

Italians doing it on the web: translating and selling Italianness

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Abstract

This essay explores the implementation of a stereotypically Italian attribute, passion, in the promotion of Italian beverages via the Internet. Twenty websites promoting different types of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages were examined in order to see how the concept of passion was adopted and whether, and if so, how the concept of passion changes according to the size of the company and the type of beverage being promoted. Findings showed that the more alcoholic content the promoted beverage contains, the stronger and more transgressive references to passion became. Furthermore, larger companies tended to opt for a more humorous use of the stereotype when compared to smaller companies.

Key words: Italianness, stereotypes, translation, advertising, Internet.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la forma en la que uno de los estereotipos atribuidos a los italianos, la pasión, se utiliza para la promoción de bebidas en internet. El estudio aborda un total de veinte sitios en la web con el objetivo de analizar cómo se adapta dicho estereotipo y si existen diferencias por lo que se refiere tanto a los tipos de compañías como de bebidas (alcohólicas o no). Los resultados demuestran que las bebidas con mayor contenido alcohólico recurren con mayor frecuencia y de forma más transgresora al concepto de passion. Por otro lado las compañías de mayor tamaño suelen recurrir al estereotipo de forma más humorística que las más pequeñas.

Palabras clave: Italia, estereotipos, traducción, publicidad, internet.

1. Introduction

This paper draws on the author's previous research (Chiaro 2004, 2007a and 2007b) into the way in which small and medium sized Italian companies have faced the challenge of what was initially labelled the New Economy in the late 1990s and

has since become a norm in marketing terms, namely promoting and eventually trading goods via the World Wide Web. Unsurprisingly, just as large companies and multinationals have traditionally had the financial resources to invest in promoting their products successfully both in print and on screen, they now appear to be equally at ease on the web. On the other hand, whether we can safely assume that smaller companies have been as well prepared to face the challenge of this relatively new way of advertising is another matter. Italy is a case in point. With an economy based largely on small to medium sized industries, a question we ask ourselves in this essay concerns how these companies have handled this new means of promotion. As recently as 2002, research revealed that Italian industries were significantly behind with respect to those of other countries in terms of 'web image' (Chiaro 2007b), and that smaller companies significantly lagged behind larger ones. How are they faring at the close of the new decade? Have small companies caught up with their larger competitors? And are larger companies adopting the sophisticated techniques of their foreign counterparts? The point is, that as well as technical know how – or at least the capacity to invest in technology – web promotion requires linguistic and socio-cultural expertise to cater for international navigators (Sprung 2000). Presumably multinational giants are aware of this necessity, but do smaller companies possess the same understanding? By examining a small corpus of dot.coms presenting Italian beverages, this essay sets out to examine just how far lingua-cultural sensitivity necessary for successful web promotion is widespread in Italian commercial enterprise and to what extent such understanding is simply in the possession of the large multi-nationals who have the economic power to be able to afford extensive research into the culture-specific perceptions of unidentified, international navigators.

2. Promotion on the Web

The way in which physical distance has been shortened due both to new technologies in transport and in communication has led to what Chiaro and Nocella have labelled “consumer homogenization” (2000:179). In other words, high speed communication is partly responsible for the process that economist Ritzer (2006, 2007, 2008) has labelled “McDonaldization” thanks to which, brands such as *Nike*, *Gap*, *L’Oreal* and *Pringles*, to name just four multinational corporations, have managed to successfully penetrate markets world wide. However, whether, and if so how far, such homogenization in consumers’ inclinations has changed local habits as radically as we are generally led to believe, is not at issue in the present study; although what is certainly evident is that companies that have ‘acted locally but thought globally’ appear to have gained global status and commercial success. For example, if we examine *Coca Cola*, a global brand *par excellence*, as

far back as the 1970s the company was advertising the product by means of a TV advertisement comprising numerous young people of visibly different ethnicities on a hilltop singing “I’d Like to Teach the World to Sing in Perfect Harmony” (Roger Cook, Roger Greenaway, Bill Backer and Billy Davis; 1978) the lyrics of which were adapted to: “I’d like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company”. By present day standards this attempt at localizing the drink into *n* cultures by means of a single ad may seem crude, it was however immensely innovative for that time. The company was obviously attempting to make the ad appealing to viewers world wide by allowing them to identify with one of the singers featured in the ad, and to say that *Coca Cola* was successful in doing so is, to say the least, understating the power of its copywriters. Likewise, in the early 1980s photographer Oliviero Toscani adopted a similar strategy for the Italian multinational *Benetton* ‘United Colors’ advertising campaign by featuring models of different ethnicities but in identical stances in each ad. The messages underlying such campaigns are self-evident. Whatever the colour of your skin, you will enjoy drinking *Coca Cola* and a *Benetton* sweater will look good.

With the advent of real time communication, competition has become tougher and while multinational giants in the past had opted for promotion via images of multiple-identity, or, depending on how we look at the issue, non-specific or even total non-identity with a specific culture, it would appear that several small to medium sized Italian companies seem to do quite the reverse and exploit the very specific notion of Italianness, both to identify the brand itself, and in the way that it is promoted. Significantly, highlighting the peculiarities of ‘being Italian’ (or, come to that ‘being *x*’, where *x* = ethnic identity) fits in well with the present day trend that accentuates the concept of local identity (De Mooij 2003, 2005). Paradoxically, although the planet appears to be becoming ever more global through high speed communication and global brands, dozens of niche markets that accentuate geographical/ethnic identity co-exist alongside high street labels. Suffice it to think of the success of the slow food movement against the onslaught of fast food conglomerates and the numerous minority languages seeking official recognition despite the pervasiveness of English. Almost illogically, it would appear that the more global we become, the more local we become too (cfr. Cronin 2004).

Of course the importance of English, undoubtedly the *Lingua Franca* of the third millennium, renders its use mandatory on the web. Thus, the need for companies to comply with the ‘GILT’ equation; namely, globalize, internationalize, localize, translate. And the fact that ‘translate’ at the tail end of the acronym may lead many operators to undervalue its status within the entire process of acting – or rather selling – globally. Conglomerate giants are well aware of the value of an appealing English slogan (e.g. “Just do it”; “Because I’m/you’re/we’re worth it”; “I’m lovin’ it” etc.)

and, I would argue, of the need to reduce verbal content. The advertising campaign for Sony Bravia television screens with the slogan “Colour like no other” consists of creating visual feasts of colour using objects and materials (balls, paint and play-doh) accompanied by music (www.bravia.sony.eu). No necessity for translation, although the significance of using the Rolling Stone’s “She’s a rainbow” as an accompaniment to the 2007 Play Doh ad will not be grasped by all viewers. Presumably, the almost total absence of verbal language is a deliberate marketing ploy which appears to work successfully in the case of the Bravia ads. We can safely assume that everyone will recognize coloured balls, buckets of paint and plasticine rabbits. But those who recognize the specific locations of each ad will recognize more than those who do not and consequently appreciate the spots more. Again, those who identify the lyrics of the Stones’ song will value the ads even further. It is worth wondering whether it is indeed possible to produce communication which is truly global and understood by everyone in the same way and to the same extent. A utopian dream, perhaps. In fact, in a general discussion of film, Egoyan and Balfour claim that “Every film is a foreign film, foreign to some audience somewhere – and not simply in terms of language” (2004: 21). The visual content of advertisements and dot.coms is no different. And this raises the question as to whether, and if so, how far, the planet really has become global (De Mooij, 2004; Ritzer, 2006).

2.1. *Web promotion as a genre*

Since the birth of the spread of HTML in the early 1990s and the first attempts at building corporate websites, the first decade of the 21st century has provided scholars with the possibility of being able to classify the content of electronic locations, i.e. dot.coms, in terms of textual genres. In other words, over and above its language and culture of origin, each individual dot.com will tend to be structured in a similar way. Thus, it would appear that navigators can retrieve specific information about a company from menus classified under sub-headings such as “Our company”, “Who we are”, “Our history”, “Our products”, “Our investors” and so on – headings which are mandatory in any self respecting company website. In addition to rudimentary information about the company, many sites also offer navigators a number of interactive services which go from games and quizzes to FAQs and downloads of wallpapers and jingles. However, a genre does not simply dictate the rules of the scaffolding of a text, but also lays down a number of micro-textual requirements of which smaller companies may be unaware. In other words, while the marketing departments of the multinational dot.com ‘giants’ may have the finances and know-how to rely on a team of linguists, translators and experts in marketing communication, smaller companies with more meagre resources may well be left to their own devices.

Needless to say, the greater the investment the more attractive will the website tend to be. In all probability websites are not only meant to be read. Images are just as important, if not more so than verbal content. In an analysis of pasta companies, Chiaro (2007b: 108) highlights the fact that Italian websites often include more words than images, noting that despite the clever use of aesthetics and colour and daily updates, one of the country's leading brands includes a 300 word text on the founder, Pietro Barilla, compared to 138 words regarding the founder of Heinz, 64 for the person who invented Kellogg's and no words at all for whoever was first responsible for Coca Cola (www.barilla.com; www.heinz.com; www.kelloggs.com; www.cocacola.com; all accessed 2007). Now, Italian tends towards verbosity, and it prefers hypertext and complex rhetoric. However, once translated into English it apparently does not always occur to the copywriters that the English language is more synthetic in nature. And that perhaps the Web is (generally) used for a faster form of communication and that navigators may not want to read, but simply 'view' and/or 'listen'.

To illustrate this point further, Tables 1 and 2 exemplify two very different ways of communicating a company's history. It is evident that the English version of the Lavazza coffee website (Italy's market leader in coffee) is a translation of the original. The translation is a good one, written in correct English in which both lexical and syntactic choices cannot be criticized and apart from the odd mistake (which quality control could, however, have easily avoided) in terms of overall functional equivalence and fidelity to the source text cannot be faulted. Yet, if we compare the Lavazza text to the history section of the Maxwell House dot.com, (a member of the Kraft food conglomerate) we immediately find, not only that the English text is shorter, but that it is couched in a totally different register. The English text is evidently written to be spoken; the tone of the 'history' text is lively and reminiscent of a TV ad. Maxwell House provides the reader with texts that are not only shorter, but also livelier, far more readable, and in short, sexier. If we compare the closing line of Lavazza's history, it reads:

(1)

Lavazza can rely on seven foreign subsidiaries and a wide-reaching international distribution network. Lavazza's Turin plant is the largest production area in Europe, operating on 73,000 square meters of space. In Italy, out of 20 million coffee-consuming families, 16 million buy Lavazza.

Conversely, Maxwell House reads:

(2)

Introducing our best Maxwell House ever. Now roasted with 100% Arabica Beans, known to be the finest coffee beans in all the world. For a full flavour without bitterness.

The latter is clearly promotional discourse. Short, to the point and catchy against the long-windedness of Lavazza. It is clear which of the two is more likely to attract readers.

Furthermore, it would appear that, generally speaking, the verbal component of Italian dot.coms appears to be colder as though keeping a distance between them and visitors. Let us consider the mission chapters of two other coffee companies, Segafredo and Kenco:

(3)

Intrinsic to the Segafredo Zanetti Espresso brand is a strong commitment to the market and the needs of a new clientele defined as international, cosmopolitan and postmodern, with tastes and lifestyles in constant evolution. (www.segafredofranchising.com accessed January 2008)

Rather heavy going to say the least if compared to Kenco's lighter, user-friendly approach:

At the Kenco coffee company we are committed to helping customers deliver a great coffee experience. (www.kencocoffeecompany.co.uk accessed January 2008).

Table 1. "Our History" www.lavazza.com (accessed January 2008)

<p>1859 <i>Nasce Luigi</i> <i>A Murisengo, piccolo centro dell'alessandrino, nasce il 24 aprile 1859, da una famiglia di agricoltori, Luigi Lavazza. Il padre Battista sogna per suo figlio un avvenire migliore: lo fa studiare e gli trasmette idee e principi che si riveleranno decisivi in seguito.</i></p>	<p>1859 Luigi is born On 24 April 1859 Luigi Lavazza is born to a family of farmers in Murisengo, a small town in the province of Alessandria. Luigi's father Battista dreams of a better future for his son. He sends him to school and conveys ideas and principles that would prove decisive in the years to come.</p>
<p>1885 <i>Dal Monferrato a Torino</i> <i>A 25 anni, con sole 50 Lire e molti sogni in tasca, Luigi Lavazza lascia il Monferrato per trasferirsi a Torino.</i> <i>La sua idea è di avviare in città un'attività in proprio ma, certo, non immagina che il suo nome possa un giorno diventare famoso. Energie e intraprendenza non gli mancano e, nei dieci anni seguenti, Luigi cambia spesso mestiere: è manovale, operaio in fabbrica, commesso. Intanto frequenta la scuola serale di commercio e in seguito la scuola municipale di chimica. È in questo modo che scopre la sua vocazione: il commercio.</i></p>	<p>1885 From Monferrato to Turin At the age of 25, with just 50 lire in his pocket but plenty with of dreams, Luigi Lavazza leaves Monferrato and moves to Turin. Although his idea was to set up his own business in the city, he certainly did not imagine that his name would become famous one day. He has plenty of energy and resourcefulness and with his drive to move ahead, in the following ten years Luigi often changes jobs: manual labourer, factory worker, shop clerk. In the meantime, he attends business school evening courses and then the municipal school of chemistry. This gives him a chance to discover his true vocation: business.</p>

<p>2004 <i>La quarta generazione</i> <i>Giuseppe, Marco, Francesca e Antonella rappresentano la quarta generazione Lavazza. Consapevoli della loro storia e della loro tradizione, si pongono l'obiettivo di traghettare l'azienda verso il futuro nel segno della continuità.</i> <i>In occasione del Salone del Gusto Lavazza lancia un nuovo prodotto: Tierra. Tierra è anche il primo progetto di Corporate Social Responsibility interamente realizzato dall'azienda e che ha previsto importanti interventi a livello economico e sociale nelle comunità di tre paesi: Honduras, Colombia e Perù.</i></p> <p><i>Lavazza vince la sfida dei mercati esteri</i> <i>Lavazza conta su sette consociate estere e una capillare rete di distribuzione internazionale. Per quanto riguarda la produzione, lo stabilimento di Torino è la più grande area produttiva d'Europa con 73000 metri quadrati. In Italia, su 20 milioni di famiglie che consumano caffè, 16 milioni acquistano Lavazza.</i></p>	<p>2004-2006 The fourth generation Giuseppe, Marco, Francesca and Antonella represent the fourth generation at Lavazza. Aware of their history and tradition, their objective is to lead the company into the future while maintaining continuity with the past. At "Salone del Gusto", Lavazza launches a new product: Tierra!. iTierra! is also its first Corporate Social Responsibility project, completely organised to launch key initiatives at the economic and social level for the communities of three countries: Honduras, Colombia and Peru. Lavazza wins the challenge of the foreign markets Lavazza can rely on seven foreign subsidiaries and a wide-reaching international distribution network. Lavazza's Turin plant is the largest production area in Europe, operating on 73,000 square meters of space. In Italy, out of 20 million coffee-consuming families, 16 million buy Lavazza.</p>
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Table 2. Maxwell House www.brewsomegood.com (accessed January 2008)

<p>1892 A coffee developed by Joel Cheek for the Maxwell House hotel Nashville Tennessee. Becomes so popular that the hotel owner allows no other coffee to be served to his guests. This special blend soon becomes known as Maxwell House Coffee</p>
<p>1942 General Foods supplies instant coffee to the US armed forces</p>
<p>2003-2004 Maxwell House offers convenience and freshness to customers with a new innovation. The café collection coffee pods, made from 100% Arabica beans, are custom designed for single serve brewing at home.</p>
<p>2007 Introducing our best Maxwell House ever. Now roasted with 100% Arabica Beans, known to be the finest coffee beans in all the world. For a full flavour without bitterness.</p>

Naturally, the fact that the English of the Lavazza site is a translation has surely had an impact on the language. It is evident that the translation emulates the target text in some way. The fact that the Italian sites provide the reader with translations that Stecconi has labelled "intrasemiotic" translations (2000) i.e. very close, often word to word, translations of the source texts, may well tie in with the suggestion that Italy fits into Hofstede's dimension of "uncertainty avoidance" (2002). Could

a ‘fear’ of departing too much from the source text create anxiety? Might there be an underlying feeling of ‘safety’ in sticking as much as possible to the original. Of course, Maxwell House and Kenco are at an advantage. They have the sociolinguistic power not to require translation. And, at this point, another of Hofstede and Hofstede’s dimension, that of small versus large power distance (2004: 39-70) could well explain difference in both styles and registers.

2.2. Promoting Italy

In previous studies the present author has identified the way in which Italian agro-food businesses tend to exploit a number of features often linked with the concept of Italianness (2004 and 2007) across several media; i.e. print, television and web promotion. Among the attributes that most frequently appear to connote Italy, the following regularly appear in advertisements for Italian products: cross-generational families; love of tradition; stylishness; beauty; good taste; art and passion. However, what clearly emerges is that all these features which, according to the collective imaginative constitute Italianness, are surely perceived as positive selling attributes. In fact, what Chiaro labels “pretend Italian brands” (2004:322), namely foreign labels which imitate Italian products, make use of the same attributes in order to underscore Italianness. A manifest difference between the promotion of products which are truly made in Italy and such pretend brands is the tendency for the latter to exploit stereotypes in a humorous way (2004: 323). Few Italian companies made attempts at being funny, or else if and when they did, they were generally unsuccessful (2007:74).

2.3. The attributes of Italianness in agro-food advertisements

2.3.1. Verbal attributes

In terms of verbal features, the following themes are typically adopted to connote Italianness in agro-food promotion in print, on film and on the world wide web:

1. family and tradition: Italian companies tend to underscore the tendency for the firm to be a family enterprise. This will be typically coupled with the concept of tradition and the date in which the company was founded;
2. authenticity and naturalness: the fact that products are truly Italian is frequently underscored together with the naturalness of ingredients – typically with references to the warm and sunny Italian climate and green environment;

3. stylishness and good taste;
4. 'the good life': frequently Italian lifestyle is promoted via references to a laid back way of living in which stylish café culture rules;
5. art and beauty: references to Italian art, architecture and classical music abound;
6. passion: the term is used both in terms of strong sexual desire (e.g. the Latin lover myth) as well as extravagance and enthusiasm.

2.3.2. Visual attributes

The colours of the Italian flag (red, white and green) typically adorn Italian promotional material, although blue is also often found, especially for the promotion of pasta. Blue is the colour of Italy, i.e. with Italian sporting teams known as *gli azzurri* (the blues), however, whether blue is a chosen because it is linked to Italy (are non-Italians aware that blue is the nation's colour?) or simply because of the colour's excellent resolution on a computer screen, remains to be seen. Interestingly, grey and silver with splashes of red are frequent choices especially for wine and coffee dot.coms, thus giving the impression of a more modern Italy, rather than the traditional idea of pasta, pizza and mandolins (Chiaro 2004:319):

1. family and tradition: sepia photographs of companies' founder and his family will appear against photos of the present day successors; families often depicted sitting around a table having a meal;
2. authenticity and naturalness: green hills; Tuscan-like landscapes; sunshine; glossy close-ups of fruits and vegetables covered in dew; kitchen tables strewn with garlic cloves, basil and a bottle of oil etc.;
3. stylishness and good taste: trendily dressed, fashionable young people riding scooters;
4. 'the good life': well-dressed people relaxing outside an open-air café; handsome couples eating with a famous Italian monument or landmark in the background (Colosseum; Vesuvius etc.);
5. art and beauty: statues, monuments; famous views etc;
6. passion: couples embracing; beautiful male and female models etc.

2.3.3. Acoustic attributes

Much promotion is accompanied by music. Although numerous websites contain elevator music, Italian websites, similarly to television ads, are not averse to an accompaniment of operatic arias or, occasionally, mandolins.

3. The study

Of the many attributes which constitutes the concept of 'Italianness' exploited in ads, the present study has singled out and explored the way in which the attribute of 'passion' is exploited in the web promotion of beverages with special attention having been paid to visuals and the extent to which they 'translate' cross-nationally. Beverages were chosen because of the social setting in which beverages are consumed. Coffee is indeed drunk at home alone or in company, but having a coffee is also a social and socializing experience. Similarly, alcoholic drinks are also often consumed in company. The latter beverages in particular are linked to the idea of passion, i.e. sparkling wines like *spumante* are commonplace at festivities and special occasions and typically at weddings, clearly linked to love and passion. Needless to say, alcohol typically circulates in clubs and at parties where many people go in the hope of meeting a partner.

A typical example of how the concept of passion is exploited can be seen in the Segafredo website. The slogan for Segafredo coffee remains in Italian on all its lingua-specific websites (i.e. English, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish) reads: *Da una passione vera, il caffè più autentico* - 'From true passion to the most authentic coffee'. In the Italian version, the first word in opening description of the company's history is, indeed, 'passion' :

(4)

*La **passione per il caffè** ha fatto della Segafredo Zanetti un'azienda multinazionale che oggi è presente nei mercati di tutto il mondo e grazie alla grande professionalità si è affermata come Leader dell'Espresso.*

The English version (translated) opens with the term 'love', but 'passion' is retrieved and is thus compensated further on in the text, juxtaposing it with (the nonce term)'professionality':

(5)

The **love for coffee** is what has made Segafredo Zanetti a multinational company which can today be found all over the world. The company's leadership in the bar espresso coffee sector is the result of an unparalleled combination of **passion and professionalism**.

Again, we find: *Passione, Professionalità e Innovazione* - '**Passion**, Professionalism and Innovation'; *Il vero Espresso all'italiana, quello che tutto il mondo ci invidia, è fatto di materia e di cuore, di passione e di capacità produttiva* - 'The authentic Italian espresso coffee, the one which the whole world envies us, is a blend not only of coffee, but also of conviction, **passion** and commitment'.

(6)

Noi italiani, con *l'estro* che da sempre ci contraddistingue, abbiamo inventato il caffè Espresso...

We Italians, world famous for our creativity and passion, invented the Espresso coffee ...

Die Italiener, mit der ihnen eigenen *Inspiration*, die sie schon seit jeher auszeichnet, gelten als Erfinder des caffè Espressos...

Nous Italiens, avec *l'esprit créatif* qui depuis toujours nous caractérise, nous avons inventé le café...

Nosotros los italianos, *con el talento* que desde siempre nos caracteriza, hemos inventado el café Espresso...

Nós Italianos, *com o entusiasmo* que sempre nos distinguiu, criamos o café Espresso...

Notably, the word 'passion' is only present in the English version. What was originally *estro* 'flair' becomes a variety of concepts that range from creativity to enthusiasm according to the language.

3.1. The corpus

The study is based on a small corpus of twenty dot.coms promoting Italian beverages. The choice of companies chosen was random and includes both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages with the exception of wine. Thus, the corpus comprises a variety of brands of alcoholic drinks, coffee and mineral waters.

Table 3. The corpus

LABEL	Url
Amaro Montenegro	www.amaromontenegro.it
Birra Peroni	www.peroni.com
Caffé Kimbo	www.kimbo.com
Campani	www.campani.com
Chinotto	www.chinotto.com
Essse caffè	www.essse.it
Ferrarelle	www.ferrarelle.it
Gancia	www.gancia.it
Illy caffè	www.illy.com
Lavazza caffè	www.lavazza.com
Limoncello	www.limoncello.com

Martini	www.martinirossi.com
Moka Rica caffè	www.mokarica.com
Moretti	www.morettibeer.com
Nastro Azzurro	www.nastroazzurro.it
San Pellegrino mineral water	www.sanpellegrino.com
Sao caffè	www.saocaffe.it
Segafredo caffè	www.segafreddo.it
Strega	www.strega.it
Vecchia Romagna	www.vecchiaromagna.it

3.2. *Attributes pertaining to passion*

The concept of passion is used both metaphorically and non in promotional websites. It corresponds, of course, to the commonplace of highly emotive Italians who are perceived as fervent in matters of the heart, but also sport, food, politics and a host of other areas too. However, in ads for beverages, and especially those containing alcohol, the sexual connotation of passion clearly emerges both visually and verbally. Passion is such an important attribute in selling Italian beverages, that it also appears in non-Italian companies promoting Italian-style drinks such as www.torani.com, a North American company making syrups. Torani was founded by Italian immigrants in the nineteen-twenties. The company slogan is “Taste. Life” and exhorts navigators to “Indulge in the flavour of passion”.

In the dot.coms of the beverages under scrutiny, passion was found to be linked to three different artefacts that I have labelled a) beauty; b) *La Dolce Vita*; and c) transgression. What follows are some examples of the concept of passion extracted at random from the corpus. Interestingly, it would appear that, generally speaking, the higher the product is in alcoholic content, the more the meaning of passion takes on a more transgressive stance.

3.2.1. *Passion and beauty*

Beautiful men and women adorn many of the websites under scrutiny. And water is believed to be an asset to good looks. Many Italian websites manage to combine the desire for a beautiful body with the concept of passion. The English language websites for Ferrarelle mineral water greet the navigator with a black and white photograph a beautiful naked woman, sitting demurely, juxtaposed every few seconds with an equally handsome and tastefully positioned naked man and the

question “Guess what Italians are made of?” clearly in the forefront. The photo shots are set off against a grey-silver background with a pack-shot of the product on the left (green bottle/red and white label) and the enlarged label on the right sporting the motto: “Italy’s number 1 sparkling water *dal 1893*.” We soon find out that Italians are made up of 20% *mamma*; 20% *papà*; 60% *acqua*. Thus we find several attributes of Italianness all rolled into one – the family with mother first, underlying references to heterosexual sex and, of course, the nursery rhyme “What are little girls/boys made of...” where the “sugar and spice and all things nice/rats and snails and puppy dogs’ tears” are replaced with the product. Furthermore, the web-pages boast that the product is “The official water of *La Dolce Vita*.” This tongue in cheek way of advertising is quite unusual by Italian standards. Clearly the company understands that by gently mocking the perception that others have of Italy can lead to a successful campaign.

Notably, Italian is used on the English language website. Code-switching (e.g. “sparkling water *dal 1893*”) is typical of Italian promotion in general (Chiaro 2004), but of course the Italian words inserted presumably belong to a repertoire in the possession of many.

3.2.2. *Passion and La Dolce Vita*

‘The sweet life’ reminiscent of a partying lifestyle of song, dance and romance as portrayed in Federico Fellini’s cinematic masterpiece (1960) is a commonplace in the dot.coms examined. Passion is an attribute which also appears in autochthonous advertisements and promotional texts. For example, the slogan of Bialetti, (www.bialetti.it) producers of the traditional moka-making vessel, reads: *La passione diventa amore vero* – literally ‘Passion becomes true love’, thus playing on the double-meaning of the term passion, i.e. excitement and ardour. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Moretti beer’s dot.com actually has a chapter entitled *La Dolce Vita* in which this concept is defined as “the good life full of pleasure and indulgence” and “The good life, Italian style. Good Moretti beer, food, and company.” And this aspect of festivity emerges from all the dot.coms pertaining to alcoholic beverages. The Birra Peroni site also has a chapter dedicated to the good life complete with numerous black and white photographs emulating the well known ‘fountain scene’ in the film in which Anita Ekberg climbs into the Trevi Fountain.

3.2.3. *Passion and Transgression*

Websites for strong alcoholic drinks (e.g. Campari, Martini) seem to have a predilection for red or black backdrops – red for passion/lust – black for sin? How-

ever, Amaretto Di Saronno, a popular almond flavoured liqueur, discards red and black, and opens up with a bright orange screen against the sound of people partying, glasses chinking and music. The navigator is then asked to choose between 'He' or 'She'. Clicking on 'She', he or she is presented with a list of states to choose from such as 'in love', 'fascinating' and 'successful'. Behind the word 'fascinating' we find the silhouette of a woman who appears to be lap dancing. She moves around the screen, and then sits down and moves her hands through her hair as she crosses and uncrosses her legs. The silhouette is juxtaposed with snapshots of a real woman. When she stops dancing, the navigator is then presented with advice regarding books to read, films to see, and, more importantly, how to behave with the opposite sex. Clicking on 'fascinating he', the silhouette depicts a man preening in front of a mirror, again, juxtaposed with photos of a real man. The advice we are given reads "Even if you have already decided, make them plead with you" Thus the 'Latin Lover' myth, so often depicted in the promotion of Italian products emerges.

Gancia, producers of *spumante*, present themselves as a family that "speaks of dedication and moreover of passion." What can be more enticing than "The glance of a person trying to attract our glance, reflected in an upheld glass, is certainly a message of love." However, alongside the image of "An evening spent with one's family who toast together" which "transmits a message of tradition", Gancia presents a snapshot of a group of attractive young people in a state of semi-undress bathing in a fountain with bottles of Gancia. The copy reads: "The vitality of young people dancing and spraying each other with sparkling wine at a beach party, an image of joy." Gancia seems to be attempting to attract two different markets in one fell swoop - older, traditional families and young, trendy partygoers. Or is the company trying to attract markets outside Italy where splashing around in fountains is more closely connected to binge drinking than the *Dolce Vita*?

Several websites for alcoholic products are somewhat daring to say the least. While the website for Vecchia Romagna brandy claims that the product generates "intense emotion" and Amaretto di Saronno's silhouette was faintly reminiscent of the notorious scene in the film *Basic Instinct* in which Sharon Stone crosses and uncrosses her legs (Paul Verhoeven, USA, 1992), Martini and Campari dot.coms go one step further. The Martini website is black and red and accompanied by music covered by the heavy breathing of a couple clearly involved in sexual activity. Copywriters would be hard put to becoming more passionate than that. But what is striking is the fact that this portrayal of passion is devoid of humour. Unlike, say, the naked woman in red stilettos and red witch's hat backdrop that we see on the homepage of the Strega liqueur website. Pity that there is no explanation for the fact that the word *strega* means 'witch', thus the joke is lost on visitors who know no Italian.

Campari also plays heavily on transgression. With its slogan “Red Passion” the dot.com includes video-clips of the well know television campaign containing cross-gendered encounters at a masked ball, although again, not humorous in any way. Much more appealing, perhaps, was the Nastro Azzurro campaign for the UK (www.birraperoni.co.uk accessed 2005) with the slogan: “Pure Nastro”. No words, but simply a bright green refrigerator on a white background. In the fridge we find a pair of red stilettos and a sexy red petticoat on a hanger. Thus we have the red, white and green of the Italian flag; the myth of the Latin Lover and the fact that if you drink Nastro Azzurro you will be cool, all rolled into one.

Of course alcohol is related to events in which participants may set out to encounter people of the opposite sex. Parties and clubs where alcohol is consumed are surely places which pre-empt social encounters which may or may not lead to romantic and/or passionate activity. Hence the highlighting of such elements on the dot.coms that promote hard liqueur. The home page that requires the navigator to provide his or her date of birth, not only exists to curb under-age drinking, but also as a watershed for unsuitable content for young people.

3.3. Small and medium sized companies and passion

But how can smaller companies compete with larger companies? The Limoncello di Capri website, promoting the island’s typical lemon liqueur tells us that *Questo prodotto meraviglioso è come bere il sole liquido. Ha un sapore favoloso e scalda l'intero corpo* - “This wonderful product is like drinking liquid sunshine. It has a fabulous flavour, and warms the entire body.” The reader gets the message, but the idea is that the warmth that the product provides is truly non-passionate. The website is pretty, blue seas and views of the beautiful island of Capri, but it is static and devoid of a kick. Again the Amaro Montenegro site sports a small and somewhat sad dot.com in which the only hint of passion refers to its inventor “... in 1885 thanks to the lengthy, impassioned experiments of a famous distiller and herbalist, Stanislao Cobianchi”. It is clear that little investment has gone into these websites. There is no action, no music and little word-play. Colours are flat and devoid of the glossiness of those of larger companies. However, more importantly, there is no attempt at providing intersemiotic translations. Only the verbal content changes with the language leaving visual elements intact.

4. Conclusions

What emerges from this study is that unlike typical Italian products such as pasta and olive oil, when it comes to alcoholic beverages, Italianness is only

partially adopted as a promotional attribute. This may possibly be due to the fact that often, companies may be ‘selling coals to Newcastle’. Let us consider the Campari conglomerate. The company is responsible for dozens of labels. One is a single malt whisky called Glen Grant, another is a beer called Dreher. The latter, with its German sounding label, is sold mostly in Brazil, while the whisky has markets in France, Germany and Spain. Again, the company’s “authentic Scottish whisky”, labelled Drury’s, is sold mainly in South America. Promoting it by means of Italian attributes would probably not get the company very far in terms of sales.

Another aspect resulting from this study is that smaller companies cannot keep up with their larger competitors in terms of web image. They cannot afford to employ top models to appear in their promotional campaigns, thus scarce finances coupled with the fact of their lack of linguistic and technical know how, makes the concept of passion in such sites fall rather flat. Last, but certainly not least, this paper has touched upon the intersemiotic aspect of web translation. On the web, images are worth more than words. However, the issue of the cross-cultural reception of non-verbal signs is virgin ground in terms of research, yet, as this essay has attempted to show, is fertile ground for further studies.

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