1.800 Yen; regarding olive oil varieties, referring to Italian olive oils, are about 30 types (Japan Times, 2013)⁶⁰.

As has been stated before, regarding the COO different effect depending on consumer age and gender, the same tendency is noticeable on olive oil evaluation. Referring to Mtimet et al. (2011) research, olive oil interest is equal for both genders but, focusing on olive oil consumption, 79% correspond to the female average, while 59% of consumers are men. Moreover, data show that people with age range 25-40 years, consume a higher olive oil quantity (Mtimet et al., 2011, p.7). Taking as examples customers of specialty shops, the ones which pay more attention towards olive oil provenience and characteristics, are people around 40-60 years old. In particular, the more careful in purchasing specialty olive oils are women (Japan Times, 2013)⁶¹.

⁵⁹ Bosco, Filippo Berio, Bertolli, San Michele, Bartolini e Masserie di Santeramo (ICE 2013, p.19).

⁶⁰ Shinichi Tokuda, *Olive oil seen enjoying second boom in Japan*, in Japan Times, 2014: http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/05/business/olive-oil-seen-enjoying-second-boom-in-japan/#.VAQwVj5_vZ1 (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

⁶¹ Shinichi Tokuda, *Olive oil seen enjoying second boom in Japan*, in Japan Times, 2014: http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/05/business/olive-oil-seen-enjoying-second-boom-in-japan/#.VAQwVj5_vZ1 (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

3) Consumers in Japan image: purchasing behavior trend

Every market has different characteristics, depending on the economical system, enterprises and consumers. This has to be taken into consideration in order to plan a sharp marketing strategy. For the purpose of understanding the market, it is necessary to focus on the consumer point of view in order to understand their activity within it. Starting from consumer needs and demands, which influence enterprises' profits and stock prices, up to the general economic system (Perry, 2014⁶²).

To individuate consumers' attitudes, it is necessary to take into consideration the society background. According to Prescott (1998), understanding cultural values is indispensable to forecast consumer reaction. Both innate and environmental values are able to influence consumers' perceptions and preferences (Prescott et al. 1995).

Focusing on the market in the Japan case, generally the information towards its system and consumers is based on stereotypes. According to Sugimoto (2010), when outsiders look at Japan and Japanese people, the image they get is linked to the general images they perceive regarding some lifestyle cases or personal environment taken into analysis through newspapers, television or magazines. Moreover, usually the cluster of people taken into consideration are mostly those who have a good position in companies and are able to use mass media and publicity systems, more than the others from the wider population status, acquiring more visibility for the analysis rather than the common people. In that way they would appear as the symbol of the national population attitude, at the expense of the other people, misrepresenting the collective

⁶² Brian Perry, 4 Key Indicators That Move The Markets, in Investopedia 2014: <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/fundamental-analysis/10/indicators-that-move-the-market.asp> (Referred to: October 9, 2014).

national situation (Sugimoto, 2010, pp. 1-2).

As confirmation of the lack of knowledge regarding consumers behavior in Japan, Prescott (1998) states that in his research period, the big part of the existent data regarding consumers in Japan preferences, were based on beliefs or anecdotes and neither on data toward a specific kind of products. Those outcomes were mostly referred to some experiences with negative results that have happened on the Market in Japan; these results linked to an almost inexistent consumers sensation analysis, were due to unreliable conclusions on consumers perceptions made by distributions agents or buyers qualified in the export area, which have reinforced the negative results concerning the impossibility of understanding consumers attitudes (Prescott, 1998).

The Japan study case and the understanding of its cultural and sociological attitude, have always been linked to the reference of the *Nihonjinron*⁶³ theory, theories about Japanese society and its uniqueness⁶⁴, which has always represented an insidious perspective. Different studies have been conducted regarding the *Nihonjinron* towards the different kind of branch, in order to define population distinctive characteristics within society habits. It is important to underline that, studies about the Japanese natives, have roots in the long seclusion 鎖国 (*Sakoku*) of the Tokugawa period (Tsukishima Kenzo, 1984), and have been carried out mostly by

⁶³ It is made by three main points: the psychological level refers to their inclination of non feeling the need of impose their individuality but otherwise to give more importance to the group, society, realization objective. The interpersonal level, refers to the personal interactions following the vertical loyalties in order to maintain a balance between the hierarchical system in a group. The third level regards the inter-group level, asserts that integration and harmony balance is a representative character of the Japanese society. (Yoshio Sugimoto, 2010 p. 3)

⁶⁴ Japanese society and culture leanings are so different that are complicated to be understood completely by non-Japanese (Dale, 1988).

Japanese researchers and also by foreigner researchers, which have focused the object of the study on the genre, protecting those arguments from general affirmations. On the other hand, others non-Japanese researchers have used those genres studies generically, without analysing the cultural circumstances of the Japanese society tendency (Wikipedia Japan, 2014).

It is necessary underline that, *Nihonjinron* study limitation is based on the presumption that all the Japanese natives share the same tendency, without considering gender differences, background or occupation (Befu, 2001). In some of those analysis it has been taken into consideration the possibility that those identified tendencies could vary from a personal point of value (Sugimoto, 2010).

Despite that, the *Nihonjinron* study is still the most used reference when analysing people in Japan behavior. As Sugimoto affirms “The so-called group model of Japanese society represents the most explicit and coherent formulation of this line argument, though it has drawn serious criticism from empirical, methodological and ideological angles” (Sugimoto, 2010 p.2). Even though some researchers have tried to analyse the *Nihonjinron* validity criticizing its general statements, the study has kept its popular appeal (Sugimoto 2010).

Nihonjinron theory became popular after the II World War when, with the USA and others European countries presence in Japan, has started a direct comparison with the Japanese culture and mentality (Wikipedia Japan, 2014). As Miura affirms (2002), through those comparisons has not been just noticed the Japanese society difference, but in recent years, have started the diffusion of rumors about consumers in Japan

strong attention towards quality, defining them as “tough” consumers.

After different conjecture and studies about Japanese people, Miura (2002) purpose was to research about the perceived image of consumers in Japan, in order to offer a general explanation concerning consumer behavior recurring characteristics, and trying to analyse the “tough” behavior reputation. Miura’s aim was to illustrate, from a marketing point of view, consumers in Japan main features through which could be possible somehow recognize and identify, among the worldwide customers, consumer behavior tendency when purchasing.

In order to accomplish his study, Miura (2002) has summed up the main concepts that came out from the raised questions regarding Japanese people characteristics, after focusing on the *Nihonjinron* theory analysis. Referring to the *Nihonjinron* levels, Miura has proposed three points, trying to reason on the existing consideration of the Japanese people features: the first point consists in the value of pure beauty, the second refers to the concept of the mother society, and the third is linked to the community value. These three points represent consumer behavior point of view: the first one refers to the behavior depending on how consideration of new products can influence consumer behavior; the second one, refers to the idea of Japanese society kindness and benevolence characteristic, 甘え (*amae*), which is possible to identify on consumer desire of depend on someone benevolence, matching the marketing purpose focused on customer fulfillment propensity. This makes to think at aiming to an over marketing development by the Japanese enterprises. The third point concerning the community value importance within the Japanese society,

and refers to consumer tendency which incentivizes brands and fashion trends (Miura, 2002, pp. 5-6).

Consumers in Japan product care, that has been linked by Miura (2002) to the points representing the theory of Japanese uniqueness, could instill the idea of those characteristics as deeply rooted in the Japanese culture and society, representing somehow consumers in Japan general attitudes. This led to perceive consumers in Japan needs, as high expectation ones, influencing their demand. This tendency towards products are confirmed by Miura affirming from his research that consumers in Japan have a strict behavior regarding quality concept, and enterprises consider them as tough consumers (Miura, 2001, p. 15).

Moreover, another feature of the Japanese society, influencing consumer attitude, could be identified in the economic area, from the market point of view: for customs and exports there are strict rules, due to the missing adherence to some of the international standards, in particular for the healthcare qualification for imported products such as food and beverage ones (Fantoni et al., 2014). This tendency may have influenced consumers in Japan behavior and their expectations of product quality, and their idea of enterprises care and efficiency towards customer satisfaction.

The general attitude in consumer evaluation when purchasing, is based on the product quality with defect absence, the fashion trend care interdependent to brand image importance. This attitude, seems to be higher in consumer in Japan needs. According to the outcomes obtained through a survey made by Miura (2002) to the employees of a foreigner company having a branch in Japan, from the comparison of

domestic consumers to the behavior of consumers in Japan, the leading outcomes show that for 60%, consumers in Japan care more about product integrity paying attention even to the smallest defect, they give more importance to product quality (42%) and 40% agrees that Japanese consumers pay more attention to the brand image, while almost for 40%, Japanese consumers purchasing behavior is influenced by fashion trends (Miura, 2002 p. 12).

Miura (2001) regarding consumers in Japan behavior trends, has summed up the main characteristics in seven points differencing the attitudes in the tough behavior and easy one. The first four points that have been proposed by Miura, represent the “tough” behavior idea: the first one regards the hostility towards product lack, as second point good originality importance; the third point consists in consumer preference towards new products and new functions, while the fourth point, preference for extreme services, assortment and functions diversity. On the other hand, what depict the “easy” behavior values for Miura are: the care for high quality product brands, the tendency toward trends products and the importance of manual influence on products (Miura, 2001, pp.16-17).

In opposition to Miura’s consumers easy points, from the foreigner company evaluation the high quality value, the brand image importance and the trend attitude have been considered by different foreigner enterprises as the characteristics representing consumers “tough” behavior rather than the “easy” one (2002, p.12).

The sensation value is a relevant aspect influencing personally consumers interest towards a product when purchasing, and for its complex and variable character,

represents a tough point in product evaluation. From the outcomes Miura (2002) has realized a result that was not proposed in his hypothesis: it regards consumers sensation, the five senses perceptions that from consumers point of view is represented as “color, design, taste, smell, and sound care”, which has a higher correlation with the toughness aspects of the Japanese consumers.

Another aspect considered tough in consumers attitude for the foreigner enterprise, it is represented by the tendency to the comparison between quality and functionality and also by the attention to the extra functions (Miura 2002, p.13).

The price consideration is not representing a “tough” behavior. According to Miura’s research indeed, caring about price is not marking a “tough” characteristic. Japanese consumers considering price as the other consumers seem to be less tough than the ones who does not have price consideration are considered tough (Miura, 2002, p.13).

Japanese consumers behavior stands out of the other Asian consumers. According to Miura study (2002) the Japanese consumers compared to domestic consumers of other Asian enterprises, have been identified through some proper characteristics when purchasing: while taking care of the effective (successful) bargain, compare functions and quality; have demonstrated more brand loyalty and rapid change of needs (p.14).

Finally, consumers in Japan behavior, also due to the Japanese sociological or cultural system general ideas, may appear as hard consumers in product evaluation and satisfaction confronted with other customers. It is important to underline that this

conclusion is based on percentages gathered through an interview about the perceived image of consumers in Japan by foreigner enterprises, having a branch in Japan, in order to define the general purchase tendency, without taking into consideration characteristics such as age, gender, and personal background. Despite that, Miura (2002) referring to his study in 1985, affirms that comparing consumers in Japan demand with other consumers demand, it is possible to see that the Japanese ones have more expectation towards the product and enterprise.

2.4. Consumer Product Evaluation

Product evaluation can be objective and subjective. The objective value depends on a product real characteristics, while the subjective depends on the individual sensation and satisfaction toward it. The subjective value comes from consumer evaluation of a product and is influenced by personal feelings or emotions from which depends the consequent satisfaction feeling when purchasing a product. Thus, the subjective value depends on the symbolic image that a product represent for a person.

The symbolic value is linked to the individual perception of objective features which determinates the final product evaluation. Consumer evaluation can be linked to personal experience or memories that a product may revoke. In this way, consumers would attach a particular importance to that product and from their point of view the product value would become higher.

1) 延岡健太郎(*Nobeoka Kentarō*): Functional and Symbolic values Theory

Product evaluations depends also on consumer values codification. 延岡 (*Nobeoka*) (2008) offers two evaluations type: the functional and the symbolic values. The functional value regards the product fundamental function coming from a product function specification that consists on the consumer objective choice. The symbolic value refers to the fixed customer behavior towards product features, and to his/her personal idea or interpretation of a product. Regarding the functional value, customer recognition creates the value; customer recognizes as a value the grade of objective classification which refers to product functions that have already been decided. The symbolic value depends on each customer subjective judgment toward a product which

influence his/her evaluation. Indeed Customer decision to purchase a product depends on the personal perception of product characteristics such as image, quality and design.

Enterprise purpose consists on offering the best product from the functional (objective) point of view and from the consumers (subjective) one. In order to accomplish this purpose indeed, it is important from the enterprises plans of a certain product to aim at offering an innovative functional product without forgetting customer needs, desires and tastes.

Enterprise success depends on functional and symbolic values. The enterprise superiority on the market over competitors depends on the functional effectiveness of the product as well as on the customers satisfaction since they are the buyers, product success is consequently related to them. Therefore, in order to take over the competition it is necessary to show off functional superiority of a product on which would depend consumer subjective evaluation. Thus, the creation of a symbolic value becomes the reason of the several success examples that are going to appear.

The symbolic value and the functional one coexist in the same product. Even if a product would have the functional and specific value base, the symbolic value is created through particular customer need: the customer express subjective meaning regarding a product and it leads to the creation of the symbolic value. Therefore, regarding the product value, the cooperation between the “product” and the “customer” concepts, leads to the creation of the value. While the functional value exists when a good have features and special characteristics, customer subjective evaluation of product significance constitutes the symbolic value. Therefore, with the cohesion of functional

and symbolic values would be created the good value (Nobeoka, 2008, pp. 7-8).

The symbolic value depends on customer feelings and taste toward a product. The symbolic value process, according to Nobeoka, could be divided in two levels: customer taste, feelings and customer context. For example, if a customer referring to a design product, would like to buy this product that emotionally satisfies the personal taste even though its high price, for this customer the product value becomes higher and it creates the symbolic value concept (Nobeoka, 2008, p.9). Customer oriented plans according to Nobeoka increase the symbolic value as well as the functional value of products (Nobeoka, 2008, p. 9).

Since both characteristics are important for a product success, functional value and symbolic value are interdependent. Regarding the creation of symbolic value, starting from an individual significance value, it is possible to look for a development of functional value suitable for customer personal taste. If the functional presence on a product is high that would obtain a higher attention and evaluation from consumers. Moreover, reaching a synergy between functional and symbolic value satisfaction the product value becomes higher (Nobeoka, 2008, pp. 11-12).

2) Consumer Self - Identity Formation: Russell Belk “Extended self”

To better understand consumer behavior, it is important to take into consideration consumer relationship with possession and in which way it influences their attitude. The human behavior and psychology, tend to perceive the objects that we possess as determination of what we are. In order to understand consumer behavior, is necessary take into consideration the strong relationship between possession and self (Belk, 1988).

The Extended self is based on the relationship of what we have and what we are. Belk by referring James (1890) explains the connection between the mutually reliant “me” and “mine” concepts, which are the main points that we include in the idea of ourselves (Belk 1988, p.140).

The human sense of possession it does not concern just objects ownership but also places or experience. According to Belk indeed, the extended self is not limited just to the objects and personal possessions but also to persons, places and within the ownership of the personal body also the possession of body parts and organs (Belk, 1988 p. 152). Moreover Belk states that among the extended self categories, experiences and places are most clear part of the extended self (1988 p.141).

The tendency to make things a part of self, producing or modifying them, seems to be a peculiarity of the universal human behavior and in the modern society the consumption shows that material objects are seen as a way to define our identities (Belk, 1988, p.144). Furthermore, according to Sartre (1943), the needing to possess something consist in our desire to enlarge our self, and through what we have we know what and who we are. “People seek, express, confirm, and ascertain a sense of being through what they have.”(Belk, 1988, p.146).

Consumers indeed, look at products as if they are a part of their life. According to Fournier (1998), consumers tends perhaps to consider a product as a vital member with whom they are in a relationship with, and that consist in one of the advertisement purposes to better create a strong link between the consumer and the product. Fournier (1988) proposes the Animism theories, to explain consumer connection to the products of

a certain brand products.

The first animistic form involves instances in which the brand is somehow possessed by the spirit of a past or present others.[...] Another form of animism involves complete anthropomorphization of the brand object itself, with the transference of the human qualities of emotion, thought, and volition[...].⁶⁵

Moreover Fournier states that a brand product to behave as a partner has to surpass its personification qualification and behave as an active part of the relationship. This happens through everyday marketing plans acting as the behavior of a brand in the relationship with the consumer.

Within the ownership feelings, there is also an experience relationship with a certain object and it consists for the humans in building a piece of life background.

Possessions are a way to store memories and feelings influencing our sense of past. A souvenir may make tangible some otherwise intangible travel experience. An heirloom may record and recall family heritage just as a historic monument may help to create a sense of a nation's past.⁶⁶

The strong relationship with an object as product and the possession we feel towards it, it is due to its symbolic representation of life memories we have been collecting, and in a way ourselves. Belk indeed, affirms that: "Material possessions forming parts of our extended selves, seem to form an anchor for our identities that

⁶⁵ Susan, Fournier "Consumer's and their brands: Developing Relationship Theories in Consumers Research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24, 1998 p. 345.

⁶⁶ Russel, Belk W., "Possession and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 1988, pp. 139-168.

reduces our fear that these identities will somehow washed away.”(Belk, 1988, p.159) Moreover, According to Belk, the possession in the extended self builds a storage that gives the opportunity to think about our origins and life experiences and in which way they are changed through the time. As families are able to create core memories for their components, assuring them a sense of “permanence and place” in the world, in the same way communities or nations do that trough monuments, music or books, providing a base to let people identify with a community(1988 pp.159-160).

Even if possession has always a negative meaning linked with the materialism concept, relative to the extended self could have a positive halo. Belk asserts that while materialism regarding possession express negative ideas, the extended self concept underlines possession positivity for person identities (Belk 1988, p. 160). For this reason, Belk (1988) continues affirming that the possession in the extended self are not a sign of a weak personality, on the contrary it has an important role for healthy personalities.

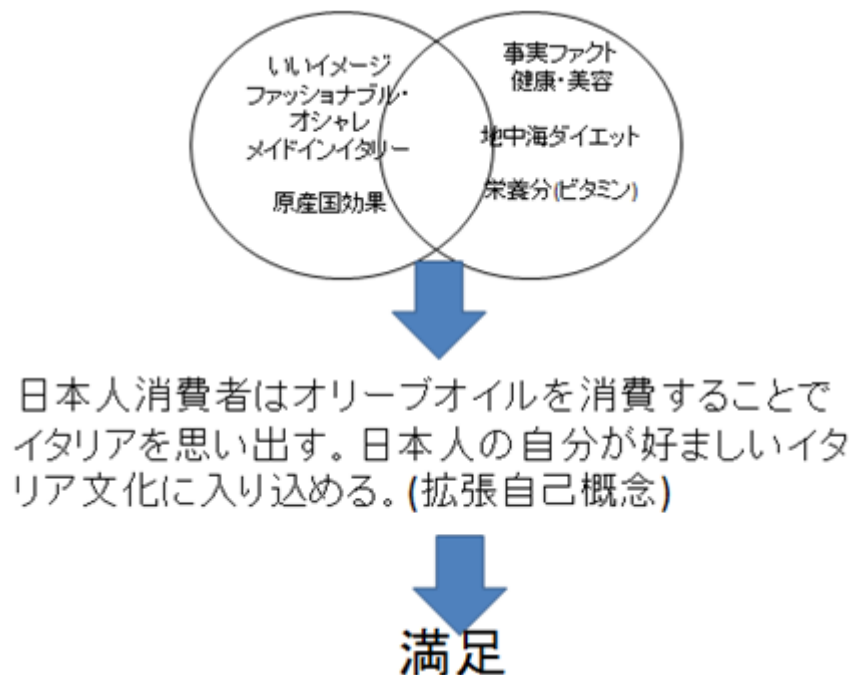
2.5.Hypothesis

Following the “Extended self” theory based on psychological and anthropological point of view, this research explains consumer behavior and feelings towards Made in Italy olive oil.

The hypothesis of this research is that consumers feel close to the Italian culture trough the consumption of olive oil and the understanding of its origin, perceiving them as their extended self which leads them to feel that they become a part of the Italian culture. Through Italian olive oil consumption, that is one of the main symbol of Made

in Italy, it is possible to instill the Italy good image to consumers in Japan. Thus, while consuming it they are able to feel the Italian atmosphere having the sensation of feeling close to their preferred part of the Italian culture.

CHAPTER 2. Figure 6. Study case scheme.



Created by the author

The scheme (Fig.6), symbolizes the hypothesis model that has been used to support the study case. In the two rings, are represented the main points through which the research activity has been based on: the first circle regards the idea and the image of Made in Italy products, based on style (fashionable) and good reputation of its products, supported by Made in Italy quality certification. Moreover, to better explain Made in Italy effects on the market in Japan and mostly on consumer behavior, has been necessary, to walk through the general concept of the Country of Origin effect.

The second circle, concerns specifically the olive oil and extra-virgin olive oil characteristics, starting off with olive oil history and its cultural back-ground, explaining its important role in the Mediterranean Diet. In order to exalt olive oil quality, has been necessary to examine in depth, its benefits and values towards body's health as well as its beauty benefits, thanking to its composition based on vitamins and others characteristics contained, helpful from the nutritional point of view.

Those listed points, were the base through which justify Made in Italy olive oil effects and success over consumers in Japan. This study case, aims to affirm that by consuming Italian olive oil, consumers are able to feel empathy with the Italian culture and traditions, and thanks to this feeling they get an entire satisfaction. The results would explain the Made in Italy olive oil success among consumers in Japan, and its effects on their purchasing behavior.

CHAPTER 3 Methodology

3.1 Survey's outline

The research measurement basis, in order to gather data, has been putted into effect through an online survey. The questionnaire has been sent through Facebook, starting firstly with Japanese natives acquaintance and friends and consequently forwarded to other contacts.

Subjects: according to previous researches, since olive oil is an imported product usually its price in non-traditional market is higher. Thus it is not affordable by anyone and mostly, is purchased by adults as career people or family ones. Therefore, the survey subjects are Japanese natives, male and female, starting from the twenty- thirty aged ones up to fifty- sixty aged people. Moreover, this study aims to analyse olive oil market in Japan, understanding consumer behavior toward foreign products, particularly focusing on Italian olive oil. Therefore, since olive oil is a Non-Traditional product with a different taste from the Japanese culinary tradition product, in order to collect specific data about consumer knowledge of olive oil and their feelings towards, the survey has been focused only on native Japanese resident in Japan.

Procedure: the aim of the research was to analyse consumers behavior in Japan toward olive oil consumption and how they perceive that product, that it is not a part of their culinary tradition, but more and more it enters in their everyday life. In order to create the survey, previous questionnaire questions have been taken as example, such as question regarding gender, age, cultural back-ground, and product

knowledge. Moreover, basing the study on Belk's extended self, the aim of the survey was understand consumers feeling while purchasing and consuming Italian olive oil.

Referring to the study case of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan, that has examined Japanese consumer behavior and thought about what concerns "Made in Italy" and Italian culture, this research aims to examine Japanese natives idea and feelings towards Italian olive oil.

Following existing data about Italian olive oil appreciation in Japan, new questions have been proposed, in order to deepen the research.

The aim of this study, is focused on understanding how Japanese people within their culinary culture, perceive and use olive oil in their diet and discover the emotions they get while consuming it. Therefore, the survey has been idealized in order to confirm the research hypothesis.

The questionnaire is made by 37 questions, including also queries about gender, cultural background and occupation. The survey, has been active online for one month collecting 132 answers. Please refer to Appendix 1 and 2 to get more information about the survey questions settings.

The collected answers may confirm the research hypothesis based on Belk's "Extended self" theory, affirming that through Italian olive oil consumption, olive oil taste recalls Italy image, leading consumers the sensation of getting closer to Italy, feeling empathy with the Italian culture. Moreover, should be confirmed that thanking to the Made in Italy high quality certification, while consuming Italian

olive oil consumers are able to feel safe.

CHAPTER 4 Analyses

Data were collected and analysed using the Google Docs survey settings. Both graphs and obtained data are available.

4.1 Survey's Results

The survey has been sent to Japanese natives living in Japan for a period of 30 days. During this period of examination have been collected 132 answers, among which 72% were female and 28% male. This first percentage difference confirms Scholer (1971) and Bilkey and Nes (1982) theory that consider women more gullible by the COO effect, showing a higher interest than man towards foreign products and this is revealed by their tendency when purchasing. This outcome supports also Mtimet et. al (2011) data showing a higher percentage of interest in olive oil purchasing and consumption, higher for women than men. Also the Japan Times news, affirms that women are the ones more interested in purchasing specialty olive oils in shop.

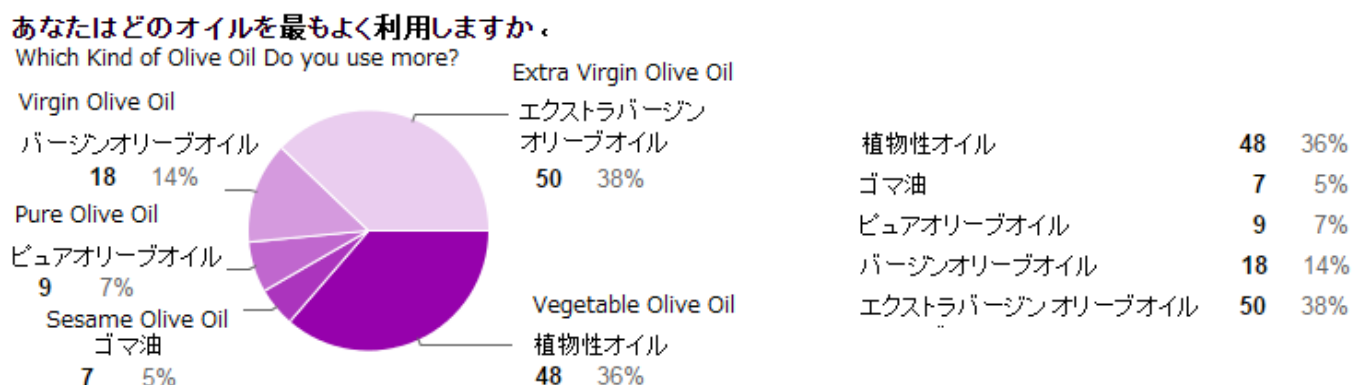
Moreover, regarding participants age, the higher percentage correspond to 20-30 years old, people with 46%, 23% 40-50 aged people and the 20% 30-40 years old and just the 11% older than 50 years old ones. Regarding their marital status information, is clear that the higher percentage of unmarried (61%) represents mostly the higher percentage of people belonging to 20-30 years old category; while the 39% married could be linked to 30-40 and over 50 age categories.

The higher percentages among the occupation data, regard company employees

47% and part time workers 12%, coming mostly from an academic back ground formed at the university and graduate school.

Concerning olive oil consumption (Fig.1), the higher average of olive oil preferences are 38% for extra virgin olive oil, 36% for vegetable oil while 14% virgin olive oil. The extra virgin data are supported by the ICE (2013) outcomes, stating that in 2012 among the imported olive oil genres 67% was extra virgin olive oil, underling a demand increase from consumers in Japan.

CHAPTER 4. Figure 1. Percentages collected trough the question number 6



Created by the author through the online survey

Focusing on olive oil use, 99% of the participants affirms that they have used at least once Italian olive oil. Among this percentage, 18% affirms to use it every day, 23% once a week and 38% more than twice a week. These outcomes confirm ICE Japan (2013) data, affirming that in 2011/2012 olive oil consumption in Japan has increased of 3,7%,; more and more olive oil is entering in the everyday diet and becoming a regular item in the family kitchens.

Concerning olive oil use typology, participants were able to choose more than one

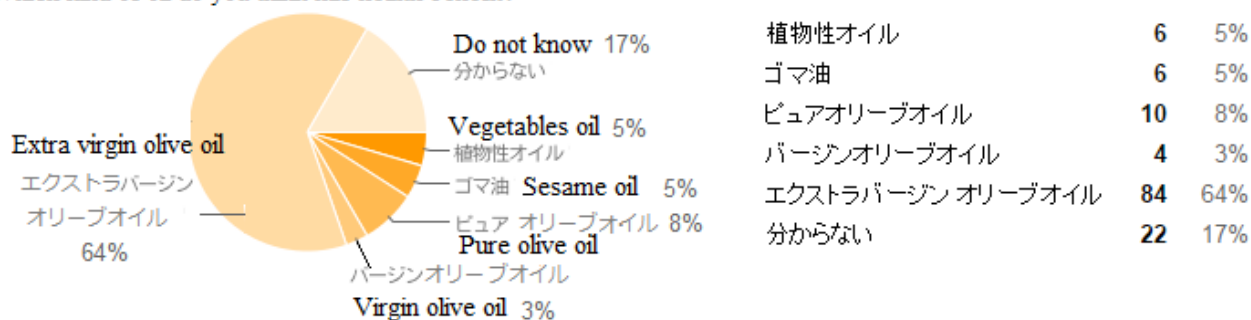
option among the proposed ones. The higher percentages, have been registered for the stir-fry/ cooking use (71%), and seasoning/ dressing use (70%), while 48% of people prefer to taste olive oil on bread. Just 11% of people uses it to fry and prepare deep-fried dishes. These data confirms Voices from the blog (2014) outcomes, stating that mostly, olive oil is used as dressing and seasoning, to cook pasta or soups while a small percentages is used to fry.

Regarding olive oil healthiness knowledge, according to the Figure 2, an higher percentage of people (64%), knows that extra virgin olive oil thanking to its features, is the main one for health benefit. Furthermore 36% knows that one of olive oil benefit effectiveness is represented by the cholesterol decrease; 14% of respondents affirm that olive oil consumption has skin benefits and 13% knows that olive oil could help in the prevention of arteriosclerosis. However 25% of people ignore olive oil benefits. Those percentages representing extra virgin olive oil healthiness and benefits knowledge, confirm Voices from the blog (2014) data, showing that mostly consumers in Japan use olive oil for its anti-cholesterol and anti-aging, for its skin and body care action.

CHAPTER 4. Figure 2. Percentages collected through the question number 20.

どのオイルが健康のためによいと思いますか。

Which kind of oil do you think has health benefit?



Created by the author through the online survey

Moreover, concerning olive oil health benefits, the survey has showed consumer knowledge regarding olive oil composition. Consumers were able to choose more options among the suggested ones: 35% affirms that olive oil contents anti-oxidant, for 20% of participants think that polyphenols are important components for the body health; just 14% of people choose vitamins among the suggested components. 27% of people show any knowledge about olive oil ingredients benefit. Moreover, the study asserts that consumers in Japan know olive oil for its moisturizer effect (63%), and that could be useful for human body also for the external usage such as cosmetics, hair care and nail care (77%). Confronting olive oil composition collected percentages, to Voices from the blog statements, is possible to confirm the knowledge existence regarding olive oil anti-aging effect.

The results of this research, show that there is a knowledge regarding polyphenols effects. This is stated by the identification ability, among the proposed options, of the main polyphenols features. The anti-aging effect results as one of its important effects (38%), while 31% of participants recognize its ability to lower cholesterol. Despite that, confronting with the other two results there is a high percentage of people (26%) affirming their lack of knowledge towards polyphenols.

Regarding the Mediterranean diet knowledge, the higher percentage (117%) shows an important lack of knowledge while, just 19% of participants affirms to have familiarity with the diet type. The Mediterranean diet, as it has been explained in the Literature review, is based on different products but, among these olive oil has a central importance. Even though participants have demonstrate a lack towards Mediterranean diet, 25% of people in the survey have been able to chose olive oil as on the product representing the Mediterranean diet. In this way is possible to confirm FAO study (2012) considering olive oil as one of the main product within the diet.

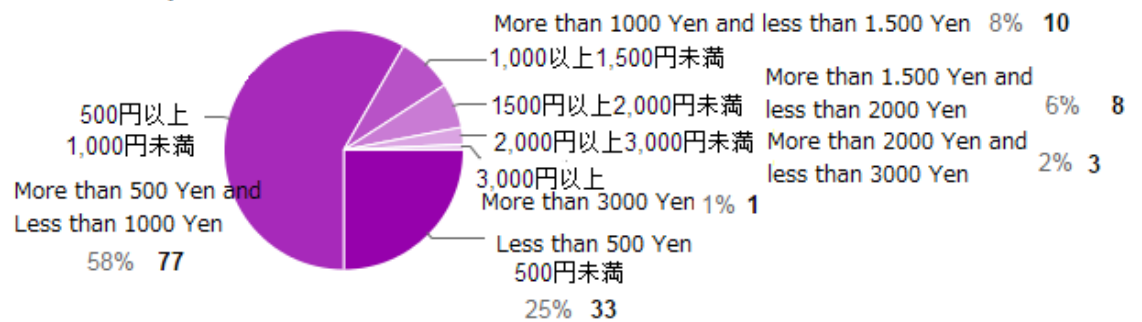
Since olive oil is an imported product in Japan as stated from previous researches, the pricing method and evaluation is somehow crucial for the market and for consumers. From the survey, the collected percentages show consumer desirable prices (Fig. 3) for an 500 ml olive oil bottle. 25% of people would like to pay less than 500 Yen, while the higher percentage (58%) show that mostly participants prefer bottles in the price range from 500 Yen to less than 1000 Yen. Other small percentages, comes from people who would like to pay more than 1000 Yen and less than 1500 Yen (8%) and people who would be disposed to pay more than 1500 Yen but less than 2000 Yen (6%). Just the 2%

is willing to pay more than 2000 Yen but less than 3000 Yen. Referring to the ICE (2013) report, regarding price segment for olive oil and extra virgin in supermarket, it is possible to deduce that the higher percentage for the price preference collected through this study, refers to the common tendency of purchasing olive oil in supermarket.

CHAPTER 4. Figure 3. Percentages collected trough the question number 12

オリーブオイル(500ml)は何円くらいであるべきだと思いますか。

How much do you think should cost a 500ml olive oil bottle?



Created by the author through the online survey

Among the imported olive oil in Japan, according to previous data the Italian one is the most purchased by the consumers in Japan and this data are confirmed through the survey which shows that 57% of participants consume Italian olive oil, followed by the Spain olive oil (16%). Another higher percentage (26%) is standing out from this answer declaring the darkness or carelessness regarding the olive oil provenience when purchasing. This outcome, confirms Mtimet et. al (2011) finding showing that 30% of interviewed people affirm their carelessness toward olive oil provenience when purchasing.

Regarding Italian olive oil choice, the higher percentages representing consumer olive oil purchasing preferences, depend on: olive oil high quality 19%, 17% on taste, while 11% affirms that olive oil choice depends on Italy country of origin good image. The taste percentage states that taste is an important characteristic from consumer point of view opposing to Mtimet et al. study (2008) that has placed taste at the last level of importance for consumers in Japan. In contrast with the previous outcome regarding the provenience carelessness when purchasing olive oil, in the Italian olive oil purchasing case the country image is one of the main reasons motivating consumer choice.

According to the producing country image importance, it is possible to underline that for the 89% of participants, generally the product quality depends on the Country of origin image. This confirm the explanation, of the COO effect on consumer purchasing behavior. This tendency, is justified by the higher percentages collected through the questionnaire: 36% of people think that, each producing country has a different techniques and from this could depend also the quality variability; another 36% of respondents affirm that the quality guarantee could depend on the different historical production background which identifies each olive oil producing countries. Moreover, 15% of people affirm that, a good producing country image guarantees the product quality influencing positively consumer perception and trust towards a country product rather than another one. Those outcomes lead this study to confirm Mtimet et al. (2011) statement affirming that Country of Origin and olive oil information are the main powers influencing customers purchasing behavior.

The product image, is important to affirm the quality of the products among the world market ones. Italy, has always been represented with the “Bel Paese” idea thanking for its atmosphere, history, long-lasting cuisine tradition, influencing the idea of the good quality lifestyle. From the survey appears that 34% of the participants perceive Italy as a historical country, as a beautiful country (27%) and as a traditional country (19%).

Furthermore, as it has been stated by previous researches as the ICCJ one (2006), Made in Italy products, represent the concept of a high quality production with a particular attention to the style. This is linked to the famous Made in Italy features, focused on the care of traditional way of production, which confers to product uniqueness and high quality guarantee. Those features, are well known in the world market and are recognisable by customers and consumers. Those data regarding Made in Italy product image, are confirmed also by the participants at the survey. As it is showed in the Figure 4, the participants were able to choose more than a proposed answer, but the higher averages obtained, show that 33% of respondents recognize the stylish/elegant image of the Italian branded products; 20% of answers have been registered for the fashionable halo and the same percentage refers to the traditional image. The familial image is important just for 8% of people contrasting Udagawa perception of Made in Italy food products (2008). Even though previous studies such as the ICCJ research (2006), have showed data affirming high quality as a distinguishing feature of Made in Italy brand, it is noticeable that the high quality value with 14% of answers has not been recognized as one of the first features of Made in Italy products.

CHAPTER 4. Figure 4. Percentages collected through the question number 28



Created by the author through the online survey

Referring to the general sensations that consumers get when consuming Italian olive oil, participants had the possibility to choose more than one option: the higher percentages concern the healthiness and its benefit for the body (32%), and the quality which leads consumers to feel relieved when using Italian olive oil (32%).

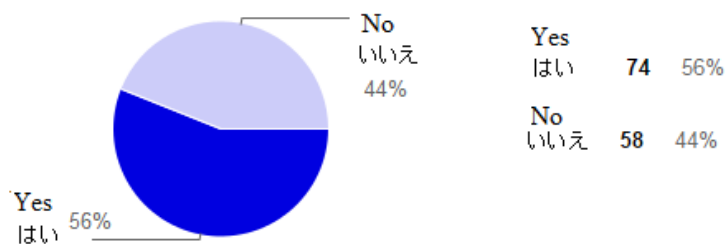
Even though Italian diet is based on the Mediterranean diet, the participants at the survey have affirmed that when consuming Italian olive oil they do not have the sensation of obtaining a health improvement typical of the Mediterranean diet (64%). Moreover, participants while using Italian olive oil do not have the feeling of enjoying the “Mum’s touch” typical of the Italian cuisine image and (69%), and affirm to do not have the sensation of enjoying the rural atmosphere of the Italian countryside (70%).

Focusing more on specific feelings that Italian olive oil consumption could lead to feel, the results of the survey have confirmed in part the research hypothesis: as it is possible to see in the Figure 5, for the 56% of consumers the consumption of Italian olive oil arouses the reminds and thoughts of Italy and its typical characteristics.

CHAPTER 4. Figure 5. Percentages of answer to the question number 31

イタリア製オリーブオイルを使うと、イタリアのことが頭に浮かんだり、イタリアを思い出したりしますか。

When you use Italian olive oil, it leads you to think about the typical characteristics of Italy, reminding you of Italy?



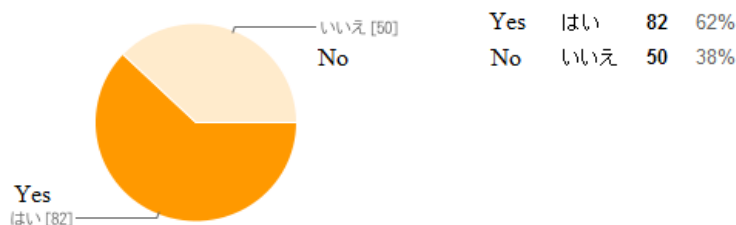
Created by the author through the online survey

Moreover, 62% of the participants affirm that through the Italian olive oil consumption they are able to feel close to Italy (Fig.6).

CHAPTER 4. Figure 6. Percentages of answers for the question number 32

イタリア製オリーブオイルを使ったり食べたりすると、イタリアを身近に感じることができますか。

Using or consuming Italian olive oil, are you able to feel closer to Italy?

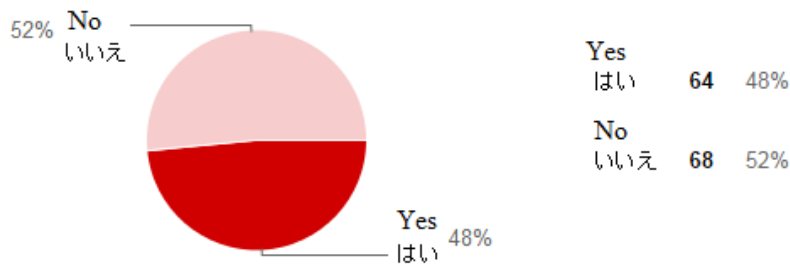


Created by the author through the online survey

The Figure n.7, shows that almost half percentage of participants (48%) have the feeling of experiencing the Italian culture when consuming Italian olive oil, while the 52% asserts the contrary, confuting with a few difference of percentage one of the proposed hypothesis.

CHAPTER 4. Figure 7. Percentages of answers for the question number 33

イタリア製オリーブオイルを使ったり食べたりすると、あなたはイタリアの文化を経験しているような気分になりますか。
While you use or consume Italian olive oil, do you get the sensation of experiencing a part of the Italian culture?

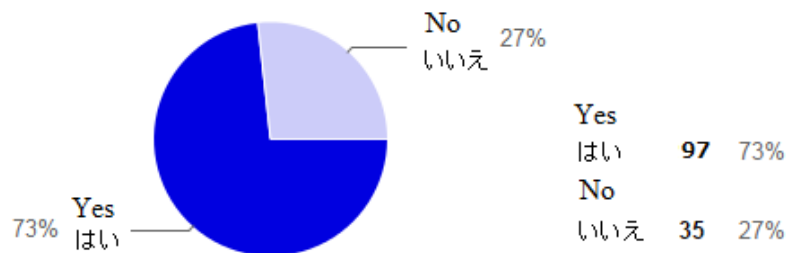


Created by the author through the online survey

According to previous researches, Made in Italy label represents a guarantee for Italian products, exalting the production wisdom and the high quality offered. The survey shows that this certification present on the Italian product label, leads the 73% of customers feeling safe when purchasing Italian goods such as olive oil (Fig. n.8).

CHAPTER 4. FIGURE 8. Percentages collected through the question number 37

イタリア製オリーブオイルを使ったり食べたりすると、品質が保証されているので安心できますか。
Using or consuming Italian olive oil, can you feel safe for the guaranteed quality?



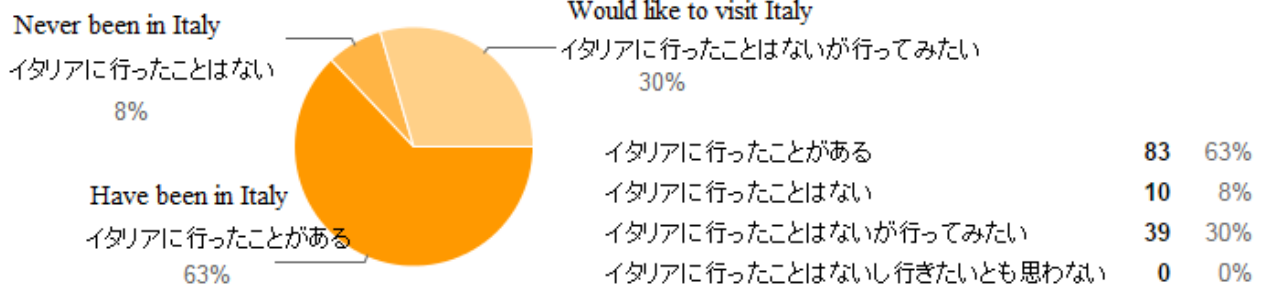
Created by the author through the online survey

In the Fig. n. 9, it is possible understand that the most answers reveal that 63% of respondents have been in Italy and 30% would like or are planning to visit Italy.

CHAPTER 4. Figure 9. Percentages of answers for the question number 26

あなたはイタリアに行ったことがありますか。

Have you ever been in Italy?



Created by the author through the online survey

In conclusion, it is necessary to state that the collected data, which lead to come out a particular trend regarding participants feelings towards Italian olive oil consumption, could depend on respondents' personal experience or interest regarding Italy and its culture.

CHAPTER 5 Conclusion

5.1. Findings

Through the online survey results whose methods and data have been explained in the chapters 3 and 4, it has almost been possible to confirm the research hypothesis regarding the perception of the proximity and empathy feeling with the Italian culture through the Italian olive oil consumption which lead consumers to perceive it as their extended self.

Moreover analysing all data, it has been nearly possible to confirm the proposed hypothesis but it at the same time interesting findings came out from the research, about Made in Italy label and Italy image.

1) Online Consumers Survey

Since olive oil in Japan is a Non-traditional product, firstly the study aim was focused on understand consumer olive oil varieties and benefit knowledge. Secondly concentrating upon Italian olive oil, the analysis purpose was based on consumer in Japan perception and feelings when consuming it.

In order to better understand the results that came out from the research, it is important to analyse consumer answers explaining and justifying the following findings.

As stated in the chapter 3, explaining the research methodology, consumer survey has been based on a questionnaire sent through Facebook to Japanese natives living in Japan, starting firstly with friends, and consequently forwarded to other contacts. Thus, the survey results showing a high tendency towards Italian culture and Italian olive oil, could be due to the participant close relationship with Italian people, as

well as with the Italian culture, which would easily influence their interest and feelings towards Italy. Despite that, referring to the ICCJ research results (2006, p. 36) conducted by a National agency through its computer system, it is possible to notice that: in both researches Italy image perception is positive, and this may represent one of the reasons inspiring consumer desire of living in Italy or visit Italy; another important results is linked to Made in Italy perceived features, that is represented mostly by the high quality value.

First, it is necessary to take into account the most relevant participants' socioeconomic information: 46% of the participants are in the age of 20-30 years old; among this group are represented company employees (47%) and 61% of the respondents are unmarried. Concerning the gender range, the higher percentage is represented by the women(72%).

Other interesting data regard the participants cultural background: the higher average collected are showing that 99 respondents had a University formation, 74 University graduates and 25 people coming from a Graduate School graduation. Referring to one of the main COO effect studies as Scholer's research outcomes (1971) that have registered a higher rate towards foreign products among people with more education, this study could confirm those previous outcomes. The higher percentages, collected through this research, underling a interest toward Italian or Spain olive oil correspond to the higher percentages showing consumers' University cultural background. Therefore, those results may be considered as a confirmation of Scholer outcomes.

The survey shows that for 58% of participants, the purchasing willingness rouses around the 500 Yen-1000 Yen range, for a 500ml olive oil bottle. Approximately, as stated also by ICE (2013), for an extra virgin olive oil in a 200ml-500ml bottle sold in a supermarket in Japan, price range is around 500 Yen up to 1500 Yen. Thus, those data regarding olive oil purchasing tendency may show that supermarket is the preferred channel for purchasing olive oil. In order to analyse better these outcomes, have to be taken into consideration consumer incomes. The purchasing preferences depend also on consumer financial possibility. The higher percentage collected from this study regards people belonging to 20-30 years old (47%) and mostly they are company employees. Usually this age range correspond to people that are starting their careers and mostly, as beginners, the salary range is not high and the money usability in order to purchase high quality products such as niche products in the specific shops is limited.

Moreover, from the research came out that olive oil knowledge, is approximately popular for some of its benefits among Japanese consumers: 64% of participants recognize the extra virgin as the healthier, and among olive oil benefits towards the body health respondents know its ability in reducing cholesterol (36%), its moisturizing effect for the skin (14%) and its help in the arteriosclerosis prevention (13%).

About olive oil composition and its health benefits, participants were able to choose more than one option but the highest percentages are: 35% of respondents take into consideration the antioxidant action of olive oil, and 20% thinks that polyphenols are influent over body healthiness. 27% of people affirms they do not have any knowledge about olive oil ingredient benefits.

Regarding polyphenol effect, an interesting outcome has been collected. Polyphenols have different actions over the body and, according to that variety of benefits, participants at the survey had the possibility to choose more than one option among the proposed answers. Significant percentages demonstrate consumers knowledge recognizing the main polyphenol features: 38% of participants recognize the ability in the anti-aging action while 31% know the effect over the cholesterol decrease. However, 26% of respondents confirm their absence of knowledge about polyphenol contents.

Moreover, regarding olive oil body use, 72% of people know its use for cosmetics, hair care and nail care. Regarding the effects over the skin, 64% of participants were knowing its moisturizing result.

Among the Mediterranean diet goods, 25% of people, among the suggested products, have recognized olive oil as the main symbol of the diet. Unfortunately, the higher percentage for that answer is 61% that signs a lack of knowledge in recognizing the main products characterizing the diet. This outcome is linked to the high percentage of people (81%) declaring the absence of knowledge towards the concept of the Mediterranean diet. This data could be linked to the reply showing a small percentage of Italian olive oil recognition as a product representing the health of the Mediterranean diet. Even though Italian diet is based on the Mediterranean diet, the participants at the survey have affirmed that consuming Italian olive oil they do not have the sensation of obtaining a health improvement typical of the Mediterranean diet (64%).

Despite this high percentage, showing a lack of knowledge regarding the

Mediterranean diet, Japanese consumers seem to be aware of the general diet benefits: 70% of people affirms that the diet is important for the external aspect of the body as well as the body healthiness. This result, could be linked to the health ethic peculiar to the Japanese diet habits, that may have influenced people in Japan inclination toward health care. Moreover, in order to protect the body health, the higher percentages show that 36% of the respondents affirm that tend to consume vegetables and fruits, while 26% tend to train.

Another important data regards olive oil consumption frequency. Significant percentages demonstrate that 23% of the respondents consume it once a week, and 38% of participants more than twice a week. Therefore, it is possible to confirm what ICE (2013) study and the Japan News article (2013) affirm, regarding olive oil incorporation in the everyday diet in Japan, becoming a regular item in the family kitchens. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that olive oil with its nourishing values such as vitamins and the ensuing health benefits, is improving on the everyday diet in Japan.

The most purchased country olive oils, are the Italian (57%) and the Spanish (16%) olive oils. From the percentages it is noticeable that the Italian olive oil appreciation and preference is prevailing. Referring to the outcomes, the higher percentages representing at the most the Italian olive oil characteristics, influencing consumer preferences and purchasing choices, are based on: high quality value, taste, and the positive country image. These percentages, show consumer knowledge and recognition towards Italian olive oil characteristics, as well as the quality value importance, that is one of the distinctive Made in Italy products features.

The sensation that consumers get when consuming Italian olive oil, consists on the relief feeling due to the healthiness of Italian olive oil perceived as a product good for the health (32%) and due to the product high quality (32%). Therefore, referring to the higher outcomes showing a preference for Italy as producing country and to the higher percentages of olive oil use frequency, it is possible to deduce that Italian olive oil is the most used. Thus, Italian olive oil with its features and benefits could change the Japanese diet and its presence in Japanese kitchens could lead to a change in the Japanese culinary habits.

Regarding the olive oil producing country outcomes, an important result may represent a contrast with the previous percentages: 26% of interviewed people affirms their olive oil provenience carelessness. This outcome, could be interpreted as a consumer mood tendency, influencing their purchase behavior. This mood could depend on various factors: the purchasing place, price as discounted products, or packaging. This tendency may bring consumers to pay less attention to product provenience. If so, this percentage would confirm Delgado and Guinard study (2011), affirming that the purchasing situations as supermarkets are not able to lead customers get in contact with product sensation. Therefore, customer choice would rather depend on the product external sensation given through packaging or bottle material.

In opposition to that statement, this study shows that just a low percentage regarding the purchasing choice tendency towards olive oil depend on label design (3%).

In contrast with the first impression had regarding the outcomes showing provenience carelessness when purchasing, the online survey results show that consumers (89%) consider the producing country image and its relative PCI as a variable in olive oil high quality definition. It demonstrates that, in consumer opinion, quality products depend on the producing traditions of a certain country (36%), and on producing techniques (36%); offering a good producing country image is a way to guarantee product quality which leads to create customer trust feeling(15%). Despite that, these last outcomes seem not supported by the collected data regarding the country olive oil purchasing choice: just 10% of people affirm that in their opinion, country olive oil choice depends on the producing country good image.

Even if from the general results, seems that there is a general spread of knowledge about olive oil features and benefits, despite that, regarding olive oil provenience there are not entirely negligible outcomes: the percentages show a theoretical knowledge of the importance of country image towards product but in the same way some percentages show a lack of practical consideration when purchasing regarding olive oil provenience.

Despite that, referring to the Italian products, the producing country image has a strong results, and consumers have been able to indicate the main features of the Italian production: Stylish/ elegant (33%), Fashionable (20%), Traditional (20%) and High quality (14%). Therefore, these data and Italian olive oil data finally, are able to led this study to confirm the importance that the Producing country has on product quality evaluation (89%). Moreover, this study is able to confirm that, the distinctive Italian production features are strongly believed by consumers in Japan, and this awareness is

linked also to Made in Italy label trust. 73% of respondents confirm that Made in Italy brand represents a reason to feel safe when purchasing thanks to its certification.

Concerning Made in Italy certificate protection, even though there have been some scandals regarding for example Italian olive oil fake, consumers still trust in the brand. Despite the scandals, the collected data underlying consumer trust and made in Italy product preferences, may confirm the government bodies' efficient activity in controlling Italian products, upholding the importance and value of Made in Italy certification through which assure product safety. Referring to Fantoni et al. (2014) advice towards Italian enterprises for the Made in Italy preservation, the outcomes of this research could be linked also to the Italian enterprise production efficacy, offering high quality products and representing Made in Italy high values around the world.

Conclusively, focusing on the hypothesis of this research based on Belk's "Extended Self" theory, this study confirms that participants (62%) through Italian olive oil consumption are able to feel close to Italy and that for 56% of consumers the consumption of Italian olive oil arouses reminds and thoughts of Italy and its typical characteristics. Furthermore, it is possible to affirm that almost the half part of the participants (48%) is able to feel the empathy with the Italian culture declaring to have the feeling of experiencing the Italian culture when consuming Italian olive oil. The 52% of participants assert the contrary, conflicting with a small difference in percentage one of the hypothesis.

In order to explain better the results, it is important underline that the 63% of participants have visited Italy, having the possibility to experience and understand the

Italian culture rather than the others which have never been in Italy. Further, 30% of participants have expressed the will to visit Italy, and this data shows that this intention is surely pushed by an interest towards Italy and its traditions. Therefore, these data justify the participant high preference in purchasing Italian olive oil among the other country production, and consumer feelings and emotions when consuming Italian olive oil; both groups, the ones that have been in Italy and others who have in plan to visit, have developed a particular interest towards Italian culture as well as the culinary traditions. Mostly, people who have already personally experienced Italy have the faculty of feeling closer to the Italian atmosphere trough the consumption of Made in Italy products, which recall easier memories, images or sensation they have already received.

5.2. Implications

1) Theoretical Implications

Among the existing studies, those that may support the hypothesis proposed by the author have been chosen. In particular, COO (Country of Origin) Effect theory, has been taken into consideration in order to examine in depth how Country Image influence consumer behavior when purchasing product. Regarding consumer in Japan perception of producing country image, this study affirms that the producing country has an important role in product quality definition. It is one of the reason that influences consumer product evaluation and purchasing tendency, in particular for the Italian olive oil.

According to consumers in Japan perspective, the study outcomes show that: depending on the producing country production technique changes, depending on the producing country, olive oil history and cultural background change; through the producing country good image could be easier assure consumer trust towards product. Concerning olive oil producing countries, this study affirms that olive oil quality value is strictly dependant on the producing country image. Referring to the producing country image regarding the Italian olive oil production, this research it is possible state that thanking to Made in Italy olive oil quality, consumers are able to feel relief when consuming it, having the feeling of using a product that offers a health assurance.

In order to go in detail of the relationship between consumers and products, the research has been focused on the analysis of 延岡(*Nobeoka*) (2008), which regards the theory of functional value and symbolic value: the functional value concerns the objective and qualitative value of a product, while the symbolic value is the emotional and subjective value towards a product.

In this study, the symbolic value comes out through consumer personal feelings or perceived images, towards Italy and Italian products such as the Italian olive oil. Since the symbolic value depends on consumer perception, through the outcomes it is noticeable that consumers have their personal interpretation or idea about Italy and its products, which influence their evaluation when purchasing.

Concerning Italy, this study shows that the historical and charming values are perceived as the main features representing the country image; while, regarding Italian products, the main opinions are based on the stylish, fashionable, traditional and high

quality values. The main olive oil characteristics influencing consumers in Japan purchasing decisions are: taste, country image and quality.

Moreover, referring to customer feelings, as Nobeoka (2008) affirms, if the consumer wants to buy the product which satisfies her/his needs even if the price is high, for this customer this product value becomes higher. Therefore, even though olive oil is an imported product and has a higher price than the domestic ones, is possible to deduce that consumers in Japan purchase it because of its benefits and taste which satisfies their needs. In the case of Italian olive oil preference, consumers purchase it because it may satisfy their needs of feeling safe thanking for Made in Italy guarantee and evocate Italy typical images.

This study underlines that, in order to obtain a product success, functional value and symbolic value have to be balanced. It is important to take into consideration the individual significance value from which develop a functional value suitable for consumers taste. Customer oriented plans according to Nobeoka (2008) increase the symbolic value as well as the functional value of products. Obtaining a synergy between functional and symbolic value satisfaction, the product value becomes higher.

Concerning consumers in Japan evaluation, this study has taken as example Miura studies towards the perceived image by foreigner enterprises of consumers in Japan. According to the symbolic value concept, that depends on individual feelings and sensations towards product, this study after analyse directly consumer preferences and perceived images, is able to affirms that the personal feelings are the main filter of consumer purchasing tendency.

Regarding olive oil consumption, the main percentages confirm that quality, as has been affirmed through Miura's research, is one of the first features in consumer demand and in product evaluation. This study has deepened the reason of this preference, showing that the high quality value regarding Italian olive oil has been the most quoted because let consumers to feel relief when purchasing and consuming Made in Italy product. Another higher percentage, towards Italian olive oil preference, that is able to affirm the individual perception influence when purchasing is the taste value. According to Prescott (1998), consumer perception and preferences depends on the environmental but also from innate value. In order to understand preference tendency, it is necessary analyse the cultural background, trying to avoid generalization.

Therefore, this study states that is not possible identify consumers just within the social culture tendency analysis, and it is not correct define consumers in Japan with the general "though" judgment, because consumers behavior depends also on the subjective feelings and personal evaluations.

Furthermore, in order to underline the individual evaluation importance, this study was based on Belk's "Extended self" study case (1988). Belk's theory has been used to understand and explain consumer behavior and feelings towards Made in Italy olive oil, through a psychological and anthropological point of view. The outcomes show that the Italian olive oil use reminds of Italy and its traditions; the Italian olive oil consumption leads consumers to feel close to Italy, having almost the feeling of experiencing the Italian culture getting an empathic sensation. As Belk (1988) affirms in his study, the object possession that consumers feel towards an object, is due to its symbolic

representation of life memories, place or experience. This perspective, transposed on consumers in Japan feelings when consuming Italian olive oil, underlines that olive oil is perceived as a symbol representing some images and emotions of the Italian culture. Since the higher percentages of people affirming their feelings perception through the olive oil consumption, are almost equal to the people that had a travel to Italy, it is possible to deduce that this perceptions they get through Italian olive oil may be a representation of life memories linked to a travel experience in Italy.

Finally, some articles and studies about Japan and its consumer behavior have been taken into consideration to get a closer look to understand the perception of Made in Italy products and more on the specific Italian olive oils.

2) Practical Implications

Previous researches about olive oil appreciation and consumption in Japan and consequently, about Made in Italy olive oil, have been conducted. Thanks to the idealized survey, it has been possible understand consumer knowledge about olive oil benefits and composition, as well as consumer behavior and feelings towards a non-traditional product as the Italian olive oil. According to the results consumers care about good quality products and a good quality life.

Data show that there is already a general knowledge of olive oil benefits and health care and also of Italian olive oil quality.

In conclusion, this study evaluates the importance of consumer feelings and perception examination, in order to understand their habits and needs. The gathered data through this study, may help Italian olive oil producing companies to focus their

marketing plans on consumer in Japan. Enterprises should aim at offering product, balanced with a valid functional value, represented by Made in Italy features, and satisfying symbolic value, adapting their objective features to consumers needs. Caring of consumer perception, would lead to a symbolic value increase and a contiguous functional value profit. In order to obtain a positive product evaluation, Italian enterprises should support Made in Italy high value production, caring about the production processes and the final product image, guaranteeing the highest quality proper of Made in Italy product.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

Due to the small size of the examined sample, data gathered through this study cannot be considered in absolute terms. The research aims to present itself as the initial phase of a new field of studies.

This study has taken into consideration the existent data as a base through which develop and support the hypothesis. Therefore, some data are not being deepened in this research, but could be used for a future research. Referring to the frequent use of olive oil, one of this interesting data that could be deepened and analysed came out in the literature review: it regards the use of olive oil in Japanese culinary tradition dishes. This data could be the first step on which start a new study to understand the diffusion of the Italian olive oil phenomenon and specifically how it could change the Japanese diet and health conditions and consequently the culinary tradition.

Moreover, future research in this sense could focus on an update and in depth-analysis of consumer values and feelings towards foreigner products, such as the Italian

olive oil. The research could be based on consumer direct interview conjoint with Italian olive oil sample test, gathering all the sensation and feeling data from the taste up to the perceived emotions. Those steps may be necessary in order to understand better the individual feelings. This would help some Italian enterprises interested in the market in Japan, in proposing new idea that may satisfy customers needs and may guarantee a higher success and appreciation of the Italian olive oils on the Japanese market.

It may be possible considering to use the future researches' data to find out new methods in order to spread Italian olive oil and the Mediterranean diet benefits knowledge in Japan.

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Appendix 1.

ONLINE CONSUMERS SURVEY QUESTIONS LIST

The questionnaire was made up the following questions and answer options:

1) How old are you?

- a) 20-30 years old
- b) 30-40 years old
- c) 40-50 years old
- d) more than 50 years old

2) Which is your sexual gender?

- a) male
- b) female

3) Which is your status?

- a) unmarried
- b) married

4) Which is your occupation?

- a) student
- b) company employee
- c) company manager
- d) government worker
- e) independent businessman
- f) temporary worker
- g) part-time job
- h) housewife
- i) without an occupation
- l) other

5) Please indicate your academic background

- a) senior high school graduate
- b) junior college graduate

- c) university graduate
- d) graduate school graduation
- e) professional school graduate

6) Which oil do you use most?

- a) Vegetable oil
- b) Sesame oil
- c) Pure olive oil
- d) Virgin olive oil
- e) Extra virgin olive oil

7) Did you ever used olive oil?

- a) yes
- b) no

8) Whith which frequency do you use olive oil?

- a) everyday
- b) one time in several months
- c) one time a month
- d) once a week
- e) more than twice in a week
- f) rarely
- d) not using

9) In which way do you use olive oil?

- a) cooking deep-fried food
- b) flavoring/ dressing
- c) stir-fry
- d) tasting on bread
- e) not using

10) In which country it is produced the olive oil you use?

- a) Italia
- b) Spain

- c) Greece
- d) Japan
- c) other
- d) I do not know

11) Why do you use olive oil from this country?

- a) Because of its high quality
- b) Because it is cheap
- c) Because the country origin image is good
- d) Because it is healthy
- e) Because it is tasty
- f) Because the label design is interesting
- g) There is no particular reason
- h) I do not know

12) How much you would like to pay for a 500ml olive oil bottle?

- a) less than 500 yen
- b) more than 500 yen but less than 1000 yen
- c) more than 1000 yen but less than 1500 yen
- d) more than 2000 yen but less than 3000 yen
- e) more than 3000 yen

13) Do you think that the olive oil quality depends on the producing country image?

- a) Yes
- b) No

14) Referring to the 13) question, why do you think so?

Please choose one among the proposed options

- a) If the country image is good, there is a product trust.
- b) If the country image is not good, there could be a negative idea regarding its products.
- c) depending on the producing country the production technique changes
- d) depending on the producing country the olive oil history and background is

different.

e) I do not know, I do not understand.

15) Do You know something about the Mediterranean Diet?

a) Yes

b) No

16) In what consist the Mediterranean Diet?

a) A cooking with a highly olive oil use.

b) A cooking with a high vegetables consumption..

c) A cooking with a small consumption of meat.

d) A cooking with a high consumption of fish.

e) A cooking with a high grain consumption.

f) I do not know.

17) Which are the effect coming from the olive oil consumption?

Please choose one among the proposed options.

a) the cholesterol decrease.

b) moistured skin.

c) constipation cure.

d) if consuming it too much you can get fat.

e) heart disease and cancer prevention.

f) arteriosclerosis prevention

g) I do not know.

18) Which is the ingredient included in the olive oil that is good for the body health?

Please choose among the options (Multiple choice)

a) Vitamin.

b) Polyphenols.

c) Calcium.

d) Fat.

e) Antioxidant.

f) I do not know.

19) Which kind of effect has the polyphenols composition?

Please choose one among the options.

- a) cholesterol decrease.
- b) breast cancer decrease.
- c) colon cancer decrease.
- d) anti-aging effect
- e) I do not know.

20) Which kind of olive oil do you think is better for the health?

Please choose one among the options.

- a) Vegetable olive oil.
- b) Sesame oil.
- c) Pure olive oil
- d) Virgin olive oil
- e) Extra Virgin olive oil
- d) I do not know.

21) Do you think that the diet is a way to take care of the beauty and health?

- a) Yes
- b) No

22) Referring to the question n. 21. In which way do you take care of the body health?

Please choose one among the options.

- a) Avoiding to take fat.
- b) Training.
- c) Restraining from the carbohydrate consumption.
- d) Using antioxidant food stuffs.
- e) Fruit and vegetable consumption.
- f) I do not know.

23) Do you know it is possible to use olive oil beyond the consumption, using it for nail and hair care?

- a) Yes
- b) No

24) Does olive oil have any effect on skin?

Please choose one among the options

- a) Moisture Effect
- b) Wrinkle prevention
- c) Scalp dandruff prevention
- d) Skin reinforce
- e) I do not know.

25) Would you like to receive more information regarding olive oil?

- a) Yes
- b) No

26) Did you ever come to Italy?

- a) Yes I have been to Italy
- b) I never been to Italy
- c) I never been to Italy but I would like to go
- d) I never been to Italy and I do not think I would like to go

27) Which kind of image do you have of Italy?

Please choose one among the options.

- a) Healthy
- b) Traditional
- c) Cultural
- d) Historical
- e) Lovely country
- f) Country side spectacle
- g) Other

28) Which kind of image do you have regarding Italian products?

Please choose one among the options.

- a) Fashionable
- b) Stylish/ Elegant
- c) High quality
- d) Familial
- e) Traditional
- f) other

29) Have you ever used Italian olive oil?

- a) Yes
- b) No

30) Referring to the question n.29, When you consumed Italian olive oil which feelings did you have?

Please choose among the options (Multiple choice)

- a) I felt the Italian tradition
- b) I had an elegant sensation
- c) I felt benefit for health
- d) I felt relieved for the high quality
- e) I had the sensation to be near Italy
- f) I had the sensation of experiencing the Italian culture
- g) I had the sensation of enjoying the mum's flavour touch
- h) I had the feeling of enjoying the Italian countryside atmosphere
- i) I do not feel anything in particular
- l) I do not know because I have never tasted the Italian olive oil

31) When you use Italian olive oil, it leads you to think about Italian characteristics, making you think about Italy?

- a) Yes
- b) No

32) Do you feel close to Italy when you consume Italian olive?

- a) Yes

b) No

33) Do you have the feeling of experiencing Italian culture when you consume Italian olive oil?

a) Yes

b) No

34) Do you have the feeling of tasting mum's flavor touch when consuming Italian olive oil?

a) Yes

b) No

35) Do you have the feeling of experiencing the Italian countryside atmosphere when consuming olive oil?

a) Yes

b) No

36) Do you have the feeling of consuming a healthy product of the Mediterranean diet when consuming olive oil?

a) Yes

b) No

37) Do you feel relieved thanks to the Made in Italy high quality certification when consuming Italian olive oil?

a) Yes

b) No

Appendix 2

オンラインのアンケート質問リスト

1. あなたは何歳ですか。
20-30 歳未満
30-40 歳未満
40-50 歳未満
50 歳以上

2. あなたの性別は？
男性
女性

3. ご結婚されていますか。
未婚
既婚

4. あなたの職業は？
学生・生徒
会社員
会社経営
公務員
自営業
派遣社員
パート・アルバイト
主婦
無職
その他

5. 学歴を教えてください
高校卒
短期大学卒

大学卒
大学院卒
専門学校卒

6. あなたはどのオイルを最もよく利用しますか。
もっともよく当てはまるものを1つ選んでください。

植物性オイル
ゴマ油
ピュアオリーブオイル
バージンオリーブオイル
エクストラバージン オリーブオイル

7. あなたはオリーブオイルを使ったことがありますか。

はい
いいえ

8. あなたはどの程度の頻度でオリーブオイルを利用しますか。

毎日
数カ月に1回
1カ月に1回
週に1回
週に2回以上
めったに使わない
使わない

9. あなたはどのようにオリーブオイルを使っていますか。

揚げ物・フライ
調味料・ドレッシング
炒め物
パンにつける
使わない

10. あなたはどこの国のオリーブオイルを使っていますか。

もっとも当てはまるものを1つだけ選んでください。

イタリア製

スペイン製

ギリシャ製

日本製

その他

どこの国製か知らない

11. なぜ、その国のオリーブオイルを使っているのですか。

もっとも当てはまるものを1つだけ選んでください。

品質が高いから

安いから

原産国がいいイメージだから

ヘルシーだから

おいしいから

ボトルのラベルのデザインが素敵だから

特に理由はない

分からない

12. オリーブオイル(500ml)は何円くらいであるべきだと思いますか。

もっともよくあてはまるものを1つ選んでください。

500 円未満

500 円以上 1,000 円未満

1,000 円以上 1,500 円未満

1,500 円以上 2,000 円未満

2,000 円以上 3,000 円未満

3,000 円以上

13. オリーブオイルは生産国(作られた国)によって品質が異なると思いますか。

はい

いいえ

14. 13 の回答で、どうしてそう思いましたか。
もっとも当てはまるものを1つだけ選んでください。

生産国にいいイメージを持っていれば、製品も信頼できるから
生産国に対してよくないイメージがあると、製品に対してもいいイメージ
を持たないから
生産国によって製造の技術が違うから
生産国によってオリーブオイルの歴史・背景が異なるから
知らない・分からない

15. あなたは「地中海ダイエット」を知っていますか。
はい
いいえ

16. 地中海ダイエットとはどういうものですか。
もっとも当てはまるものを1つだけ選んでください。

オリーブオイルをたくさん使った料理
野菜をたくさん食べる料理
肉をあまり食べない料理
魚をたくさん食べる料理
穀物をたくさん食べる料理
知らない・分からない

17. オリーブオイルを食べるとどういった効果がありますか。
もっとも当てはまるものを1つだけ選んでください。

コレステロール値を下げる
肌が潤う
便秘が治る
食べ過ぎを防ぐことができる
心臓疾患やがんを予防する
動脈硬化を防止する

知らない・分からない

18. オリーブオイルにはどういった身体に良い成分が含まれていますか。
当てはまるものを選んでください (複数回答可)

ビタミン

ポリフェノール

カルシウム

脂肪

抗酸化物

知らない・分からない

19. ポリフェノールという成分にはどのような効果がありますか。
もっとも当てはまるものを1つだけ選んでください。

コレステロール値を下げる

乳がん発症率を下げる

大腸がん発症率を下げる

アンチエイジングになる

知らない・分からない

20. どのオイルが健康のためによいと思いますか。
1つ選んで教えてください。

植物性オイル

ゴマ油

ピュアオリーブオイル

バージンオリーブオイル

エクストラバージン オリーブオイル

分からない

21. あなたは美容や健康やダイエットに気をつけている方だと思いますか。

はい

いいえ

22. 21 の質問で、具体的にはどういう風に健康に気をつけていますか。
もっとも当てはまるものを1つだけ選んでください。

脂肪を摂らないようにしている
運動をするようにしている
炭水化物を摂ることを控えている
抗酸化食品
果物と野菜
分からない

23. オリーブオイルは食べる以外にも、化粧品やヘアケアやネイルケアにも使えることを知っていますか。

はい

いいえ

24. オリーブオイルはお肌にどういう効果がありますか。

もっとも当てはまるものを1つだけ選んでください。

保湿効果
皺を防止
頭皮のフケを防止
肌を強化する
分からない

25. あなたはオリーブオイルの特徴について他の情報が欲しい？

はい

いいえ

25. あなたはオリーブオイルの特徴について他の情報が欲しい？

はい

いいえ

26. あなたはイタリアに行ったことがありますか。

イタリアに行ったことがある

イタリアに行ったことはない

イタリアに行ったことはないが行ってみたい

イタリアに行ったことはないし行きたいとも思わない

27. イタリアという国に対してどういうイメージを持っていますか。

もっとも当てはまるものを1つだけ選んでください。

健康的

伝統的

文化的

歴史的

素敵な国

田舎の光景

その他

28. あなたはイタリア製の製品に対してどういうイメージを持っていますか

もっとも当てはまるものを1つだけ選んでください。

ファッショナブル

オシャレ

高品質

家庭的

伝統的

その他

29. あなたはイタリア製のオリーブオイルを利用したことがありますか。

はい

いいえ

30. 29の質問で、イタリア製オリーブオイルを使って食べたときにどうい
う気持ちになりますか。
当てはまるものを選んでください(複数回答可)。

イタリアの伝統を感じる

オシャレな気持ちになる

身体にいい/健康になれると思う

品質が安心できる

イタリアを身近に感じられる

イタリアの文化を経験しているような感覚を覚える

マンマ(イタリアのお母さん)の味を楽しんでいるような気分になる

イタリアの田舎の風景の雰囲気を楽しめる気分になる

特に何も感じない

イタリア製のオリーブオイルを利用することがないから、知らない

31. イタリア製オリーブオイルを使うと、イタリアのことが頭に浮かんだり、
イタリアを思い出したりしますか。

はい

いいえ

32. イタリア製オリーブオイルを使ったり食べたりすると、イタリアを身
近に感じるができますか。

はい

いいえ

33. イタリア製オリーブオイルを使ったり食べたりすると、あなたはイタ
リアの文化を経験しているような気分になりますか。

はい

いいえ

34. イタリア製オリーブオイルを使ったり食べたりすると、マンマ(イタリ
アのお母さん)の味を楽しんでいるような気分になりますか。

はい

いいえ

35. イタリア製オリーブオイルを使ったり食べたりすると、イタリアの田舎の風景の雰囲気を楽しめる気分になりますか。

はい

いいえ

36. イタリア製オリーブオイルを使ったり食べたりすると、地中海ダイエット的な健康を手に入れられるような気分になりますか。

はい

いいえ

37. イタリア製オリーブオイルを使ったり食べたりすると、品質が保証されているので安心できますか。

はい

いいえ

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