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From waste to (*real*) taste A semiotic analysis throughout the culture of food waste

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A mio fratello Enrico

Che tu possa affrontare la tua vita nel modo in cui ho imparato a farlo io: con il sorriso, con passione e tanta grinta.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis proposes a focus on the binomial of food waste-brand activism: in light of the fact that the new imperative for entrepreneurs that seek to build iconic brands and to emerge from the cluttered media world is to activate, to take a stand and to mobilize debates around political or social causes, I have decided to understand how companies face and fight one of the biggest socio-economic problem that the world is facing but whose seriousness is not yet understood too much: food waste.

I decided to focus on a topic related to *food* both because this is one of my deepest passions and both because I believe that it is a symbol expressing sociocultural identity and a system of communication that is able to vehicolate values and meanings, sometimes more than words.

In order to develop a systematic understanding of how companies through their discourses can sensitize consumers and induce them to act in a sustainable way reducing food waste, I have decided to analyze the topics of brand activism and of food waste separately and then to apply a specific research process.

The thesis is divided in 4 chapters.

The first chapter contains a detailed literature review of the phenomenon of brand activism. The chapter opens with a clarification: marketing and semiotics are not two separate branches but they are complementary. In fact, we speak of *semiotics applied to marketing* which allows to know the problems and understand the market. Semiotic analysis, according to L. Oswald, can play a key role early in the strategic planning process to align the brand with the movement of meanings associated with the product category, the consumer target, and the cultural environment. Researchers agree that "companies must have a social responsibility" and thus must have an "eye on the world" because customers today want to know what their purpose is.

In this sense, brands should behave as cultural *activists* (not reactionaries) and thus they must take an emphatic nonneutral stance on a controversial matter which regards all members of the society and must lead the change with their actions or initiatives. Brand activism has become an imperative. It is important to highlight that authenticity must be perceived by the consumer, otherwise negative effects will occur.

In the third paragraph of the chapter I have explained the difference between brand activism and Corporate Social Responsibility: CSR is as an obligation for companies to take certain factors into consideration during the course of their business activities, thus it is something more "internally focused" as its actions are aligned with the principles it claims to believe in.

Subsequently in the chapter it is highlighted the importance of taking a stand and consumer reactions to brand activism are widely presented. Despite it appears clear that the majority of consumers say they are in favor of brands taking a stance, the reaction to new role of brands is asymmetric and can differ from person to person, but, in general terms it is possible to say that they could receive positive or negative feelings.

The second chapter instead focuses on the analysis of the phenomenon I wanted to analyze: food waste.

Food waste is not merely a byproduct of culture: this problem is so monumental that experts define it as a *culture*. We live in the culture of waste.

But before talking about this phenomenon and its consequences, I thought it would be proper to analyze all the values and meaning that, *over time, revolve around the language of food*.

Gastromania, food porn and the general spectacularization of food, which are analyzed in the following paragraphs, have progressively eroded the importance of conviviality at the table even where it played a fundamental role, such as in Italian culture.

Undoubtedly values attributed to food have changed and here the phenomenon of food waste emerges.

After a brief analysis of the historical origins of the phenomenon, I have highlighted its relevance, through facts and figures. It is not an isolated phenomenon but it occurs throughout all the supply chain, at the production, retail and consumer level.

After, through data, I have also reported the economic, social and environmental consequences of the phenomenon of food waste and then I have identified the actors (such as Public Institutions, companies or consumer movements) that are understanding the seriousness of the problem.

I concluded the chapter with a description of the lack of research from a marketing standpoint.

The third chapter instead is focused on the research process and it could be divided in two parts.

It opens with an illustration of the research question and the identification of the method used to answer to the same.

So, in the development of first part of the chapter I have used the *brandscape* model from Laura Oswald. So, first of all, I have explored the external environment and the trends in the category and popular culture though a data collection process, which has led to the identification of 2 main categories, analyzed in detail in the corresponding paragraphs. After I was able to identify the dominant and the emergent codes and the cultural tension that arises in society.

Simply taking a traditional perspective and interpreting food waste on the basis of the current brand communication was not appropriate basically because this topic is a taboo, and therefore it is hardly discussed in an explicit and linear way.

In the second part of the chapter I have conducted a semiotic analysis of a print advertising, first and of a commercial, after. In order to have a broader comprehension of the spot, I have also decided to use the Enunciation model and the Actantial one. To conclude, I have added the semiotic analysis of an hybrid case.

In the fourth chapter I inserted the conclusions and valid guidelines for brand managers to effectively create brand activism campaigns on the topic of food waste. Moreover I also showed the limitation s and I made some observations on future researches.

CHAPTER 1 : BRAND ACTIVISM. A LITTERATURE REVIEW

1. MARKETING AND SEMIOTICS: A TWO WAY STREET

The marketing literature has always been focused on the relationship between companies and the external environment they are immersed in: in particular, companies' aim and duty is to configure themselves and to take into account changes in the public's tastes and preferences (Morgan, Vorhies, and Mason 2009) and to accomplish consumer needs. More precisely, according to academic literature, the aim of marketing is to "create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." (Gundlach and Wilkie, 2009). Philip Kotler, one of the most important scholars, argues that it is necessary to ask what is the goal of marketing today and the answer can be on different levels, in increasing order of breadth of vision and impact, just like a climax. Accordingly, marketing can aim to sell, to create value for the customer, to increase the quality of life of people, to make a contribution to happiness and wellbeing. However, marketing, as Floch observes in his works¹, uses methods such as market researches which "privilege a simplifying and quantitative approach, orienting more towards the measurement and quantification of a phenomenon rather than its understanding".

Marketing is based on the theory of social action that rests on three pillars:

- While acting, consumer uses essentially a rational and economic approach in the sense that between two divergent solutions he will tend to choose the more practical one, the simpler and better one suited to his objectives. In the realization of his objectives, an individual will tend to rationally analyze the cost-benefit ratio and will choose the solution that maximizes benefits and that minimizes costs.
- The individual is moved by a series of needs that determine his social behavior which arise in a predetermined order that is the equal for everyone. Only when one type of need is satisfied, the individual feels the need to satisfy the next one in accordance with Maslow's pyramid theory. First of all there are the primary needs, such as that of nourishing oneself, protecting oneself, warming oneself and gradually there are the more sophisticated and immaterial needs such as intellectual or socialization needs.
- Social behavior is a phenomenon of competition and hierarchization: individuals are looking for an affirmation of their status which takes the form of social prestige. This status is difficult to obtain and therefore a competition to access it follows.

As a consequence, echoing Floch's words, 'market research has a methodological and theoretical nature and adopts a quantitative approach, oriented more toward the measurement and quantification of phenomena than

¹ Floch J.M.; Semiotica, marketing e comunicazione: dietro i segni, le strategie; Franco Angeli

to the understanding and problematization of hypotheses." Marketing therefore aims more at measuring behaviors and classifying individuals according to objective criteria (socio-demographic parameters). Consumption is seen, therefore, as a mere usage.

Considering the growing contradiction of behavior linked to the world of consumption, its instability, the rapid change and growing needs that characterize the population, it is evident that the traditional and quantitative paradigms of investigation, however necessary, fail to account for of all these variables. And to the extent that consumption is increasingly a symbolic and cultural phenomenon, it is evident that the tools traditionally used by researchers tend to be less effective.

In fact, the growing complexity of society has placed marketers in a dead end: since it would not be able to satisfy the market and the consumer in the best possible way, researchers believe that the use of semiotics and qualitative research is necessary. So it becomes more and more evident that measuring is useless if you don't know what you are measuring. Semiotics allows, on the basis of the notions of signifier and the meaning, to see beyond a single text but lacks social action. However, it must not replace marketing but should complement it.

This is why researchers like Floch prefer to talk about *semiotics applied to marketing* which can play an important role of provocation and stimulus. In particular, looking at marketing through a semiotic lens allows to know the problems and understand the market. In particular, if researchers want to overcome a simplistic and naive view of products, and therefore if they want to deepen the mechanisms of consumption in order to understand the reasons or values that lead consumers to behave in a certain way, it is necessary to refer to semiotics.

The semiotic approach obliges researchers to pay greater attention to the practice of signification and therefore allows to formulate a theory of consumer behavior and to define a theoretical framework necessary for analyzing brand problems.

Semiotic analysis applied to marketing problems constantly tends to highlight that the meaning of a textual configuration does not reside exclusively in the text itself (object, advertisement or other) but a meaning tends to be situated in the relationship between production and consumption, which is continuous.

In fact, as mentioned, it is no longer possible to consider consumption in a literal and objective sense but, with reference to the Floch theory, it is necessary to shift the focus from the consumption of a product to the *consumption of the meaning* of that product. In fact, nowadays, individuals do not consider a product and consequently a brand for its extrinsic qualities (weight, volume, performance) but they choose one over another in relation to a series of values and meanings that they are able to convey and of the impact that they can have on the society.

Researchers agree that "companies must have a social responsibility" and thus must have an "eye on the world" because customers today want to know what their purpose is. A brand must feed of the *cultural humus*

of the moment, incorporating tastes, trends, values, ideologies of the environment in which it is immersed in, translating them for its specific purposes. Semiotic analysis, according to L. Oswald, can play a strategic role early in the strategic planning process to align the brand with the movement of meanings associated with the product category, the consumer target, and the cultural environment.

The Benetton-Toscani case is a good example in this sense because it has contributed to questioning the barriers between advertising and socio-political discourse, inserting AIDS or mafia-related issues within a marketing context where they have always been excluded. In the same way Bill Gates invests in humanitarian causes in Africa much more than any State government: he does it to strengthen the brand discourse, to repair the political weakness of the nations and to show the brand commitment toward a specific cause. He mixes practices and words, undermines the boundaries between genres, redraws their semiotic contours and strategic objectives.

Nowadays the majority of brands embrace social, environmental and pacifist values. Where movements and political parties are emptied of meaning, ideologies crumble and lose their strength, it is the brand that relaunches the value of a series of delicate social and political issues.

Many other large corporations have already moved in this direction, also taking risks, because taking sides often means antagonizing those who do not share the same "purpose", or in any case exposing the side to criticism if some action is not perfectly consistent with what has been declared. The boomerang risk is therefore high.

The spread of technology, which has brought a radical change to the marketplace, have resulted in an hyperconnected world that has enabled existing brands to expand their geographic reach, boundaries and societal roles. ''Hyperconnected world is characterized by networks of people, devices, and other entities that are continuously interacting and exchanging information ''² . This ensures that there is a huge amount of data available and high speed of access which implies that consumers need to expend less effort in learning information about brands. Moreover the spread of networks, social media and brand conversations, enables an environment in which brands and their meanings are co-created. So, hyperconnectivity provides that, on one side, consumers are no longer passive receivers of information provided through advertising, but they have become more interactive and they share their values and beliefs that every brand must consider. (Bain, 2018); on their side, brands need to prove their ethical responsibility by linking themselves to social causes and thus, they have developed new roles.

The traditional role of the brand envisioned it as symbol or as mental cue: Oswald precised that a brand is not a sign: it is a symbol and as such, structures an economy of symbolic exchange that gives value to the meanings consumers attach to the brand, name, logo, and product category. Levy (1959, p. 205) stated that "things people

² Source: Swaminathan V., Sorescu A., Steenkamp E.M, Gibson O'Guinn T., & Schmitt B.(2020); *Branding in a Hyperconnected World: Refocusing Theories and Rethinking Boundaries*. Journal of Marketing

buy are seen to have personal and social meanings" ³and, on the basis of William James' "Theory of self", people use branded symbols to reinforce their view of their actual and ideal self. Moreover, the brand also indicates a status symbol and is important in consumer identification as it becomes a resource for self-expression (e.g., Holt, 2002; Morhart et al., 2015) and gain subcultural legitimacy (e.g., Beverland et al., 2010; Kates, 2004)

Holt (2004) writes in the outline of his book on the principles of cultural branding : '' People identify strongly with cultural iconic brands and often rely on these symbols in their everyday lives. [...] ''More generally, cultural icons are exemplary symbols that people accept as a shorthand to represent important ideas.'' ⁴. But, today, as Swaminathan states, hyperconnectivity has shifted the role of the brand and has made it as an *arbiter of controversy*. Still, when brands are strong enough to serve as symbols, some also transition into roles of arbiters of controversy within the identity and sociopolitical realms on key topics such as feminism, LGBT rights, and racial issues, environmental concerns and, while doing so, appeal to consumers at the epicenter of cultural controversy. In this way, brands appear to have a stronger voice not only in the identification of the self, but also in a hyperconnected world, in which their message s on social and political issues in ways that can aid society move forward. Hyperconnectivity has not only afforded brands the opportunity to have a stronger voice but also has not reduced their ability to stay "above the fray" on controversial topics .

Some scholars "consider it necessary for organizations to define their roles in society" (Lindgreen and Swaen 2010) and to position themselves in relation to socioeconomic or ecological problems, thus entering a variety of political conversations. Times have changed. In the past, a company *could* choose which problems to commit to, or even whether *to commit or not*. In today's world at large, and consequently in the business and marketing environments, it's becoming more common to take such an emphatic stand on a divisive social issue. Some brands deliberately and proactively position themselves in political context by becoming "ractivists" of some sort (Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015; Stoeckl 2014). Such activist brands promote oppositional moralities by actively transforming hared ideals, concerns or criticism into organized debates, driving brand stakeholders into moralized "brandscapes" (Den Hond and De Bakker 2007; Salzer-Morling and Strannegard 2007)⁵: the distinctive characteristic that makes a brand "activist" is the fact that, as it will be explained, the company is taking a nonneutral stance on a controversial matter which regard all members of the society. In doing so, those brands go beyond merely having a good conscience or behaving ethically and correctly.

³ Source: Swaminathan V., Sorescu A., Steenkamp E.M, Gibson O'Guinn T., & Schmitt B.(2020); *Branding in a Hyperconnected World: Refocusing Theories and Rethinking Boundaries*. Journal of Marketing

⁴ Source: Holt D. (2004); *How brands become icons : the principles of cultural branding*; Boston, Mass ; Harvard Business School Press

⁵ Source : Koch, C. H. (2020). Brands as activists: The Oatly case. Journal of Brand Management, 27(5), 593-606.

In some cases, brand are *forced* to take a stand because consumers clearly require a position: they are increasingly turning to corporations, demanding brands to use their power to drive positive change in society (Stewart, 2018; Bakhtiari, 2020) because they want companies to be accountable for their responsibilities in society, since they are big actors on the market and have a great impact and since a cycle of distrust breaks this scenario. While taking a stand could mean putting your business at risk, it's what consumers demand.

An indicator of trust, which is the Edelman Trust Barometer annual survey, already and since 2018, confirms that people have lost faith in social platforms, NGOs and the State and have affirmed as the most trustworthy institution ``their employer". The inability of the State to play its role of leader has led companies, and therefore its CEOs, to take the reins of charge. Consumers ask companies, both public and private, to have a social purpose. 'Businesses must not only have satisfactory financial performance but also demonstrate that it makes a positive contribution to society. CEOs are expected to lead the fight for change'', as Stephen Kehoe, global chair of reputation at Edelman says.

Accordingly the survey results⁶ from 2019 confirms that more than three-quarters of respondents (76%) say they want CEOs to lead change, instead of waiting for those who impose it (73%). Additionally, 70% believe that a company can take actions that increase profits and improve the economic and social conditions of the community in which it operates.

For generations, it seemed clear that a brand belonged to the company that invested in shaping, growing and monetizing it: Katsanis (1994) argued that brands are the most valuable possession of a company since positive attitudes and associations customers have toward the company's brands create value and attract new consumers. In fact, from a marketing point of view, historically the brand was put on the market by focusing on its performance, therefore a lot was played on its positioning (product of *alpha* company is better than others); nowadays, as said, things have changed and the positioning is no longer sufficient and at the moment it is urgent to behave correctly, in light of the fact that brands have become community property: shareholders own a stake, as they always have, but so do employees who bring the brand to life. Consumers also have an important role: they support it through their purchases and shape it with their demands.

So, a brand is not internally focused and internally constructed but it must look also outside because all these players and all facts that happen around build brand identity, improve the brand experience and, conciously or not, refine what the brand stands for. In effect, according to Oswald's notion of *'brandscape''*, companies must struggle and thus must change according to the evolution of their respective industries, meaning that they must proactively research the culture of consumers, align this culture with their brand legacy and promise, and use this information to develop new products and a relevant communication strategy.

⁶ Source: https://apac.prca.global/2019-edelman-trust-barometer-reveals-my-employer-is-the-most-trusted-institution/

In fact, the concept of *brandscape* implies that the brand strategy builds on the network of meaning that link the brand with the consumer world, rather than relying only on its heritage. In particular it is better to talk about a ''give-and-take'' relation between brand heritage, consumer culture and the external environment which is in continuous evolution. This means that successful brands not only mirror culture; they create culture, in the form of trends, icons, and meanings that produce culture. According to L.Oswald definition, ''semiotics can contribute to brand innovation by tracking the evolution of social and cultural trends, anticipating emergent trends, and moving brands into that new space''⁷. In this way the brand, at the same time, enters consumer culture and is created by the consumer, and it answers to his needs and wants, rather than only looking at its own culture.

Instead, Holt⁸ adopted a different perspective: according to his cultural branding model, there is a one-way movement of meaning from the brand to consumers. It focuses on the analysis of the relationships between brands and consumer culture, leaving out consideration the competitive tensions structuring relations between brands in the marketplace, or semiotic tensions between the brand, the category, and peripheral categories. Holt vision emphasizes how marketers influence consumer behavior by means of iconic advertising. So, exactly, it is a one way movement: once identified the cultural tension, the brand builds a defined and creative strategy that would reach the consumer.

Therefore, it is clear that, in an increasingly "hyperconnected" company, the consumer has become a constituent part of it, not only more a "spectator " or "receiver" of the communication.

So, With nearly two-thirds of consumers expecting brands to work to improve the state of society, brand activism has become a keyword in today's world.

2. BRAND ACTIVISM

The new imperative for entrepreneurs that seek to build iconic brands and to emerge from the cluttered media world is to activate, by mobilizing debates around a political causes and promote the legitimacy of industry practices, following the footsteps of Nike and Patagonia. Contrary to what one might think, nowadays it is not proper to talk about political marketing and therefore it is not politics that influences advertising and communication models but vice versa: advertising and therefore communication experts are those who have grasped the need to inform the public and therefore to spread a relative system of values to ensure that he is able to understand important issues and behave accordingly.

⁷ Source: OswaldL. (2012) Marketing semiotics : signs, strategies and brand value; Oxford

⁸ Source: Oswald L. (2015) Creating Value: the theory and practice of marketing semiotics research; Oxford

Holt sustained that most companies are organized to act as cultural *reactionaries*, whose practices are the opposite of the activism that is required. And, a brand that wants to become an icon needs to be a cultural activist: so it must ''open its eyes'' and catch the emerging cultural opportunities and reinvent its marketing functions. They must assemble cultural knowledge rather than knowledge about individual consumers and strategize according to cultural branding principles, rather than applying the abstracted mind share model. And they must create cultural activists, rather than promoters of brand essence.

Managers require and need knowledge about the brand and about the consumers, not only from a psychographic point of view but also from a qualitative one, with the analysis of the role of major social categories of class, gender, ethnicity. But above all, what is required, in order to develop strategy and walk the talk, is a deep understanding of major social changes impacting society and the trend that continuously develop and shape culture.

In recent years, more and more research by management experts revolves around the concept of brand activism, with the aim of establishing a unique definition. ''It is an emerging tactic for brands seeking to stand out in a fragmented marketplace by taking public stances on social and political issues" (Moorman 2020)⁹. Accordingly, Kotler and Sarkar in their work clarify that brand activism is therefore the will, clearly stated, *to want to take part*, and not just take a position, in causes in the social sphere. It therefore means taking on specific responsibilities regarding the achievement of what is considered by people to be the common good: from this point of view, brand activism is leadership. Accordingly, brand activism is also seen as a deliberate corporate strategy which focuses on what companies think is "good" for society through the communication of values that include core political and social issues whose aim is to influence the consumer through messages and campaigns created and sustained by political values. (Manfredi-Sanchez, 2019). Brand activism often adresses societal, environmental, or human issues, even if they are not directly associated with the company's core product. Therefore, for Chatterjee (2020)¹⁰ taking a stand is not about marketing any longer, it is about showing compassion for the people affected as a brand, people that can be customers, employees, or other important stakeholders.

Even if Kotler and Sarkar (2017) coined the expression, their definition largely overlaps, in terms of meaning, with other authors' notions. In fact, despite brand activism is a relatively new concept, it can be traced back to Sethi (1979) concept of *AdvocacyAdvertising*¹¹ defined as "the propagation of ideas and the elucidation of

⁹ Source: Moorman C. (2020); Commentary: Brand activism in a political world; Journal of Public Policy and Marketing

¹⁰ Source: Chatterjee, D. (2020, August 31). Ready Your Brand For Social Justice. Forrester

¹¹ Source: Sethi, S. P. (1979). Institutional/image advertising and idea/issue advertising as marketing tools: Some public policy issues. Journal of Marketing, 43(1), 68-78.

controversial social issues of public importance It does so in a manner such that supports the position and interests of the sponsor while expressly or implicitly [sic] downgrading the sponsor's opponents and denying the accuracy of their facts."

Instead, Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020)¹² used the concept of *Corporate Activism* to indicate the "company's willingness to take a stand on social, political, economic, and environmental issues to create societal change by influencing the attitudes and behaviors of actors in its institutional environment". Other authors, such as Hambrick and Wowak (2021)¹³, instead, in their works talked *about CEO Sociopolitical* Activism as 'a business leader's personal and public expression of a stance on some matter of current social or political debate, with the primary aims of visibly weighing in on the issue and influencing opinions in the espoused direction." Some authors such as Mirzaei et al (2022), in light of the fact that the term "woke" is of African-American origin and refers to a "byword for social awareness" (Merriam-Webster 2017), forged the jargon 'woke activism' referring to a brand that is awake or alert to critical social issues, discrimination, and injustice. It is interesting to observe Bhagwat et al. (2020)¹⁴ definition of "sociopolitical activism" as 'a firm's public demonstration (statements and/or actions) of support or opposition to one side of a partisan issue ". This means that activism offers firms a chance to demonstrate their cultural relevance. The brand adopts certain values and addresses society-based issues which are transformed into actions and collaboration with the society, through personalized messages, discussions, co-creation of the content, Extending Moorman's (2020) work on brand political activism, Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry and Kemper (2020) see formally brand activism as 'a purpose- and values-driven strategy in which a brand adopts a nonneutral stance on institutionally contested sociopolitical issues, to create social change and marketing success'¹⁵.

In particular, companies try to bring a concrete benefit or improvement to societies by focusing on concerns from several activism categories that managers may consider throughout the marketing strategy processes.

Those statements led the previous authors to make several reflections:

1)The brand is purpose- and values-driven; Brand activism, driven by brand purpose and values, seeks to impact sociopolitical issues beyond immediate economic interests (Sarkar and Kotler 2018) in fact a brand is not driven solely by profit but focuses on a brand's contribution to wider public interest and societal goals, prioritizing delivery of social and environmental benefits (Bocken et al. 2014).

¹² Source: Eilert, M., & Nappier Cherup, A. (2020). *The activist company: Examining a company's pursuit of societal change through corporate activism using an institutional theoretical lens;* Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 39(4), 461-476.

¹³ Source: Hambrick, D. C., & Wowak, A. J. (2021). *CEO sociopolitical activism: A stakeholder alignment model ;* Academy of Management Review, 46(1), 33-59.

¹⁴ Source: Moorman C. (2020); Commentary: Brand activism in a political world; Journal of Public Policy and Marketing

¹⁵ Source: Vredenburg J., Kapitan S., Spry A., &. Kemper J.A (2020); *Brands Taking a Stand: Authentic Brand Activism or Woke Washing?*; Journal of Public Policy & Marketing

Accordingly, Sibai defines activists as "moral subjects, in that their stakeholders perceive them as "purposeand values-driven" entities, having a moral "conscience" (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018, p. 707) that can be used to influence the morality of others (Hoppner & Vadakkepatt, 2019)"¹⁶.

A good example of brand activist in this sense is Patagonia: the brand in 2018 created "Action Works" to connect committed individuals to organizations working on environmental issues and donates 1% of sales to such organizations (which has encouraged other companies to do the same starting "1% for the Planet").

2)The brand addresses a controversial, contested, or polarizing sociopolitical issue(s); Brand activism has extended beyond achieving social impact to engaging with controversial, contested, and polarizing sociopolitical issues. Controversial issues can be defined as "salient unresolved matters on which societal and institutional opinion is split, thus potentially engendering acrimonious debate across groups" (Nalick et al., 2016, p. 386)¹⁷. This aspect demonstrates the power – and some might say responsibility – of brands to drive public debate and show moral leadership. In order to talk about ''activism'', this condition is necessary and thus there will be firm stakeholders—consumers, partners, employees, policy makers, and so on—who wants to maintain the status quo on these issues and those who look for a changed world. The company throughout its activist campaigns addresses controversial issues that potentially divide the public (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Contested issues have competing values and interests, engender disagreements about assertions or actions, are politically sensitive, and arouse strong emotions (Flinders University 2019; Nalick et al. 2016). Thus, not all customers have the same values as the brand, and the brand could potentially alienate certain consumer groups more than others.

3) The issue can be progressive or conservative:, brand activism is further characterized by the adoption of either progressive or conservative stances on sociopolitical issues, that are subjective and determined by the company on the basis of researches and investigations about the possible and potential concerns a future stakeholders may have.

When companies have to choose which issue to side with, some experts confirm that companies should choose to focus on problems that are more in line with their values; on the other side, this is a shortsighted way of looking at problems as firms don't look ''past their noses'' and they only consider the inner company reality or a small circle of inconveniences. Companies need to adopt a mentality which observes reality from the outside to the inside. In this regard, as Kotler and Sakar indicate in their book, there are a series of ''evil problems'' that companies interested in being considered as ''activists'' should consider. These dimensions

¹⁶ Source: Sibai O. Mimoun L. & Boukis A. (2021); Authenticating brand activism: Negotiating the boundaries of free speech to make a change; Journal of Psychology and Marketing

¹⁷ Source : Bhagwat Y., Warren N.L., Beck J., & Watson G. (2020) ' 'Corporate Sociopolitical Activism and Firm Value''; Journal of Marketing

broaden the categories proposed by Carroll's (1979) for CSR construct and encompass large unfriendly debates facing society (Hydock et al., 2020; Mishra & Modi, 2015; Sarkar & Kotler, 2018; Vredenburg et al., 2020):

- Social activism: includes areas such as gender equality, education, healthcare etc.
- Political activism: includes lobbying, voting, privatization, policies etc.
- Economic activism: includes tax policies, income equality etc.
- Workplace activism: deals with labor and organizational issues etc.
- Environmental activism: which includes air and water pollution, emission control issues, environmental policies, food waste etc.,
- Legal activism: deals with citizenship and employment laws and policies etc.

4)The firm contributes toward a sociopolitical issue(s) through messaging and brand practice : brand activism involves both intangible (messaging through advertising) and tangible (practice) commitments to a sociopolitical cause. Therefore, as Ghosh A. states in his article written for Brandingmag online journal in 2021, ''brand activism goes beyond mere advocacy (i.e., Dodd and Supa 2014; Nalick et al. 2016; Wettstein and Baur 2016) and involves alignment with corporate practices that uphold brand purpose and values. Messages are backed up by tangible changes within the organization to support employees, customers, and stakeholders through, for example, modifications to corporate practice and organizational policies (Kapitan, Kennedy, and Berth, 2019), monetary donations (Crimmins and Horn, 1996), and partnerships (Duane and Domegan, 2019) aimed at facilitating social change''¹⁸.

2.1 PROGRESSIVE VS REGRESSIVE BRAND ACTIVISM

It is good to precise that, whatever we have exposed, is basically referred to one type of brand activism: the *progressive* one. Indeed, author as Sibai, Mimoun and Boukis (2021) suggest that brand activism is progressive per definition, while others (e.g., Kotler & Sarkar, 2017; Vredenburg et al., 2020) suggest that it is necessary to make a distinction between progressive or regressive brand activism.

¹⁸ Source: Gosh A. (2021, September 2021); When brands should shut up-A study on Brand Activism; Brandingmag

As we can see from the picture of this timeline, when there is a question or a social issue that basically divide society, a gap can originate between business values and its position and customer values.



Source: Kotler P. Sarkar C. (2020) Brand acivism : from purpose to action ; Milano ; Hoepli

. This gap can be measured properly through online surveys, reports and investigations conducted at regular intervals. If brand vision is in contrast with consumer and society needs, a negative situation arises and scholars talk about "regressive" brand activism. Instead when the gap has a positive value, meaning that the brand vision is more advanced than the one of its stakeholders, this means that the company has made something for them and has overcome all the expectations: in this case researchers talk about leadership or progressive brand activism.

To be more precise, the distinction is based on the concept of 'common asset' which, by definition, is classified as 'what is shared and joyful for all or for most of the members of the community'. In fact, depending on the scope of brand activism, it is possible to distinguish the progressive one, whose aim is to promote the common good, and on the other side, regressive one, whose aim is to go against it.

In particular, as we said, the objective of a brand must not only be to generate profits, but also to express its proactive position on the main issues that afflict today's society and to engage in concrete, authentic actions. This means being a progressive activist. In fact, according to the authors, the progressive brand activism implies a brand's awareness of having to behave in compliance with the common good and in carrying out concrete actions oriented in this sense; it presupposes a deep interest and a responsible, concrete, ethical commitment and participation in favor of the community with the final aim of solving the "hot" problems that afflict society at large.

On the other hand, regressive brand activism represents a form of behavior that denies, or is opposed to, the concept of the common good and which tends to conceal or minimize the negative effects deriving from the production of certain products or services. In particular, the companies question the negative impact on the environment and society of their economic activity, but as long as the orientations of their target consumers are taken into account. To be more clear, it is proper to make an example: the tobac co companies are the ones

that practice this type of activism. They, especially in their advs, for years and decades, have denied that cigarettes are harmful to health, even when their own research proved otherwise. What were highlighted in their commercials were the "virtues" of smoking such as pleasure or stress reduction, thus there was an emphasis on the ludic valorization.

The following schema summarizes the effects of both type of Brand Activism:



As it is clear, the progressive activism, so the fact that a companies try to proactively solve an issue by taking a stand, brings to "brand evangelizing", so they are perceived positively. Thus, it develops a connection between consumers and the company, not just with the product, which is based on individuals' dedication and enthusiasm about a brand, inspired by an emotional connection as they feel assisted in something they care about. The term "evangelism" in the corporate context does not refer only to consumers, but to all stakeholders, such as employees and collaborators, who can somehow benefit from the action. As consumers tend to enthusiastically talk about the brand to friends and family as it shows itself as a genuine partner and it "walks the talk", they generate the most valuable, transparent and trustworthy type of advertising or other peers, since it is not based on a paid relationship…and of course, the development of this positive feeling is something that benefits the company, too.

In this sense, as it is in the essence of activism position, brand evangelists have the potential to drive communities and movements which can really impact the society. The consumer, therefore, shows support and intentionally purchase the brand's products, generating a behavior defined as "buycott ".

On the other side, the regressive brand activism, which actively pursue policies that hurt the common good, triggers a negative reaction in consumer who disagree with the political viewpoint of the brand, as it could be expected. In this case, markets talk about ''brand shaming'' which identifies with a sudden decline in brand

value in case the content and the presentation elements of the branding strategy do not match the cultural tendencies of audiences. So, the brand is discriminated because consumers are not in line with brand position and thus he will tend to ''boycott'' the brand as he refuses to buy or use its products as a sign of protest or against the position assumed.

2.2 PERSUASIVE vs CONTROVERSIAL PATHWAY

According to Sibai investigation, activist brands can reform their audience's moral judgment either through a persuasive or a controversial pathway: authentic activist brands reform moral judgments through persuasion ''by developing their cultural authority but also through controversies by negotiating the boundaries of free speech''. ¹⁹

When using the persuasive pathway, activist brands persuade consumers by developing "cultural authority". It is the legitimacy that a strong brand holds to be a creator of meaning that develops as a consequence of their social role: if an activist brand is associated with a strong myth, this one earns the authority and will be also used to tell similar kinds of myth. In particular, the brand envisions the product as something that offers cathartic moral innovations that allows him to overcome contradictions between the "dominant ideology" (Holt & Cameron, 2010, p. 187)²⁰ of the item category and their life experiences.

The product or the service offered is the tool that helps consumer to overcome the actual tension and the one that could potentially originate over time. This persuasion work can transform the moral norms of an entire product category (Holt, 2004) thus revolutioning the opinion that they have. For example, Clearblue inspired many women and changed the view they had of pregnancy test devices, initially considered intrusive objects of medical knowledge. They have become, instead, empowerment tools that enable women to have control over their bodies

Although the persuasive pathway is very attractive, its scope tends to be limited as extant literature seems to indicate that cultural authority is an option for brands looking to reform moral judgments in product categories, but not for brands looking to engage with moral issues unrelated to their product categories.

For this reason, an alternative pathway can also be considered: activist brands can also reform moral judgments through a controversial pathway (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020) in which they engage in controversies, public debates where different actors oppose their views (Blanchet & Depeyre, 2016).

¹⁹⁻²⁰ Source: Sibai O. Mimoun L. & Boukis A. (2021); Authenticating brand activism: Negotiating the boundaries of free speech to make a change; Journal of Psychology and Marketing

Brands can nurtures existing controversies (Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020) by demonstrating "support or opposition to one side of a partisan issue" (Moorman, 2020, p. 389). Brands can also focus on generating new controversies by making shocking statements or revelations around societal issues (Scholz & Smith, 2019). In both cases, brands are orchestrating public discussions of what ideas and opinions are "right/wrong, good/bad, or worthy/ unworthy" (Wieser et al., 2019, p. 153) to express in the public space²¹.

Midtbøen²² et al. visualize the mechanism of moral judgment reform through controversy as free speech boundary work. While free speech represents the right to publicly share opinions and ideas unrestrained, it is always encompassed by social norms which label what can and cannot be said in public.

2.3 HOW TO BUILD A MOVEMENT

Reflecting on its nature, Manfredi-Sánche believed brand activism borrows its fundamentals from social movements campaigns, copying their aesthetics of authenticity. In fact, just like social movements, brand activism represents the real and genuine stance of a company that, by taking an ideological (social or environmental) choice, wants to reform society. The claim of discourses of social activism by brands transfers values that are traditionally connected to social movements and initially discussed in political or private conversations to the brand communication and advertising sphere. In fact, through brand activism, values that are traditionally linked to social movements now enter the advertising sphere which aims at "selling morality' (Hopkins, 2015): brands offer wisdom and remind the audience of moral values shared by the community. In fact the product the consumer buys is a symbol and hides a belief or idea that people hold dear as the basis for action.

Jay Curley, Ben and Jerry's global head of marketing, says that²³ activism "turns the marketing organization into an organization for building and executing campaigns, and marketers become activists. This means that we no longer sell only goods but great ideas (and ideals) ". In fact, the American brand is guided by activists and its activity supports progressive movements.

In this sense, Curley suggests to refer to the 6Ps of brand activism:

- **Purpose**: fundamental values.
 - Brand activism is guided by the company's values. It must be clear about its values and must make them rooted in something real and that they can last over time.
- Policies: real changes

²¹ Source: Sibai O. Mimoun L. & Boukis A. (2021); Authenticating brand activism: Negotiating the boundaries of free speech to make a change; Journal of Psychology and Marketing

²² Source: Midtbøen, A. H., Steen-Johnsen, K., & Thorbjørnsrud, K. (2017). *Boundary-making in the public sphere: Contestations of free speech*; Chapter 1

²³ Source: P-Kotler, C. Sarkar (2020); Brand activism: from purpose to action; Hoepli

The brand must not pursue empty actions but must support real changes within company and society policies that address the real cause of the problems.

- **People** : movement

Those who support the brand must share and believe with conviction in the causes faced by the brand and in the movement supports. A relationship between the two that must be strong and based on emotions: the consumer must have at heart the problem faced by the activist and therefore he develops passion to create the change

- **Power** : resources

Businesses have immense power and influence over politicians, the media and consumers. This means having gained experience in consumer research, performance marketing, creative development of the highest level, as well as having substantial budgets. activist companies must use all these resources to improve the world, not just to sell goods.

- **Publishin**g : storytelling

The brand must use its voice and its consumer touchpoints for continuous storytelling and to convey creative content that engages consumers as brand activists

- **Pop (culture)** : visibility

Brands must use positioning and tone of voice to get noticed in the crowded media landscape. The relationship with the customer can help him to join the movements and the support of the brand to the movements can give him relevance and a top of mind positioning.

What transforms a campaign into a movement? That is, *how do you go from words to actions?* To make this transition, it is necessary to have a common vision in order to involve and convince other people to participate in collaborative actions. So the keyword is ''involvement''.

Brand activism is not something static but it is strategic, dynamic and fluid. Before developing a strategy that can practically demonstrate the commitment toward a controversial social cause, it is necessary to start by asking questions:

- What needs to be done? Initially, it is necessary to understand the most urgent needs that society must face and therefore to define a mission at the service of the common good.
 - In particular, it is necessary to *look outside* when choosing a problem because from within the company, the sense of urgency that stakeholders feel with respect to certain issues is not perceived. There are six maps that address some of the most pressing problems as they are viewed by external stakeholders (the 7 malefices)
- What is our playground? It is important to understand the context, therefore whether the activist actions have a local, national or international reference.
- What contribution can we make? Identify the resources that we can use to improve the situation
- How to measure the impact of the initiatives?

Continuing, research tells that the construction of a movement, and therefore of the action, rests on 5 phases that follow one another in a cyclical way.



Source: Kotler P. Sarkar C. (2020) Brand acivism: from purpose to action; Milano; Hoepli

- Common good: everything starts with the definition of a mission based on the common good and therefore a company seeks to bring benefits on a question that is controversial and that affects everyone. The common good is the tool for aligning the company with the future customers.
- **Imagination**: imagine how movement can be and how it can be realized: in particular, the CEO must define what the organization wants to become or what it wants to be known for, thus it must assess a clear *Vision* that must be able to express the strategic direction of the organization.
- **Inspiration**: companies have to think about the possible ways to inspire and influence people to join the movement.

To inspire the mass of consumers, or receivers, it is important that the company use a compelling *message* that has the three Aristotelian elements of persuasion, on the basis of which it is possible to build trust: *ethos, pathos and logos*. In order to reach the public, the company must be able to evoke emotions and feelings in the mass (pathos) and leverage the values and beliefs of the recipient through storytelling. Furthermore, the sender must be considered credible, and therefore treated as an expert on the subject, and must establish a similarity with the public in such a way that the consumer can fully identify with and feel directly threatened by the problem. The logical arguments, logos, which are

necessary to fuel the debate and convince the other members of society to carry out a certain action must not be missing.

However, in the era of fake news, it is necessary to add another element: the *thymos*, that is the spirit of the messengers or brand ambassadors. They must be subjects who, with their enthusiasm and passion, must be able to drag the consumer to take action and understand that change is necessary. In the past this last element was not understood since it was common that all good sellers believed in the product they were selling. Nowadays, with the problem of lack of credibility, this is no longer the case and brands must become more authentic, more human and more credible in order to have an impact, enthusiasm cannot be pretended.

- **Mobilize:** the participants who have embraced the cause are ready to go to practice.

Companies can create and build a movement by actively participating in the dominant cultural narratives in society. As old cultural narratives are replaced by new narratives, companies must tune in to the future. The message being conveyed is the promise that the brand makes to the consumer to take him to a desired future place or condition, thus it should have a *meaning* that must be strong enough to generate an impact that leads him to act. There are four dimensions that influence his vision of the world: myth, ideology, history and identity. Identity is the most important dimension because it is the most personal.

- **Take action**: joint action is coordinated to create an impact.

At the base of every form of activism there is action and there is no movement without action. Understanding the cultural traditions of one's organizations in the face of the cultural narratives of society bringing activism to the market requires a clear message with the public. A message is significant or insignificant if it aligns with the dominant cultural narrative and is accepted; otherwise it must modify that cultural narrative before gaining widespread acceptance. Can help guide strategic choices since choices contrary to the dominant culture are more likely to fail.

As it concerns the fourth step of this cyclical process, an activist company can make three choices if it wants to involve and mobilize its customers: follow them, guide them, or co-create with them a different future. According to a work by Kotler, companies have two ways to interact with their consumers and to help them change their future in the name of the common good:

- IoP : Internet of Purpose
- Purpose Platform

Regarding the first option, companies could create a product that becomes a catalyst and a tool for brand activism: in particular this concept represents an extension of the Internet of things and therefore a company uses its products to create a kind of ''Internet of purpose''. First and foremost, in order to make consumers as the protagonists of activism, companies could imagine and put on the market an intelligent product (or ''smart

product') that allows them to directly connect with a cause they care about, using the Internet of things. The internet of purposes is the product ecosystem that involves the consumer by offering him the opportunity to do good.

How is it possible to realize all of this?

- Choose the problem that is closest to the target's heart
- Identify a way to resolve the cause
- Configure the product so that it connects the cause to the target
- Create an adv campaign to increase the awareness and develop a storytelling
- Check that the pack is consistent
- Develop a use-related activism component incorporated into the product
- Define social rewards that allow activist consumers to support the cause
- Measure and communicate to consumers the impact and results of the campaign

Nike could imagine a possible application of internet of purpose and use this innovative tool to generate an exponential impact against one of the different social causes it supports: the brand in fact since years stands against the fight to police brutality, youth community reform initiatives, empowerment of minorities.

In particular, the key could be to configure the product, and thus the shoe, to the cause sustained. It all starts with advertising that introduces the consumer to activism and stimulates and intrigues him to learn more about the married cause, precisely the first thing the consumer encounters at the point of purchase is the packaging (shoe boxes) on which it should be explained how to join the ''game'', and hence how to support the cause. After that, the consumer encounters the product and he practices "activism in use ": in fact, every step that the consumer takes, which is tracked through an app, generates points that can be assigned in favor of a cause that the consumer directly selects from an app. The winning cause is identified thanks to the points donated by the shoe owners who earn 1 point for each step they take. Nike will donate a certain amount of money to the most scored cause at the end of the month. In doing so, the points generated through the app are aimed at creating a social impact: " vote for the winning cause ".

Results from the CMO Survey conducted by Moorman in 2020, with the aim of collecting opinions of top markets, shows that marketing leaders prefer certain type of stance: 'Making changes to products and services in response to a defined issue'' is considered an important option, with 47.2% of respondents claiming that it is appropriate to revolutionize products and services. Activist organizations invite consumers to ''purchase whom they are'' by voluntarily making a statement of what they think is 'good' for society (Cian et al., 2018) . It is not anymore about the mere product itself but it is about the idea that is behind. In this sense, consumers are engaged in the frontline battle with a particular topic that should be battled. In this case, the purchase shapes "who you are" as a person in this life, rather than who you are as a consumer. Accordingly, one of the

most important theories in Consumer Behavior, the self-congruence one, provides that consumption becomes a vehicle for exhibition of individuals' identity construct. Consumers search for brands with symbolic images similar to their self-identity as a way to enhance and display who they are to the world: products that people buy can act as signals of identity, as an extension of their view, values , believes and lifestyle and allow consumers to construct, express and communicate useful information about their self-image to themselves and to others. In this sense, consumers will tend to choose those brands' products that embrace the ideals they share and they fight for.

Another tool that allows consumers to act together with the brand and co-create with them a different future are the purposes platforms: in particular they allow to break down any boundaries and, according to Simone Cicero²⁴, they concern the scalability of interactions, and ensure that solutions can emerge naturally from all the interactions that take place in the system among peers. He therefore argues that platforms are a vehicle for self-organization and connection. Unlike the previous idea and the creation of connected products, platforms are channels that connect people and services so that everyone can express their potential, even without a physical contact. In fact, the purposes platform is a tool that allows people to be mobilized within society, whether they are experts, researchers or common members, to create lasting and sustainable solutions to the most urgent challenges of society for the construction of the common good. Any one can build a platform of purpose: a company, a school, a university "No one is too small to be an agent of change, " as Greta Thunberg states. The essential element for such platforms is that at the center of them there must be a " coalition of wills " and therefore a group of passionate, attentive and committed people who can change the world. Such leaders, as well as all participants in the platform, must ask themselves: what is the result and what is the public value that is created?

Purpose-led brand will put the traditional view of "customer as passive buyer" to bed forever. They will, instead, focus on creating a community of loyal, engaged and valuable brand stakeholders that identify themselves in the ideals shared by the company. This gives a sort of protection from the almost inevitable "trust incident" and ultimately safeguards profits, too. Taking a stand on a particular issue and showing the consumer a proactive behavior on something he cares about, can potentially mitigate any damage a trust event might have on a customer relationship (and sales) by giving them another reason to believe in the company. At a minimum, a meaningful and relevant purpose can increase the likelihood that consumers will give companies a second chance if trust is otherwise tarnished or if a negative WOM spread about its activity.

²⁴ Source: P-Kotler, C.Sarkar (2020); Brand activism: from purpose to action; Hoepli

2.4 WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

Standing for everything means standing for nothing. Consumers don't fall for insincere attempts from companies who want to merely catch their attention. As Fitzgerald²⁵, chairman of Unilever, stated in a speech to the Publicity Club of London, the greatest opportunity for brands today is to deliver not entertainment, but rather ideas and myths that their customers can use to manage and fight the tensions that increasingly threatens their identities. Citing Holt in "Branding as Cultural Activism", "if brands merely deliver entertainment like most culture-industry products, they will be handicapped from the start". Consumers today live in a world oversaturated with cultural content, which is delivered not just by the traditional culture industries but also increasingly by the Internet. In line with their predecessors, "Today we should conceive and evaluate our brand communication as though it were content-because today, in effect, that is what it is. We are in the branded content business.", as Niall Fitzgerald confirms. Customers aren't just making decisions on the basis of the product itself or its price. They're now making evaluations and they care about what a brand says, what it does or what it stands for. Standing for something bigger than what they sell, tuning into customers' beliefs and taking decisive action, companies are able to modify their customer relationships and connect with them on a deeper level.. When a brand includes social issues in its brand purpose, consumers to feel like they've joined a movement. In the semiannual CMO Survey, conducted in 2018 by Christine Moorman at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and supported by Deloitte and the American Marketing Association, it has been stated that 21 % of respondents say they feel it's appropriate to take positions on political issues. Among those who are willing to take a stand, three quarters (75%) say doing so would demonstrate the company cares about more than profits, and nearly as many (70%) say it would help attract customers and partners.

In fact, according to Moorman²⁶ study, when brands engage on these topics, they need to pick a side and either challenge or defend the status quo. They may support climate change initiatives, transgender rights, racial justice, minimum wage increases, or gun control. When companies decide to be political actors, they need to take into account 6 perspectives or lenses:

- **Brand authenticity view**: consumers resonate with brands that stay true to a position (Becker, Wiegand, and Reinartz 2019). This is why, on their side, if companies would assume a position about a political or social concern, they should do so in a brand consistent way that connects with target markets in an authentic way. Making a false step could seem fake and cause consumers to question the company's motivation.

²⁵ Source: Douglas Holt ''Branding as Cultural Activism'' from <u>How Brands Become Icons: The Principle of Cultural Branding</u>, Harvard Business School Press (Sept. 2004)

²⁶ Source: Moorman C. (2020); Commentary: Brand activism in a political world; Journal of Public Policy and Marketing

- **Corporate citizen view**: companies have an important responsibility to contribute to the world in which they operate. This point of view seems to accept the role of brands as political actors.
- **Cultural authority view**: according to Holt definition, cultural authority is a brand asset based on the nations' collective expectations that the brand can (and should) author. Some brands are in a position of power as they embody ideas and meanings that are important to society and earn the right to be the bearer of myths that touch cultural concerns and have the responsibility to help shape social awareness and action around important issues.
- **Calculative view**: the firm decides to engage in brand activism and to take a side only after making an "evaluation" and a "balance" between gain and loses, meaning that it enters the "arena" only when it expects to come out ahead. This calculation provides that the end gains (improvement of brand image, increase in costumer loyalty, increase in profits) justify the brand risks (woke washing). This does not mean that the brand is manipulative, but its motives are instrumental. Sometimes some firms, even if it is unconvenient for them, join the cause to stay with the pack.
- **Brands as educators view**: adopting this view, the company uses its marketing prowess to move consumers in a direction that is better for society: in particular brand, throughout its messages should be able to to shift consumer preferences toward more sustainable or ethical choices, thus triggering social change. This specific role may originate from brand resources and authority, such as that seen in Swaminathan et al
- **Political mission view** : In this view, the company's raison d'^etre is inextricably linked to social change. Some companies are born with a political mission, such as Patagonia, and others are evolving into this position, such as Unilever. The founding or conversion of companies with political missions appears to be due to the imprinting of leaders (Boeker 1989). In particular, a sustainable mission which, just like Patagonia one, focuses on the creation of a product that does not cause environmental harm, influence the company's intense political advocacy even using its marketing prowess to influence the election of pro-environment candidates.
- **Employee engagement view** : political activism helps companies attract and retain employees. In fact, according to the 69.7% of respondent to the 2018 CMO survey, activism is the reason that "bolstered the company's ability to attract and retain employees", especially the millennials that approach to work.

2.5 BRAND AUTHENTICITY

The prerequisite for authenticity, trust and personality is the alignment among values, purpose, communication, and behavior across the whole organization and each of its activities (Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020; Stanley, 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020)

Accordingly, marketing academics (Kotler and Sarkar 2017; Moorman 2020) and practitioners (Unilever 2019) have highlighted the importance of authenticity in brand activism and the dangers of brands not walking the talk, ''with 56% of consumers indicating too many brands now use societal issues primarily as a marketing ploy to sell more of their product'' (Edelman 2019)²⁷. In particular, it is important to stress this aspect because there might be a sense among consumers that companies only take a stand becau se of commercial interests (Laufer, 2003). So it is important to assess what we mean when we refer to ''authenticity'' and how can it be achieved as a lack if it risks to lead to a negative brand equity by way of giving false signals, it can also mislead the consumer with unsupported statements which is unethical as it creates mistrust which in addition restricts the possibility for social change (Kapitan, Kennedy, & Berth, 2019)²⁸.

While the term initially indicated rejection of conformity and resistance to various forms of extrinsic motivations, the sense of the word as a synonym to genuineness or sincerity only entered the English language as late as the 18th century (Trilling, 1972). It seems that the cultural meaning of authenticity is changed from the image of a rugged outlaw rebelling against society's laws and institutions, now also encapsulating values such as truthfulness, responsibility and transparency (Botterill, 2007; Giesler & Veresiu, 2014; cf. Holt & Thompson, 2004). Therefore, achieving and communicating the authenticity of brand activism — a brand is demonstrably willing and able to deliver on its sociopolitical claims—emerges as being critically important for marketing success as well as potential for social change arising from this strategy. Ilicic and Webster (2014) demonstrate that brand authenticity increases brand attitudes and purchase intentions as well as trust and commitment towards the brand (Moulard et al., 2016; Portal et al., 2019); brand authenticity also acts as a "repairer" meaning that it alleviate brand scandals and increase the intention to forgive (Guèvremont & Grohmann, 2018): in fact, if the consumer perceives a brand as honest, even if he has had once a negative experience with the brand if there has been a brand transgression, he tends to cancel this negative feeling because he knows that, in general, it is cheerful and delivers its promises. Grayson and Martinec (2004) precise that there is an important but subtle difference between being authentic and brand authenticity. Authenticity is part of the ongoing search for meaning and belonging in life; instead brand authenticity has been defined as 'the extent to which consumers perceive a brand to be faithful and true toward itself and its consumers, and to support consumers being true to themselves'' (Morhart et al., 2015, p. 202)²⁹.

According to Kotler and Sarkar (2020), a combination of both powerful marketing statements and prosocial corporate practices in real life is essential to be perceived as authentic in brand activism.

²⁷ Source: Edelman Report (2019). In Brands We Trust? 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report Annual Global Study.

²⁸ Source: Vredenburg J., Kapitan S., Spry A., &. Kemper J.A (2020); *Brands Taking a Stand: Authentic Brand Activism or Woke Washing?*; Journal of Public Policy

²⁹ Source: Södergren J. (2021); Brand authenticity: 25 Years of research. International Journal of consumer studies

Vredenburg³⁰ confirms those words and specifies that authenticity of brand activism is determined by the alignment between three key characteristics of the brand:

- 1. its **core purpose and values** as a reflection of employees, brand promise, and caretaking of stakeholder needs and wants and how those are articulated and understood in the marketplace;
- 2. the **messaging** type and content circulated through brand vehicles, traditional media vehicles, and peer-to-peer and social media vehicles/channels;
- 3. its corporate **practices** and how key stakeholders catalogue, demonstrate, and interpret these practices in the marketplace.

Thus, authenticity is holistically constructed by the alignment between those factors: that means that when messaging, for example, operates independently of corporate practice, purpose, and values, authenticity of brand activism is compromised. Likewise, when practice is misaligned with purpose, values, and messaging, it is viewed as being inauthentic. The absence of authenticity, which implies that companies have yet to adopt prosocial corporate practices in their approach to the marketplace and that do not have prosocial brand purpose and values or use activist marketing messaging, is greater than a mere failure to align prosocial corporate practice with messaging. This is because such alignment is necessary but not sufficient to grow and maintain authentic brand activism; indeed brands must also show symmetry and a match between their purpose, values, messaging, and practice. When there is the alignment of the mentioned four factors, consumers more likely tend to judge the brand's position on the focal socio political issue as relevant, truthful, and dependable.

The authenticity value strengthen brand activism for two reasons:

1. it involves truthful alignment of the activist marketing messaging with purpose- and value-driven prosocial corporate practice, serving as a necessary catalyst for social change.

A good example comes from the ice cream maker Ben & Jerry's whose values-driven messaging and practices are in sync with progressing social change (i.e., sustainability, equity, transparency). The ice cream makers have a premium product whose activist messaging (of sustainable food systems, use of fair trade products) clearly aligns with the well-defined long-term prosocial practices that underpin its purpose and values.

2. it delivers the greatest brand equity outcomes.

According to Keller, 1993, brand activism is successful strategy for building brand equity and nudging social change. Brand equity defines the value of the brand and it refers to the consumers' perception of the brand and is strategically valuable for brand management because all the associations that consumers hold of the particular brand, become linked with the brand as part of the knowledge structure. Success in terms of brand

³⁰ Source: Vredenburg et al. (2020); *Brands Taking a Stand: Authentic Brand Activism or Woke Washing?*; Journal of Public Policy & Marketing

equity, results from a positive response to the brand driven by strong, favorable, and unique brand associations held in consumers' minds. Therefore, authenticity generates brand equity for the current campaign and moreover it increases the likelihood that future (authentic) campaigns will further rise brand equity.

One important aspect to look at in brand activism is brand personality. Brand personality is defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347) and is critical because consumers display a tendency to endow brands with human like traits and personalities. The fact that a company decides to pick a side, regardless of whether it is fully congruent with the brand's values or not, shows the human side of a brand, and people attach importance to brands whose values align with their own.

According to Aaker (1997), five dimensions of brand personality can be identified (namely sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness) which can help to explain the relationship between consumers and brands. The scholar shows that people tend to choose brands with specific personality dimensions to "highlight" certain aspects of their own personality in different situational contexts: whether one of these traits match with his/her own, the firm is closer to the consumer and influence his/her beliefs and distinguish brands from their competitors (Plummer, 2000). Ansary & Hashim, (2017) confirm in their study that brand personality also drives brand attitudes and preferences and determines brand equity.

When a brand is consistent in its messaging and branding initiatives, it is endowed with credibility which seems to correlate to brand trustworthiness (Erdem & Swait, 2004). A brand itself can be considered trustworthy if it consistently delivers what has been promised (Erdem & Swait, 2004). Being perceived as trustworthy brings many advantages for brands in the market: for example it simplifies consumer relationships and brand loyalty (Fournier, 1998; Morgan & Hunt, 1994), increases purchase intentions, particularly when consumers feel uncertain or insecure about their decision (Gefen & Straub, 2004; Doney & Cannon, 1997), and enhances perceived brand equity (Ambler, 1997). It is clear that if consumer trusts, marketing activities and companies efforts will have success.

If there is inconsistency between a brand's values and the cause it supports in terms of activism, it is possible to say that the brand will be perceived as unreliable or inconsistent, and this leads to a reduction of the overall perception of trust. Vredenburg et al. (2020) also identified authentic brand activism as a purpose driven strategy. Authentic brand activism can be attributed four key characteristics such as not being afraid to directly address an important socio-political issue and freely addressing any socio-political issue that a brand likes.

The last one recalls the already mentioned concept "optimal" incongruities in brand activism. Based on this, it can be assumed that as long as the perceived incongruence is not too high, consumer trust will increase

2.6 RISKS OF BRAND ACTIVISM

In particular, companies have to face a double challenge: to set apart rationality, pragmatism of the everyday business and economic worldview that smothers cultural activism, marginalize social issues and runs directly counter to the cultural point of view needed for identity brands and to develop a *cultural activist organization*. The aim is to build a company organized around developing identity myths that address emerging contradictions in society, organized to collaborate with creative partners to perform myths that have the charisma and authenticity necessary to attract followers and to understand society and culture, not just consumers. Companies used to avoid hot-button social issues, because they feared that any strong stance could alienate customers and staff. But, this is a critical position because now leaders have clear that it is far more risky to stay silent on issues such as gay rights, environmental causes, climate change or gender equality. Thus corporate activism isn't just encouraged but expected. Nevertheless, also taking a stand in society against a social problem and consequently make changes to products and services in response to those issues, remarks for companies an high risk because product and service changes are likely to affect the very core of the company's business.

The first downside that is taken into account of taking a controversial side is about pissing off a bunch of customers and the fact that consequently bottom line takes a hit: negative attributions can impede business returns and brand equity. In fact Accenture (2019) global research has estimated that more than half (53 percent) of consumers who are disappointed with a brand's words or actions on a social issue complain about it, while 47% will switch to other brands, and 17% may never come back. Moreover the assumption of risks and responsibilities conceptualizes this practice as free speech boundary work, that is, ''negotiating whether social norms defining which opinions and ideas are acceptable to express publicly, should be created, tightened, maintained, loosened, or suppressed''. (Midtbøen et al., 2017)³¹

Free speech boundary work is a double-edged sword for activist brands and it represent a risk : they are social actors who can influence free speech boundaries by deciding what is appraised as a dequate to be said in public. So, companies shape what should be said and how: they decide which topic has more importance than others and hence how to treat them. The associated danger is linked with the fact that the activist firm could appear insensitive or detached from some issue rather than others or could offend people's sensitivities or generate unwanted reactions in consumer behavior that can have impact on the whole business. Audiences can condemn activist brands' actions as inauthentic (Vredenburg et al., 2020) and accuse brands of "woke washing" (Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020; Sobande, 2019; Moorman, 2020) So, knowing how to negotiate the boundaries of free speech is essential for activist brands' authentication and it is also a crucial activity as there is not a predefined schema that suggest what and how to do or to say in order to appear as authentic. A qualitative study

³¹ Source: Sibai O. Mimoun L. & Boukis A. (2021); Authenticating brand activism: Negotiating the boundaries of free speech to make a change; Journal of Psychology and Marketing
based on the analysis of data from 18 activist brands associated with 113 controversies and operating in diverse markets, from fast-moving consumer goods to service and nonprofit brands, confirms that there are 3 controversial strategies that brands use to justify their activism to stakeholders, each of them challenging the boundaries of free speech.

Stakeholders judge brands as true activists if their strategies demonstrate moral competency in all skills, which consists of (conjointly) moral sensitivity, moral vision, and moral integration, that is, brands' ability to pass accurate moral judgments when defending the need to challenge the current boundaries of free speech. On the contrary, there is the risk that stakeholders judge brands as deviant, opportunistic, and/or conformist, if they demonstrate poor sensitivity, integration, and/or vision respectively.

Moral sensitivity represents a brand's ability to recognize the moral content of situations and understand the moral consequences of the decisions made on mass of costumers. Many decision-making situations are difficult because they are morally ambiguous, in that the embedded moral issues are not blatant and are integrated into the situation with competing concerns" (Jordan, 2007, p. 326). Low sensitivity emerges when brands neglect relevant moral problems, often raised by their own actions. In fact, when a brand lacks moral sensitivity, stakeholders judge the brand as deviant, that is, an actor transgressing the boundaries of free speech.

Moral vision captures brands' insight into the future of morality. Moral vision relates to brand vision (De Chernatony, 2010) and guides the definition of ethical and meaningful goals and actions (Sangarakshita, 2007) rather than those that serve organizational performance. Brands prove to have a clear moral vision through the articulation of challenges to free speech that help solve contemporary problems for markets and society. When brands don't have moral vision, stakeholders judge them as conformists, and so as an actor reproducing the boundaries of free speech.

Moral integration characterizes brands' ability to pursue their moral beliefs in all situations (Li et al., 2018). It manifests through moral coherence across audiences and consistency over time. When a brand lacks moral integration, stakeholders judge the brand as opportunistic, that is, as an actor manipulating the boundaries of free speech h to serve personal interest rather than reform morality. The term "woke washing" can be declined using different labels, depending on the issue debated, to condemn brands' opportunist speech.

For example, green washing" is used when referring to environmental issues (Manrai et al., 1997); rainbow washing" for LGBT issues (Ad Age, 2019), or "blue washing" for global democracy and human rights issues (Commondreams.org, 2000), as well as broader terms such as "purpose washing" (Ad Age, 2020)³²



Source: Sibai O. Mimoun L. & Boukis A. (2021); Authenticating brand activism: Negotiating the boundaries of free speech to make a change; Journal of Psychology and Marketing

3. ONCE UPON A TIME: CSR

In recent times, the concept of brand activism evolved inherently from the well-researched field of CSR and CRM and replaced them. Precisely, cause-related marketing is the process of advocating CSR in marketing communications (Eyada, 2020) Whereas CrM (cause-related marketing) and CSR are categorized as marketing-driven or corporate-driven concepts, the phenomenon of brand activism according to Kotler and Sarkar (2017) developed as a "value-driven agenda for companies that care about the future of society and the planet's health". Kotler and Sarkar (2017) classified brand activism as an emerging field which naturally evolved from the concepts of CrM and CSR which seemed to be not satisfactory to meet the high demands

³² Source: Sibai O. Mimoun L. & Boukis A. (2021); Authenticating brand activism: Negotiating the boundaries of free speech to make a change; Journal of Psychology and Marketing

and desires of the younger generations towards a brand. So, CRS can be defined as the ancestor of brand activism.

Since the second half of 1900, a new awareness encouraged companies to implement practices compatible with the values of their business and to take into account the expectations of all its stakeholders which include, according to Freeman's theoretical definition, "any individual or group of individuals who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives" (Freeman, 1984) ³³

Bowen in 1953 first introduced the idea of CSR- describing it as an obligation for companies to take certain factors into consideration during the course of their business activities and development of these factors has continued to this day. CSR came to be considered as the introduction and implementation of sustainable development within the sphere of management as, according to the definition, companies were obliged to take into account the impact of a company's activities upon its human, social and ecological environment, and in particular to see responsibility as stretching beyond responsibility to a company's shareholder s³⁴. In fact stakeholders, namely employees, suppliers, clients, consumers, the local community, environmental associations and NGOs , have long pressured firms to provide societal benefits in addition to generating shareholder wealth. Basically, these benefits have come in the form of corporate social responsibility.

As Pava & Krausz, (1995) précised some years later, CSR goes '' beyond profit maximization" as it deals with the policies and practices that go beyond profit-seeking or legal requirements and focus on a sustainable mission that is good for the environment and stakeholders. In particular, Carroll's model³⁵ (Carroll, 1979) sustains that a company has to fulfil responsibility at four levels. These include :

- the economical responsibilities of organizations to be profitable; the company has to make profit otherwise it would not be able to pay salaries for employees and thus it would not survive in the long term.
- the legal responsibilities of organizations to follow all laws : the company should adhere to some legal responsibilities such as employment laws, competition with other companies, tax regulations and health and safety of employees
- the ethical responsibilities of organizations to do what is ethically right; the company should try to do the right thing, to be fair in all situations. Behaving ethically would benefit the firm as this not only shows their stakeholders that they are committed and moral, but people will feel more comfortable purchasing goods/services from the company as well

³³ Source: Freeman, R. E., & Velamuri, S. R. (2006). A new approach to CSR: Company stakeholder responsibility. In Corporate social responsibility (pp. 9-23). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

³⁴ Source: Kechiche A. & Soparnot R. (2012); CSR within SMEs: Literature Review. International Business Research

³⁵ Source: Carroll, A. B., & Shabana, K. M. (2010). *The business case for corporate social responsibility: A review of concepts, research and practice*. International journal of management reviews, 12(1), 85-105.

 the philanthropic responsibilities of companies to engage in activities that benefit society and causes. This highest level of responsibility is more than just doing things ethically, as it is something that companies do to be considered as 'good citizens''. In fact, businesses have long been criticized for their carbon footprint, their part in pollution, using natural resources and more. To counterbalance these negatives, they commit to "give back" to the community they take from and to improve quality of life of actual and new generations.

In this sense, CSR is not seen as an external add-on but more as an integral part of the way they manage their firm and researchers like Porter & Kramer (2011)³⁶ leverage CSR to obtain competitive advantage and to realize long-term success. In the past, cause-related marketing has been proven to be a highly successful marketing strategy because it does not only positively impact purchase intentions (Lafferty & Edmondson, 2009) and brand attitudes (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005), it also allows consumers to support social causes while meeting their own consumption needs (Eikenberry, 2013). Hereby, especially the degree of fit between a brand and the cause it supports has been shown to positively influence the effectiveness of CRM campaigns. Correspondingly, Blombäck and Wigren (2009) believe that commitment of a company to CSR concerns its operational activities, like the introduction of procedures that respect the environment, the inclusion in the community and the maintainment of good working relations with local actors (local sponsorship of events for e.g...). Thus, it refers to "a set of actions that advance social good beyond that which is required by law" (Kang, Germann, and Grewal 2016) and constitutes the gradual formalization of cause-related marketing and corporate philanthropy aimed to "do well by doing good" through a strategic focus (Varadarajan and Menon 1988, p. 60)³⁷.

CSR efforts have a positive impact on the financial performance of a company; sources, however, vary on the level and intensity of the positive impact for corporations. In fact, it brings several positive outcomes, such as firm reputation, product evaluations, customer trust, and long-term loyalty (Chernev and Blair 2015; Homburg, Stierl, and Bornemann 2013), which relatedly has a positive effects on firm value (Luo and Bhattacharya 2006)

Going deeply, according to several studies, implementation of CSR enhance reputation and corporate image, improvement of working relations with staff, improve production processes and quality, represent an attractive factor for prospect employees (Vives, 2006; Saulquin & Schier, 2007; Berger-Douce, 2008; Worthington et al., 2008; Russo & Tencati, 2009), and also financial advantages such as a reduction of costs and increased efficiency (Jenkins, 2009; Russo & Tencati, 2009). In effect, by implementing responsible practices and measures or using substitute products which are less harmful to the planet, a company can reduce wastage and

³⁶ Source: Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2006). *The link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility*. Harvard business review, 84(12), 78-92.

³⁷ Bhagwat Y., Warren N.L., Beck J., & Watson G. (2020); *Corporate Sociopolitical Activism and Firm Value*; Journal of Marketing

secure a reduction in costs or outlay (Reynaud & Mathieu, 2005) and, in this sense, it can be a catalyst for increased motivation and productivity amongst a company's workforce and prospect employees (Saulquin & Schier, 2007; Berger-Douce, 2008): conscious business with a deeper purpose inspires, engages and energizes its employees, customers and other stakeholders and earns their trust³⁸. According to Unilever, its sustainable and ethical objectives contributes to recruiting talents, with half of its graduate entrants citing that as the primary reason they want to join the company.

A consequent advantage consists in the fact that CSR initiatives have an effect on consumer behavior, particularly intent to purchase.

3.1 FROM BRAND PURPOSE TO ACTION

It is important to specify that an organization does not solely stand for improving sustainable development: this is why CSR is a smaller offshoot of "purpose" 's umbrella.: It is surely important to set goals and objectives that focus on the well-being of the environment and society, but this phenomenon cannot be considered in isolation. So, for companies is important to set an obligation that takes into account the impact of a company's activities upon its human, social and ecological environment... but this is just a small part of its purpose. Purpose is what the organization stands for and by definition, it explains the reason why something exists.

For companies, brand purpose is a definitive statement about the difference a brand is trying to make in the world : it is an ideal that drives everything a brand does, and the underlying essence that makes a brand relevant and necessary. Jim Stengel, Global Marketing Officer of Proctor & Gamble during 2001-2008, defines the brand purpose as an organization's inspirational and motivational reason for being, the higher order it brings to the world. A sustainable, ethical or environmental purpose challenges an organization to aim high and change its culture.

For example, The Lego Group has taken up several CSR initiatives: one of these is the introduction of the Sustainable Materials Centre in 2017 which is a site focused on the research, the development and the implementation of new, sustainable, raw materials for LEGO products as well as packaging materials. This is CSR at its utmost finest. But it is not purpose. The Lego purpose is *To inspire and develop children to think creatively, reason systematically and release their potential to shape their own future - experiencing the endless human possibility³⁹.*

But in today's world brands must update meaning that they can't remain silent or not speak out and act regarding socio-political issues. Purpose assessment is not enough and now companies need to switch to actions: doubts about purpose-driven marketing still exist. Some question whether it is only noble and uplifting

 ³⁸Source: Kechiche A. & Soparnot R. (2012); CSR within SMEs: Literature Review. International Business Research
³⁹Source: https://www.comparably.com/companies/lego-group/mission

in words but merely a lofty top-down command from the CEO to employees and hence lacks sincerity and transformative actions.

Simply having a brand purpose in advertising to tell people what the brand stands for does not make a brand purpose driven, let alone deliver the desired impacts and benefits. Rather, it is essential that brands not only define and articulate a meaningful purpose and to share with costumers their intent to sustain a social or environmental issue, but also practice what they preach. Many stakeholders now expect firms to demonstrate their values by expressing public support for or in opposition to a partisan sociopolitical issue. People expect brands to share their opinion and to affirm their moral and ethical position. In particular today's consumers want brands to take a stand especially on issues like racial discrimination, social justice and environmental damages instead of staying silent (Komiya, 2020) mainly because society as a whole is looking for a more robust leadership and an active participation that comes from companies. Overall, the adoption of activist activities by firms can be interpreted as a result of calls for being more responsible and take active and public stances in favor/against what is considered right/wrong (Moorman, 2020; Swaminathan et al., 2020)

This makes clear that it has become urgent to shift *from purpose to action* as just talking about the values isn't enough: it's time to serve the consumer because they want companies to help them live their lives, to help them make their own difference. The transaction from CSR to brand activism is taking place in the current society and it is important to underline that, although similar, the two strategies have points of difference.

CSR is more 'internally focused': the company self-regulates its practices with ethical and sustainable principles so that its actions are aligned with the principles it claims to believe in.

Instead, when dealing with brand activism, there is an "external focus" meaning that companies, in relation to an issue (environmental, social etc) takes a position and not only expresses it openly, but actively acts, so that it can have an impact on the world.

Brand activism represent the commitment of the company in order to promote social causes, political ideals, environmental issues or social ones, with the final aim to implement the initiatives proposed and stimulated to change in the external environment.

Another factor that differentiate those 2 constructs is the contentious nature (Chernev & Blair, 2015; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2009): CSR or CRM initiatives are *unlikely to elicit a negative response* from consumers unless the initiative is perceived as an insincere marketing trick (Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz, 2009; Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, & Schwarz, 2006) and it typically concern *generally-accepted, non-divisive, pro-social issues* such as supporting education or disaster relief OR rescuing animals; instead brand activism usually involve issues on which consumers are sharply divided (e.g., gun control, abortion, death penalty; Pew Research Center 2017). This sees consumers involved at the forefront of a social cause.

3.2 BRAND ACTIVISM AND SUSTAINABLE MISSION

how do brands behave considering the hot topic of the climate change and the ever-increasing evidence that calls for urgently changing food production and consumption?

Feldmann, in his book ''The Corporate Social Mind: How Companies Lead Social Change from the Inside Out'', believed that consumers now have twofold expectations about how companies behave.

The former provides that they foresee a focus on sustainability of products. "Sustainability " means meeting needs of the present generation without compromising those of the future generation. The term has taken on different nuances over the years and, starting from a vision centered mainly on ecological aspects, today flows towards a broader meaning that takes into account the well-being (environmental, social, economic) of present and future generations. More and more attention is given (and must be given) to this topic if consumer wants that the environment continue to provide resources, absorb waste and provide "life support'". A survey carried out in June 2020 among 1,004 respondents in America found that 46% of respondents want companies to publicize the environmental impacts of their new goods or services.

The latter expectation, instead, according to Feldmann, is about how the company treats its people. This is why there is an expectation that the company itself is going to be more mindful not only about impact on the environment but also on its employees on questions like race and sexual orientation. In light of the growing trend of environmental sustainability, younger consumers are seriously concerned with social and environmental causes, which many regard as being the defining issues of our time. They increasingly match their beliefs with their shopping habits, and thus they prefer brands that are coherent with their values and bypass those that don't. Given the scenario, brands are integrating social and environmental themes into their activities, products and services.

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING A STAND

While several brands worry about making political or social statements fearing the backlash that may occur from taking a polarizing stance leading to an isolation of a percentage of their target audience, other brands have found several benefits to using brand activism. There is empirical evidence to showcase that the companies' and brands' investments in corporate social responsibility and activism result in positive influence on marketing outcomes. In fact it works on creating a thrill around the brand and hence helps the brands to gain a favorable impact on their profits, customer loyalty, and connect with people who share common values and beliefs.

The first benefit that emerges from taking a stand consist in setting the brand apart from the pool of competition: this implies that customer perceive an organization's offering as being superior when compared to other similar offerings. In fact the polarized values shared by the company and its proactive attitude give people a reason to choose their business over others and to adopt those as a lifestyle. The consumer feel that

the brand, just like them, believe in something, helps them to fight for a REAL CAUSE, and tries to make real changes in current society.

In particular, by speaking up about the brand proactivity on social media platforms, awareness about a brand or about a social problem (which was underestimated) increases. By getting to know about the prosocial position of the brand, there are more chances that the company will be included within the consideration set of consumers, that is the set of brands taken into account by the individual when he has to choose about different brands. The development of awareness can be more effective practice than traditional advertising to call the attention and get exposed.

Brand activism also results in an increase of purchase intention (Negrao, Mantovani, & Andrade, 2018, Becker-Oslen et al, 2006)⁴⁰. In particular, Spears and Singh (2004) defined purchase intentions as an "individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand". Companies pay a lot of attention to this aspect as it is a useful indicator of future sales (Crompton, 2004) and thus of prosperity. On this purpose, influencing consumers in their purchasing decisions is one of the main companies objectives and they are constantly striving for a more effective way of doing this: tackling emotions could be a powerful way to induce consumer to remember the product and the values it carry, thus triggering a subconscious and automatic decision making process. But, considering the fierce competition on the market, ''differentiation'' has become a ''must'' for companies and this can be realized through the launch of creative offers targeted to the group in order to guide the customer to a purchase.

Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell (2000) noted that if the company is genuine, reliable and conforms its core purpose and values to the corporate practice and if consumers highly regard the endorser, feels represented by the brand and shares its same values, the desire to purchase may increase in the consumer's mind: credibility and authenticity are important assets⁴¹.

There are studies which indicate that there are gender differences regarding purchase intention on the basis of values, attitudes and behaviors imposed on them by the society (Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010): in particular it was revealed that women are more interested and favorable for cause-related marketing than men. They hold more favorable attitudes towards the campaign format and indicate higher purchase intention (Chéron, Kohlbacher, & Kusuma, 2012; Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010)⁴². When people associate buying from a brand with supporting their values and social/political cause, it creates an emotional tie that goes beyond product quality or price. In fact, if the motivation to purchase a specific product/service has an high frequency, and so

⁴⁰ Source: Shetty A. S., Venkataramaiah N.B., & Anand K. (2019). '*Brand activism and millennials: an empirical investigation into the perception of millennials towards brand activism*''. Problems and Perspectives in Management Journal

⁴¹ Source: Schmidt, S. H., Shreffler, M. B., Hambrick, M. E., & Gordon, B. S. (2018); An experimental examination of activist type and effort on brand image and purchase intentions.

⁴² Source: Shetty A. S., Venkataramaiah N.B., & Anand K. (2019); *Brandactivism and millennials: an empirical investigation into the perception of millennials towards brand activism*; Problems and Perspectives in Management Journal

If consumers buy repeatedly from a company because its purpose aligns with their values, loyalty generates. Customer loyalty describes, exactly, an ongoing emotional relationship between the company and the individual who is willing to repeatedly purchase the product from a company without looking or considering competitors' options because the expected satisfaction is lower than those currently perceived. Embracing a cause dear to consumers' heart can help to build brand loyalty and develop a strong emotional tie. In this sense, this is an important asset both because it ensures that consumers are not open to pitches from competing companies, both because they are willing to pay more as long as they get the same quality product or service they are familiar with and love, so the company can leverage an higher price.

All of this, has led to new forms of promotion in which consumers themselves generate discussions about products and services that they like and use: in fact if consumer share the same ideals of the brand, they are more willing to refer its initiatives to their family and friends that share their same values and thus this will boost a real societal change and also generate positive WOM. By mentioning and sharing advertisements and social media content to their peers about brand proactivity, consumers have the opportunity to become a sort of brand ambassadors and raise awareness and support the values they and the company believe in. In particular consumers become spokespersons for a social movement they believe in and their opinions can influence other consumers and induce them to join the change.

Moreover, brand activism is seen as an opportunity to support the employer branding by increasing attractiveness and retention and unite the staff to pursue a shared purpose: thanks to the value shared, it establishes the organization as a desirable workplace. This view might inspire the reinforcement of internal engagement and thus might put a premium on the employee acquisition, retention, and productivity benefits. Regarding employer branding, purpose is helpful for attracting potential employees, aligning current employees with the brand's direction, and making conscious their contribution to the brand and society.

Employer branding addresses two distinct target audiences : existing and potential employees . In fact brand activism can generate internal support from actual employees and external support, thus it can be an asset that attracts new talents. Attractiveness, image, and shared values, among others, have been identified as central determinant for recruiting talented employees. The higher the attractiveness of the employer brand and the better the attitude towards it, the higher the interest in working for an organization.

All the mentioned pros can benefit the company also from an economic and financial point of view : in fact, the raise of awareness, the purchase intention and the consequent brand loyalty can lead a firm's followers to carry a buycott, to support a cause and deliberally encouraging people to buy the brand product or services, thus leading to an increase of sales. And, as mentioned before, given the fact that consumers are attracted because of the values and actions shared and implemented, beyond price and quality reasons, this can make sure that company can leverage on a higher price.

So the firm's public demonstration through statements and actions of support to a specific society concern can be considered as a strong business strategy that brings to the development of a sustainable competitive advantage. The competitive advantage is what makes an entity's products or services more desirable to customers than that of any other rival: according to Porter's definition, it is the leverage a business has over its competitors and it is gained by offering clients better and greater value. In particular, thanks to this marketing strategy, the competitive advantage developed is more likely to be sustainable, meaning that, it cannot be replaced, eroded by competitors actions or become obsolete because of the continuous evolution of the economic context. When there is a sustainable competitive advantage, it is more difficult it is for competitors to neutralize the advantage.

5. CONSUMER REACTION TO BRAND ACTIVISM: AN ASYMMETRIC EFFECT

In the marketing literature, the relationship between brands and their consumers have mostly been studied through the lens of the consumer-company identification framework (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). This theory suggests that each individual tend to choose the product he identifies with and the higher self-brand similarity results in stronger self-brand identification and, thus, in more favorable attitudes towards the brand, increased purchase intentions, and higher levels of brand advocacy: in fact the consumer envision himself and shares the brand ideals and values, thus would sustains the activist position.

It appears clear that the majority of consumers say they are in favor of brands taking a stance, as demonstrated, for example, from a recent survey by public-affairs agency Global Strategy Group conducted in America with 800 adults with varying political beliefs which states that citizens are overwhelmingly supportive of corporate political engagement, with 78% agreeing that companies should take action to address important issues facing society. Specifically, in a Porter Novelli study, professionals said that companies "must address sexual harassment (97%), racial equality (93%), women's rights (89%), domestic job growth (86%), and privacy and security issues (84%)"⁴³. Another encouraging result in this sense comes from a research conducted by Sprout Social which states that 66% of consumers want brands to take stands on political and social issues and consequently they make purchasing decisions based on whether a brand represents their beliefs.

An important thing to notice is that nine in ten Generation Z consumers believe companies have a responsibility to address environmental and social issues and want to hear from companies their opinion about a specific socio-environmental concern. They want to join a movement. In particular, some studies also found that younger people are more prone to purchase suboptimal products (De Hooge et al., 2017), and they are increasingly aware of the importance of sustainable actions. From an economic point of view, it is interesting

⁴³ Source: Whitler A.K. (2021, October 18th); *How research can mislead marketers on brand activism*; MITSloan Management review

to notice that the Gen Z segment will account for 40 percent of global consumers by 2020, thus it is important to listen to a consistent part of the market which is continuously and exponentially growing.

Despite the common opinion, consumers reaction to new role of brands can differ from person to person, but, in general terms it is possible to say that consumer could receive positive or negative feelings. There is no absolute response about how consumers would react to company initiatives of activism basically because it usually involve issues on which consumers are sharply divided (e.g., gun control, abortion, death penalty), but, of course, it is possible to say that they may or may not support the choice of the brand.

But, on what does the fact that the consumer is favorable or unfavorable to the position taken by a brand depend?

If the consumer perceives the sincerity and coherence of the brand this means that its gestures and actions would be perceived as authentic and thus the consumer develops a positive attitude toward the activist position; otherwise, whether he understands that brands detach their activist messaging from their purpose, values, and practice, he would perceive it as inauthentic and thus there is an immediate distancing between the two. This last phenomenon is known as woke washing.

More specifically, the consumer's reaction certainly depends on the social problem faced per se. A brand's stand on a contentious social or political issue thus reflects the emphasis it places on moral foundation, thus it is important also to look at the moral foundation the brand stresses. It is possible to distinguish 5 different types of moral foundation highlighted throughout its messaging and actions: care (versus harm), fairness or proportionality (versus cheating), loyalty or in-group (versus betrayal), authority or respect (versus subversion), and sanctity or purity (versus degradation)⁴⁴. For example, a brand that opposes marriage equality arguably places greater emphasis on protecting 5 the in-group and purity. In fact if consumers disagree with the moral stand taken by the brand, it implies that the consumer will tend to detach from it. So, the brand place different emphasis on the aforementioned moral foundations, which would in-turn lead to a low self-brand similarity. Considering that on average people tend to consider their own moral beliefs to be superior or inviolable, it is unlikely that they will change their position about an issue to align it with a brand's one. When they perceive the brand as immoral or contrary to their principles and values, it is highly unlikely that consumers will opt to morally rationalize such a stand and this results in consumer-brand disagreement. Therefore, this situation, which indicates low self-brand similarity would lead to lower levels of consumer-brand identification and thus toward a distancing of the consumer from the brand and its activist position..

In reality, consumer responses depends also on company's intended image and so on how the firm describes its relationship to its external environment. Depending on whether the company describes itself as marketdriven (analyzes and adapts to the market) or values-driven (respond to market need and stays true to its

⁴⁴ Source: Mukherjee, S., & Althuizen, N. (2020). *Brand activism: Does courting controversy help or hurt a brand?*; International journal of research in marketing, 37(4), 772-788.

values), consumer reaction would change. In fact, consumers accept less political stances from a company which describes itself as market-driven (Slater, Mohr, and Sengupta 2010), because it might be seen as calculating, such that it appears to be claiming to believe something only to appeal to certain customers rather than because it is pressed to act based on its values. Thus it is seen as hypocritical. Wagner et al (2009) define hypocrisy as a "belief that a firm claims to be something it is not"⁴⁵. When taking a stand, if there is a gap between image-based expectations and marketplace actions, this drives to hypocrisy and to the consumer vision of the company as opportunistic. Most importantly, the consumer ''feels played for a fool'' and consequently his relationship with the company is damaged and in turn, the likelihood of purchase is impacted

Instead an opposite reaction happens when the company engages in activism and defines itself as a valuedriven, so if it focuses on corporate values and desire to project those onto the market, because in this case the company is seen as coherent and thus authentic. In fact, the company has a strong internal values and, when picking a side in relation to a partisan issue, it behaves in line with the stated value and every its action is designed to explain why the company does what it does. This company approach will maintain a greater expectation to be open about its political ideology or social concerns and thus becoming an activist provides that the company conforms to expectations and is viewed as acting consistent with its intended image and will therefore be considered as a more reliable partner. On the contrary, a value driven company would appear as hypocritical when abstaining because the company would have the ability to act but doesn't. It is clear that consumers may prefer consistency (versus inconsistency) between a company's intended image and its political stances.

5.1 STRATEGIC CONSISTENCY TRIANGLE

Since the consumers reactions, whether positive, can ultimately influence purchase decisions, brands attempt to engage consumers' active reactions. In doing so, as said before, it is important to be perceived as authentic, so an entity that wants to be considered as 'activist' must be able to 'walk the talk' and thus to align their messaging and values with their final actions.

But, this is not something easy or immediate. In particular, marketers of today use an old model from Duncan and Moriarty that is the ''Strategic Consistency Triangle'', also known as the Integration Triangle. In particular this tool is used to show how various brand message sources influence the perceptions we have of a product: in few words, marketers use this model to understand how their messages work on consumers. Thus this model must be read from the point of view of the customer.

⁴⁵ Source: Wagner, T., Lutz, R. J., & Weitz, B. A. (2009). *Corporate hypocrisy: Overcoming the threat of inconsistent corporate social responsibility perceptions.* Journal of marketing, 73(6), 77-91.

In the world of IMC ⁴⁶(integrated marketing communication), which by definition is the process of developing and implementing communication programs by combining communication instrument as to reach a synergic effect to influence the consumer behavior, the term "consistency" is applied only to the marketing communication messages and is used to improve a brand's image. In particular, this is obtained by being cohesive over time and across touchpoints and by combining different instruments and messages to reach in a synergic way the target audience.

But, what we refer to, is *'strategic* consistency'': it is the focus of integrated marketing and the term is used by public relations professionals to refer to all of a brand or company's interactions with stakeholders. In particular, Moriarty clarifies that "integration at this level focuses on all points of contact between a brand or company and its stakeholders, where it is important to have, exactly, strategic consistency"⁴⁷. This means that there must be a coordination of all messages in order to strengthen or create reputations, as well as a positive image and a favorable positioning in the minds of customers and other stakeholders. Undoability having consistency in marketing communication is important, but it is more important to create *strategic* consistency in the fundamental areas of core values, business philosophy, and corporate mission because these areas demonstrate corporate integrity and provide an expansion of brand boundaries.

The mentioned "triangle" model is made up of 3 factors, each of these is linked to the different kinds of messages which can be sent and received from marketers to consumers : SAY (planned messages), DO (product/service messages), and CONFIRM (unplanned messages)

Specifically, planned messages are "say" messages: in other words, this is what the company directly declairs about itself, and thus it represent the core purpose and what it promises to deliver. More in detail, the ''SAY'' message refers to what the marketer wants the customers to know or think about the brand or about its activist position: the company wants that the consumer know that he cares about a social concern or environmental issue and explains, throughout its words, its commitment. These messages can be relayed in a number of "traditional" ways such as advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, merchandising... and according to the company ,they may be the most accurate.

Instead, produce/service messages are "do" messages: the "do" factor of the strategic consistency triangle refers to the extent to which the "say" factor is delivered by a product or service and whether it has satisfied the client's requests as promised by the company. So, "do" represents the corporate practices and tell what the company/product actually does and so how it actually performs. It is powerful as performance usually speaks for itself in fact this message suggest how well a good or service delivers on the promise and meets expectations created by the say messages. Thus practice has a determinant impact because it can contradict (or

⁴⁶ Source: R.Batra, K. Keller (2016), ''Integrating Marketing Communications: New Findings, New Lessons, and New Ideas'', Journal of Marketing

⁴⁷ Source: Moriart S.E. (n.d.) " The Strategic Consistency Triangle"

confirm) the planned message. Sometimes consumers may be willing to refuse the other messages (if negative) if it has been proven by actually trying the product that it is good.

Finally, the unplanned messages are "confirm" messages which represent the content circulated throughout brand vehicles or other media. These messages come from other customers and stakeholders such as the media who either reinforce or contradict the say/do messages. In other words, it refers to what customers are saying about a product and for this reason it is also defied as ''unplanned'' message. In fact, the com pany/marketer usually has no control over this message because they are produce by a network of networks of people, devices, and other entities that are continuously interacting and exchanging information which include gossip, word of mouth/testimony, things competitors say, etc... and this is something that can not be controlled by the company.





Shortly, in implementing purpose-driven marketing, brand have to align their 'do' messages of product offerings, services etc. with their 'say' messages of the brand's claimed core purpose so that they may win their stakeholders' positive confirmation through their corporate practices ('confirm'). In other words, the say messages delivered by marketing communication must be consistent with the do messages of products and service performance, as well as with what others confirm about the brand. If the say and do messages are not consistent there will be a breackdown between the two parties which would lead to poor conformation of the brand, negative perceptions of it and of the rise of an unplanned message.

In this last case, customer and other stakeholder relationships is threatened as the individual perceives that the brand activist position is inauthentic and opportunistic; more specifically, its reputation is likely to be tarnished. In fact, from this schematic model it is possible to easily identify inconsistency in the organization's communication and it can call attention to potential relationship problems that could emerge, for example,

when the company doesn't do what it promises to do or when others say the brand isn't doing what it is promised.

From the customer's point of view, brand authenticity exists when a brand does what its maker says it will do and when that expectation and experience is confirmed by other peers. In particular, thanks to technological advancement and social media, there is a more frequent one-to-one communication between a brand and its consumers, which improves business–customer relationships and makes sure that consumers can have broader chances for interpersonal exchange of feedback with other similar consumers, so that the y are able to confirm corporate actions.

But, of course, maintaining strategic message consistency is not easy because a kind of coordination is needed to face several challenges: the first one consists in the fact that organizations have multiple audiences/stakeholders : if a company decides to take a position over a controversial problem, it should know that it could be risky because some stakeholders, including other companies or consumers, could believe in opposite principles because they have different needs, and consequently disagree with the new ones adopted and vehicolated. This result in a distancing from the company or, even worse, stakeholders can mistrust it and generate negative word of mouth.

5.2 WOKE WASHING and BOYCOTTING

When brands exploit topical issues or public events and show a sudden attention towards them, but they do it mostly in an interested and superficial way, as a marketing strategy to make themselves known or to derive economic profits or to conceal controversial company policies, we talk about "woke washing"

The term woke-washing is the equivalent to ''greenwashing'' for a social context and refers to inauthentic brand activism meaning that brands marketing messages about a central socio-political issue are not consistent with the purpose, values, or corporate practice of the brand (Sobande 2019; Vredenburg et al. 2020; Moorman, 2020)

Companies potentially mislead consumers through their activist messaging: they promise societal benefits with words but they do not act as intended. Even though consumers expect and want big brands to take a stand, they may not believe them when they do.

Inauthentic brand activism can be witnessed in many global brand's marketing strategies. It is important to note that a single act of activism, when perceived negatively, doesn't automatically cause a bad attitude or image, especially if the consumer is loyal to the brand: he can show empathy and forgive a single mistake. It is rather another association that adds to previous experiences, which are evaluated as a sum. Since activism often deals with ethical issues, one particularly severe act can, however, weigh heavily and tip the scale in the unfavorable direction as mentioned before.

A good example comes from Nike: the brand, which is one of the biggest activist engaged in the fight against racial discrimination joining #BLM movement, took a slip meaning that it continued to sponsor the NFL teams that rejected Colin Kaepernick, after he knelt as a Black Lives Matter protester, despite embracing Kaepernick as its endorser (Carp 2018) The company knew that they made a bold corporate move by signing up the American black sportsman but they decided to take a side, because they claimed themselves as contrary to racist values. Despite that, Nike continued to be the sponsor of the American league, thus appearing as incongruent and profit-oriented.

Many companies, in fact, could follow the *bandwagon effect*, so they quickly and blindly follow the trend and join a movement only because other firms do, without creating the necessary foundations within the company first. Because of a sense of urgency and market responsiveness (Campbell 2007; Georgallis 2017) they pretend to be updated and would keep up with times, thus joining battles and social justice movements on purpose in order to conquer an higher market share and the heart of the most conscious consumers.

Such behavior inevitably leads to backlash and stakeholder accusations of hypocrisy and inconsistency. Some brands could see this strategy as a smart or flexible move, but indeed it is simply counterproductive. In fact, today's consumer, who has a lot of information available thanks to the internet, does not easily trust brands claiming commitment to social issues: he is able to scrutinize the motives driving their actions and is likely to accuse them of engaging in trust washing and woke washing. According to a recent research from WARC (2021), more than half of surveyed customers were skeptical of brands' involvement in social issues, arguing that brands have profit-seeking motivations.

In fact, consumer can understand easily that the brand is not cheerful and the values it shares are fully incongruent (Moorman, 2020) with the cause it claims to supports and thus he might feel deceived or fooled. Above all, if consumer does not perceive the authenticity of brand initiatives, but rather he consider them as mere surface-level posturing, then the strategy becomes less effective and does not produces the social good outcomes expected. Hence, on the basis of their personal experience, consumer develops a "skeptical" attitude.

Researchers define skepticism as the disbelief of stated claims (Darley and Smith, 1993; Ford et al., 1990; Pomering and Johnson, 2009) and it is very dangerous for companies.

In fact, the skeptical consumer is cynical about the brand because of the prevalence of misleading actions and he is prone to denigrate the retailer in conversations and with facts. He is ruthless toward the brand and lacks of trust, as he feels betrayed by its inconclusive behavior. Skepticism leads to lower levels of consumer-based equity and thus reduces the incremental value of the brand's name in consumers' minds, which is critical because it builds resilience to negative information and prompts positive WOM. In fact, the spread of negative information about the company and its denigration in conversations with the public are outcome of prime importance because interpersonal communication is generally viewed as a more credible source of information (Grewal, Cline, & Davies, 2003) and consumers are unwilling to overlook or forgive when the company that comes under attack or adverse scrutiny in the public domain (e.g., in the event of a crisis)

Activist marketing messages that contain claims that are unsubstantiated and are important to a customer's decision to buy can yield irreparable harm to consumer trust. Beyond, this fraudulent behavior from a company can break consumers expectations and this induce consumers disappointment: they can send complaints to the company or take out negative ads or reviews, or tell Facebook friends to avoid the brand or, even worse, organize a boycott.

Boycott is defined by Friedman⁴⁸ (1986) as "an attempt by one or more subjects to reach certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from certain purchases". It happens not only against products, but mainly against companies, industries, brands, countries, or ideas. It may happen that the consumer may have a good opinion of the product itself, resulting from experience or direct evidence, but he refuses to buy it for ethical or ideological reasons related to the brand that produces it, perhaps because it does not respect human rights and exploits children for the realisation of products or uses substances that are harmful to the environment

This phenomenon has ancient roots and it is much more than a simple protest. Just think that the first episode occurred in 1773 in Boston Harbor, where a group of Massachusetts colonists disguised as Mohawk Indians boarded three British tea ships and dumped 342 chests of tea into the sea because they were disappointed with the British government. Since then, American colonial merchants called for boycotting all British products in fact they started avoiding drinking or consuming produces which came from England. So, since ever, costumers use boycott tool as their own weapon to ''make themselves heard'' in case they strongly disagree with company's action.

Boycotts can be direct or indirect (Friedman, 1999). In a direct boycott, individuals avoid products and services of a specific brand whose policies they consider irresponsible. An example that explains better is the Nestle case. The company advertised its infant formula to be "better than breast milk" and more convenient to use: it was a powder to which water is added. In 1977, the infant formula was boycotted by many consumers worldwide because they believed that Nestle mislead them with inaccurate nutritional claims. In fact, in poor countries saddled with infected water, babies often got sick.

⁴⁸ Source: M.Friedman (1985) ''Consumer boycotts in the United States''' The journal of consumer a ffairs, Wiley

In an indirect boycott, participants take harmful actions against a company that does business with another brand with whom the primary dispute exists. For example, in the early and mid 1990s, there was a boycott action against Nike. Its goal was to put an end to the human rights violations that were happening in Nike's facility in Indonesia (primary boycott); indirect boycott is represented by the fact that consumers, angry at Nike, boycotted a store, such as Foot Looker, that carries and sells Nike brand. In this case, the action is directed to a third party.

Hofmann in its model "trigger/promoter/inhibitor" accounts divergent boycott participation motivations. He uses the umbrella term "promoter" to identify the factors that encourage boycott participation which are instrumental and moral factors.

Regarding instrumental factors, consumers are more likely to participate in a boycott when they expect their participation can be functional to achieving the objectives of the boycott action.(Sen et al., 2001). Briefly, this type is related to self-efficacy (Bandura, 2012).

Regarding moral factors, consumers join a boycott action to enhance their self-esteem. Participating makes them feel ''better people'' because they make a sacrifice by not buying, for example, certain products / brands but they feel compelled to do a good deed towards society to correct it from distortions. We therefore focus on perceived control and self-enhancement as important instrumental and moral promoters.

The scholar also identifies some factors that impede boycott participation: there could be a variety of costs that occur when individuals boycott companies For example, they may face subjective costs that refer to increasing information costs, research costs, and financial costs involved in switching to other brands (or the lack of alternatives).

Therefore, woke activism authenticity is critical to overcoming consumer skepticism (Schmidt, Ind, Guzman, & Kennedy, 2021) and influencing marketing success, with potential for social change through activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

CHAPTER 2 : FOOD WASTE

1. SEMIOTIC NATURE OF FOOD

As seen in the previous chapter, the brand becomes a semiotic subject that transcends the manufacturing company to mediate between it and the consumer, stimulating, maintaining and transforming the relationships between the two players involved.

The brand acts as guarantor no longer and not only of the quality of the products and of the good reputation of the company that offers them on the market, but also and above all of the values that can be contained in those products and that circulate in the social culture.

In fact, the brand takes on a narrative character in the sense that it elaborates stories that reflect the social culture in which consumers can identify themselves with, as they feel close to those values.

In parallel, any product, any food appears on the market as such, having only a presumed materiality and an instrumentality. It is always, even unconsciously, filled with meanings and values both by the producer, by the consumer and by the society and culture in which it circulates. Thus, it is a symbol.

Coca Cola is not simply the brand that puts on the market products with certain properties (taste, color) and specific functions (quenching thirst) but it is a drink and an intermediary that allows the consumer to feel symbolically similar to young Americans, the tool that allows to adhere to a convivial and spontaneous lifestyle. The brand coincides with its valorization: a consumer approaches Coca Cola because he wants to lead a certain lifestyle that is fashionable and full of energy. The world of things and the world of meanings complement each other.

It is therefore clear that, in addition to its purely nutritional, sensorial and playful, historical and cultural dimensions, food has its specifically semiotic dimension thanks to the fact that it embodies the characteristics of a real language.

The starting point of the semiotics of food is to identify the system of meaning which it is based on: it is a primary cultural modeling system which is a tool that communicates, classifies, puts in hierarchy, proposes images and evaluations of the world.

So food shapes a culture, space, image and other systems of meaning, just as language does. However, food is a silent, non-verbal language, but perhaps precisely for this reason, is even more powerful than verbal language.

In order to be meaningful and to be used as a form of communication, food does not need a linguistic basis that precedes it, it does not rely on previous linguistic structures but it anticipates them: food does not only mean what is "said" by verbal language but in what it says apart from it, and therefore, in itself, constitutes a form of language.

1.1 FOOD AS LANGUAGE

"A society's cuisine acts as a language through which it unconsciously expresses its structure"⁴⁹

Levi-Strauss words are a manual in this sense. It is clear that, from now on, it is better to refer to the concept of food-language.

The semiologist was just one of many other scholars who shared this approach. In fact, Marrone affirms that food is a language and as such it serves to communicate with others, to express oneself, to interpret the world, to consolidate cultural traditions, to represent social hierarchies.

It is important to underline that food and language are different forms of communication that have different functions but the share the same underlying structures: first of all, they have the same physical origin so the same physiological place that generates them: the mouth.

Just as verbal language is not made up of simple words, in the same way, the language of food is not made up of foods, raw materials, calories only; food symbolizes ourselves and the social world: according to Barthes, food is a body of images, a protocol of uses, situations and behaviors. When buying food, and consuming it, people do not handle an object in a purely transitive way but food summarizes and transmits a situation, it constitutes an information and therefore it has a meaning.

Food-language, from a semiotic point of view, is declined in two different dimensions:

- Parlare del cibo: Talking about food

This dimension aims to attribute a meaning to it, linking it to moments in the history of the culture of people or an individual.

People have always talked about food. In Italy the boom in conversations about food began in 2000: the first cooking program that was launched was " La prova del cuoco " by Antonella Clerici, followed by ''Cotto e mangiato" by Benedetta Parodi: these are just two embryonic examples of a new way of proposing cooking on Italian television.

For the first time in fact the art of cooking was presented in a simple and playful way: everyone, not only grandmothers or people with high skills could (and can) get in the kitchen and make delicious food with a few simple steps.

From that moment on, talents on food have multiplied: the first program to have international importance has been Masterchef which, with the presence of the Italian chef Carlo Cracco, is a talent show whose participants are amateur chefs who cook with passion and who, through a series of challenges, try to win a cash prize and the opportunity to publish their own cookbook.

⁴⁹ Source: Marrone G. (2016) Semiotica del gusto: linguaggi della cucina, del cibo, della tavola ; Milano ; Mimesis edizioni

Nowadays we talk about food not only in television broadcasts, in conversations, in cookbooks, in specialized magazines, at the cinema, in advertisements, but also in blogs, in social media that have established themselves with the spread of the Internet.

Today what to eat, the way to prepare it and consequently how to consume it is one of the favorite online and offline topics for people, to the point that it is not clear if the table is the place where people eat rather than the one where they converse. Talking about food, whatever its form, has become a (*gastro*) mania.

Consequently, the fact that people talk a lot about it implies that a meaning is attributed to food and this influences taste, culinary practices and therefore the way consumers act. For example, with the spread of social media and therefore of "social food " consumers discuss and talk a lot about good food and organic crops that enhance freshness and care for the environment: this leads them to eat well more carefully than before.

Food is once again considered as the "bearer of the values of the past and well-being ", therefore it is given a "new "meaning opposite to that which established itself in the era of the fast food boom.

As in actual language, the language of food is also characterized by the problem of how people talk about food, what to say and what not about the gustatory experience.

- Il cibo che parla

This second dimension is more hidden and provides that food itself constitutes a specific form of language. As Levi-Strauss argues, through food an individual talks about the world, of society, of the universe, of himself.

If 'man is what he eats', citing Feuerbach, it is not only because the substances he incorporates constitute his physicality, but also because the food he prepares and ingests represents him, it gives him sense, valuable thus contributing to build his individual or collective identity.

In fact, the ideological and valuable organization of each culture coincides with the culinary system of that society. As the anthropologist suggested, to get to know a particular society in depth, it is important to visit its market.

When considering this dimension of food, it is important to abandon the functionalist approach, according to which it is possible to make rigid categorizations and to establish what is good or bad, what is nutritious or unhealthy. This is not the basis from which cultural symbologies are established, and therefore from which food can build a real language. We need to embrace a more semiotic approach. In fact, just as no one speaks only to convey a message or dresses only to protect the body, in the same way no one eats only to nourish himself or to enjoy the flavors. Beyond the functional (nutritional) nature of food, there is its semiotic nature, which has allowed man to move away from his animalistic nature to build different forms of culture and civilization. Abandoning its description as a body fuel, food flows into a semiosphere within which it plays a leading role, entering into a relationship with the rest of the world and meaning something other than itself.

These two communicative dimensions in social practice end up reinforcing each other until they become confused: food assumes a meaning because it is talked about and, at the same time, it is talked about because it has a meaning.

Looking at Ferdinand de Saussure's theories, whatever attributes meaning to a language is *not the substance* or its externality, but the *form*, thus the differences and relationships, the processes, the transformations, the valorisations.

Verbal language is made up of *forms*, not substances: in fact its specificity that makes it such does not lie in the sounds that everyone can hear or in the things that everyone can see but in the way of articulating them within a given system and distinguishing them according to certain rules. Language is a system of differences as well.

Precisely, in the same way, in order to talk about a form and so in order to give it a meaning, it must be organized within a system of differences.

The same product changes its meaning according to the others with which it relates with, obtaining different valuations: what for some cultures is a 'text'', for others it is only *part* of a larger text while for still others it is intended as a 'context''. For example, a bite is a text, therefore a set of meaning that bears value only in some cuisines and cultures such as Japanese and Spanish ones: in fact, in these countries food is served in the form of a small single portions that can be bitten into once (sushi or tapas); in other cultures it is rather a dish, if not a whole meal, that has meaning. In the Italian culture, a bite is *part* of a large text, that is a dish of pasta. In the same way the spaghetti, properly seasoned, in Italy constituted a dish *per se* and are the symbol of a geographic region (southern Italy); instead in France they are served, without seasoning, as a side dish to a steak. The link established internally (in Italy) between pasta and condiment and (in France) between pasta and meat, is what makes food meaningful and therefore the expression of an identity.

Not only do different cultures attribute different values to a food but also the greatest meaning of cuisine can vary: in our culture there is a clear separation between what happens in the place where the dishes are prepared and composed by the chefs and what happens at the table (where the dish is eaten); in other cultures this difference is not clear: it can happen that the dishes are composed at the table or, even, that these are cooked in front of the consumers. This is the case, for example, of the fondue that arrives at the table on the stove or of the incandescent plate that continues to roast the meat in front of the diners.

In reality, the clear separation between kitchen and table has faded with the introduction, starting from the starred restaurants, of large glass screens that keep the kitchen in contact with the dining room. They have been introduced as a symbol of transparency, and therefore to reassure consumers that whatever arrives on their plates has been prepared with the utmost care.

But, what are the different meanings that, over time, revolve around the language of food?

2. FOOD CULTURE

Since a lifetime, food acts as a companion that makes people feel happy, welcomed and part of a group: it is synonymous of conviviality and socialization.

Groups of primitive men who sat in front of fire and, while talking, ate, gave birth to the convivial vision of food. People began to give a certain importance, and in some eras even "sacredness", at the moments shared around the fire (and today around the table). Eating has become a real ritual and an occasion for a festive encounter to which one loves to yield.

With reference, again, to the past, in Ancient Roman Culture, common people but also the most famous writers of the time spoke of "*convivium*". It is a term that indicates the actual banquet and, etymologically, derives from the term '*convivere*'', which means " to live and to stay together". The association of terms mean that when there is food, there is also a community. People not only gather together for a meal, but also to converse about philosophy, politics and common interests. Still today, sharing food and eating together fosters dialogue, reflection and can be the entry point into a community, it makes people feel as an integral part of the same culture, and puts them in communication. This is why the pleasure from food, according to this vision, comes from the commensal act of eating, rather than on flavors themselves.

Food is also seen as an intimate act and an act of love and care. The famous claim of Barilla "where there is Barilla, there is home" simply justifies this aspect: the sentence refers not only to the physical place where the daily ritual of the meal takes place, but also refers to the theme of the family, of its values and therefore envisions it as a refuge, shelter and protection. Food, and in this case Barilla products, takes on a semiotic connotation and becomes the tool that allows the good father of a family to provide for the needs and wellbeing of his children and his wife on a daily basis.

Family unit is essential for the materialization of this vision: in fact, people rarely meet during the day, due to raving lifestyle rhythms. They get together and share the moments of their routine only around a delicious banquet. The meals of the day become the points of reference both in individual and collective time.

Here, some foods could have the function of glue, in the sense that they can bring to mind forgotten episodes of life that unite different family members; for example, eating a slice of apple pie is able to evoke memories of the grandmother who used to prepare it for all the nephews, reviving a moment of childhood with great intensity. Emotions come into play and are activated by taste and smell and allow to create a unique bond with food. In the famous words of Ryan Bromley, people "*choose to eat less and less to feed themselves and more and more to get excited*"⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Source: Ferriniggift (2019, March 19th); La creatività in cucina coinvolge tutti i sensi

It cannot be said differently when an individual comes into contact with a work of art: many are moved by looking at the Mona Lisa or at the infinite versions of Monet's water lilies. Art is capable of continually evoking and re-evoking emotions and memories from the past or from life experiences. So food does, as said.

The cuisine is defined as a form of art, in particular, according to the theory of the semiologist Goodman, as an art of the *allographic* type⁵¹. Unlike autographic art, it provides that the artist, whether he is a musician or a writer, or a cooker indeed, produces the work and then there is the moment of execution that completes it. In particular, the execution can be done not only by the author himself but also by others in subsequent times. The execution by others is not a *fake* version but it is part of the work: it will have different interpretations. Indeed, the recipe can be replicated not just by the chef who created it, but also by someone else. In particular, it can be interpreted and personalized according to the ingredients he has available or of the time he wants to invest in the preparation of the dish. Then follows its execution or its reproduction.

Taking another perspective, food has always been an important pictorial subject reproduced by different painters in different eras. Since man began to feel the need to represent his own life, food has inevitably been art and part of art. From hunting scenes engraved on the walls of ancient rocks, to works from the 1400s including Leonardo's ''Ultima cena'', passing through Vincenzo Campi, ending with the most modern *pop* and *eat art* by Andy Wharol.

And in particular in each of these circumstances it assumes a significant and different semiotic value: in the 16th century works, for example, food at the same time incorporated the profane dimension with the sacred one and indicated the nourishment that the human being must receive from word of God, as opposed to the concrete and earthly nourishment represented. For example, a piece of lamb was not just something to eat but it hided an allusion to Christ and reborn.

Instead, in Andy Warhol's works food that is represented is a symbol of consumerism and alluded to the fact that art, as well as canned and standardized products, was no longer an elite phenomenon but everyone could appreciate it.

Trivially, the fact that each individual, in a completely natural way, tends to immediately associate the Italians with pasta, the Chinese with rice, the Germans with beer and wurstel, the French with baguettes and escargots, makes it clear that food is a cultural element and takes on such a strong identity value that it becomes also a symbol of people, of a community, of a place.

In fact, food can be considered as a symbol of cultural identity, since it represents the connection or the bridge towards one's own land, one's loved ones, one's places, but also towards oneself. In fact it is an expression of collective and individual identity.

⁵¹ Source: Marrone G.; (2014); Goodman in cucina. le attivazioni di Babette in Cibo estetica ed arte a cura di N. Perullo

An example is represented by the '*risotto alla Milanese*'', that is a strong symbol of a collective local identity ("risotto patrio", as it is also called by C. Gadda) but also of individual one.

In fact, on one hand, it represents a food rooted in time and in social rituals that helps to keep people steady; on the other hand, the risotto is the point where different personal, family or group variations are manifested, starting from which culinary uses are claimed which, in turn, go to constitute individual identities. In this sense, there is no person who does not make "*his*" personalized version of the risotto.

At the same time, it expresses the collective identity (of the inhabitants of Milan) and individual one (each adds an ingredient that represents it more in its own variant of the dish).

In reality, this dimension prevails precisely because it is a strongly traditional dish and relatively easy to prepare, not only for the (small) number of ingredients but also for the (small) number of steps required: therefore the variants of Milanese risotto that tend to personalize it are endless.

Levi Strauss talks about the "refined art of variations" which ends up constituting a real myth from which the power of food is born. In particular, some individuals, also considering the best known chefs such as Marchesi or Cracco, insist on the type of rice to use, on the use or not of the onion or on the type of wine to use for whipping. Some take personalization to the extreme, introducing completely original ingredients such as coriander and peach stone in the variants.

The ingredients contribute not only to the identity value of the food but also to the preparation procedure itself: the slow, continuous, patient, loving cooking procedure is not only a part of the preparation of risotto but of many other foods, represents a real ritual which, like all rites, founds and strengthens the identity myth connected to it.

Food transmits and spreads the culture of people, it includes social models, uses and it elevates itself as an identity symbol of a country, thus fully describing it and making the cuisine, local or ethnic, a set of identity and otherness, a point of contact and contagion between different semiospheres.

Food also represents a means of (cultural) exchange, and thus it is the first form of contact between two civilizations, or two social groups, or two individuals: it is known that when someone visits a new country and wants to know the new local culture, the first thing to do is to go to the local market. Each culture has its own code of rules that privileges certain foods and prohibits others and all this is influenced by the geographical, environmental and economic components that characterize the culture and traditions of a people.

For example, Islamic culture prohibits the consumption of pork because of religious limitations. In the Christian religion there are no prohibitions in this sense, except in the weeks preceding Easter, but particular symbolic emphasis is attributed to three elements: bread, oil and wine, considered as a gift from God and therefore consuming it represents an act of thanksgiving to those who take on the task of making it available. In Judaism a considerable number of rules govern the consumption of meat since the prevailing interpretation of some passages of the Bible indicates that humanity was initially vegetarian and would become omnivorous only after divine authorization.

All these "prohibitions " or rules distinguish and therefore characterize a particular culture.

2.1 THE VALUE OF FOOD PREPARATION

To corroborate the fact that food has a strong and rooted meaning in society, it is also interesting to open a little parenthesis on the techniques of food preparation. The transformation makes food different and transforms it not only from a physical and nutritional point of view but also from a semiotic perspective and therefore contributes to its enrichment in value.

The scholar who most focused on the theme from a "structuralist" point of view was Levi-Strauss who recognized the importance of the operations connected with the preparation of food and affirmed that cooking symbolically marks the "transition between nature and culture" and therefore "between nature and society". However, the intuitions of the French anthropologist on the methods of using fire in defining the great transitions from nature to culture are fundamental.

Raw food (salad, tartare), which does not require the use of fire, is not natural but is associated with the "nature" category; cooked food (bread), is associated with the "culture" category, as it is more elaborated and is defined as the *cultural* transformation of natural food; putrid food (a cheese such as gorgonzola or beer that goes through a fermentation process) is subjected to the automatic process of *natural* transformation and therefore arises as an intermediate entity.

For example, a raw carrot is assimilated to the category of nature instead, once it comes into contact with boiling water, and therefore when it is cooked, it refers to the category of culture.

There are several categories that offer an effective conceptualization of firing operations: amorphous vs. structured, discrete vs. compact, concentrated vs. expanded. Always referring to the carrot, in nature this appears as a structured entity (meaning as a well-defined and shape entity); instead when it is incorporated into other ingredients in order to compose a dish, such as ragù, it must necessarily pass through the category of amorphous, therefore it must be cut, shredded and deconstructed.

The use of fire defines 3 culinary techniques that are covered with meaning: boiling, roasting, smoking.

Boiling is not just a culinary technique that gives the product a delicate flavor; as well as roasting is not simply a culinary technique that gives a strong taste to food. They can be interpreted on the basis of the semantic opposition nature vs. culture. The sense depends on the different perception of the degree of food processing: the more the food is processed, the more it is perceived as cultural (boiled), the less it is processed, the more it is perceived as natural (roasted).

Frying is another cooking method on which many semiologists, first of all Brillat-Savarin, focused.

A real and precise recipe is never given but rather experts tend to indicate a precise cooking procedure. Throughout boiling, the action of fire on the water leads the latter to become broth and to acquire the flavor of the objects that are placed in it: the water (subject) takes on the flavor (therefore the value) of the food, for example the piece of meat or vegetables (anti-subject) that are put inside. With frying, however, things go differently, the oil does not take on the connotation of a subject and therefore does not appropriate the value possessed by the anti-subject but can at most destroy it.

In fact, when food is placed in oil, the latter does not take on the flavor of the food itself but tends more to "destroy" it in the sense that it forms an external crust that changes its initial appearance.

In the case of boiling, therefore, we speak of a union between water and fire with the mediation of food; in the case of frying, on the other hand, the food is combined with the fire while the liquid is an instrument of realization. In particular for frying it is important that the meeting between liquid and solid takes place under certain conditions: the immersion of the food must take place at an appropriate time after a long, tense wait. Instead, the transformation that takes place in the frying operation happens suddenly and unexpectedly, as if it were a surprise, unlike what happens for the broth in which the transformation is slow. the surprise is understood as an aesthetic event within which a form of catharsis, a traumatic event that takes the actors by surprise and which then leads to a complete redefinition.

2.2 THE VALUE OF FOOD MOMENTS: START OF SOMETHING NEW

In the previous paragraphs it has been underlined that the food shared during the meals of the day is considered as a symbol of conviviality and it moreover recalls tradition: it gathers people around the table who share the pleasure of eating, the moments of the day, memories that food brings out and knowledge.

G. Marrone in his works addresses a crucial theme: that of the merenda and the merendina.

It is interesting in the socio-semiotic discourse on taste and food since it introduces a *moment of detachment from tradition* and would seem to *contradict the value of conviviality and tradition* that has always been associated with food. In fact, the *merenda* (or maybe the *merendina*?) is at the same time superfluous but essential, irrational but necessary, transgressive but traditional, domestic but industrial, familiar but nomadic. To understand the truthfulness of this supposition, it is advisable not to confuse *merenda* and *merendina*: in the passage from one term to the other, there is more than a simple grammatical variation: it is in fact a passage from the home food tradition to industrial globalization and post industrial, from nature to culture, from family to the street.

Based on the definitions reported by the dictionaries in various editions, starting from 1976, the *merenda* is basically defined as an event: not as a material object, but as a moment, a series of stereotyped actions that have a temporal articulation (between lunch and dinner and sometimes in the middle of the morning, or in any case between one meal and another), a spatial dimension (to be consumed in the home or during a trip or outing with the family), an actorial dimension (consumed mainly by children) and an affective dimension (rigorously prepared by grandmothers or mothers in the home environment).

From a semiotic point of view it is possible to identify between the lines a double transgression of the *merenda*: it refers to the act of extraordinary eating, therefore between meals, as opposed to the normal meal.

Furthermore, in this category it can also be consumed in an extraordinary way by adults outside the home, perhaps during a work break, not only by children at home.

The moment of *merenda* is a moment of aggregation and sharing and is aimed at strengthening the social and emotional bond between people: the grandmother who prepares bread and compotes for the child, the brother who shares part of the food with his sister and so on ... its consumption contributes to the growth of memories.

The *merendina*, instead, is an object of value full of meaning that different subjects want and can attribute to it: it is different from the *merenda*, as it is its "modern transposition" since it is a symbol of breaking with the past, it is a pop icon of industrialization, prepackaged food that is bought on impulse at the supermarket. The pleasure of the *merendina* lies above all in its packaging to be enjoyed with the related opening rituals: the consumer eats with his eyes. In this sense, the *true essence of food is lost* and this gives rise to a hypocritical sense of guilt.

On the other hand, the *merendina* is associated with an adolescent nostalgia for traditions, it is the materialized memory of the merenda... it is something of the past to be nostalgically regretted. It is at the same time, food for excellence and its denial of principle: on the one hand it is a source of transgression for which one feels a sense of guilt while on the other it is pure pleasure because it is vaguely linked to childhood.

In accordance with Montanari's words, it is possible to say that the *merendina* has become insignificant because it lacks a temporal context (it is no longer associated only with a single moment of the day) a spatial reference (it is not consumed only in specific places such as the house or the garden) and a value dimension (It is no longer just a reward to be deserved but it takes on other meanings). In fact the break is a moment that can always arrive, sometimes extending to the whole day and therefore the *merendina* can be eaten anywhere, for any reason or without a specific reason.

Advertising at the end of the 20th century helped *merendina* to shape its myth and therefore introducing a variation of the food values, which reinvented the traditional snack: this, however, from a business point of view, is not entirely negative since companies have enriched the potential of signification: in fact, *merendine* are no longer consumed only in a single circumstance, they are not associated only with a moment of the day or with a single consumption occasion: brands made sure that to the packaged product could be given different meanings and could be associated with different times of the day.

Brands, in order to be able to place it throughout the routine, had to consider the opposition of the continuity *vs*. discontinuity categories and, with these, also the relationships of complementarity and contradiction.

The following semiotic square has been worked out.



Source: Personal elaboration

For example, Lindt chocolate takes up the category of non-continuity, according to which the *merendina* is considered as a break that accentuates the flow of everyday life without breaking it.

t is seen as a cuddle, as a moment of '*'irresistibile scioglievolezza''* and as a reward the consumer deserves. In advertising, it is associated with the after-dinner moment when the consumer wants to indulge in a little luxury.

Instead, products like the "Parmareggio snack", follow the category of discontinuity, and therefore the *merendina*, which in this case is composed by Parmigiano cheese and crackers, is understood as the classic break, therefore as the interruption of the flow of the day in order to get a recharge of energy. It is consumed in those moments in which, due to the hectic life, it is not possible to sit at the table and enjoy a full meal but at the same time energy is needed. The product provides the right charge before, after and during an activity. Products such as Bauli croissants, provide that the *merendina* is not an interruption of daily life but tends to maintain a certain balance of the food tradition and therefore expresses the principle of conservation of the values of tradition, family and social order. They belong to the category of continuity.

Products that instead belong to the category of non-discontinuity, precisely because they do not interrupt the routine in the least, such as a Protein Cookie from Foodspring, whose claim is '*Un Cookie ci sta sempre*!" to indicate that there is not a precise moment to which its consumption is destinated, it is timeless because of the fact that it is an healthy and packed food, it can be eaten anywhere and anytime without guilt.

From this elaboration of the square, it is possible to affirm that the *merendina* is the output of media culture and is filled with meanings precisely because advertising and all marketing actions multiply the contexts of use and therefore the values associated with it.

2.3 GASTROMANIA

Through new and old media, food has invaded every dimension of our existence, individual and collective, and its meaning has inevitably changed. The idea of gastronomy has given way to that of *gastromania* and indicates, as Marrone establishes, the modern obsession linked to food and nutrition.

The media representation of what happens in the kitchen inevitably involves a process of construction and reconstruction of meaning.

If gastronomy and "gourmet" were an elite phenomenon, elegant and sophisticated, dedicated to the few individuals who could afford to eat in the wealthiest restaurants, today it is on everyone's lips. Whether it is with family, friends, at work, on vacation, in the bookshop, in the park, at the shopping center, everyone eats, tastes food from different cultures, but above all everyone talks about food, comments, photographs, films, shares images about food. We feed on food discourses.

Today everyone has turned into food lovers and enthusiasts, the so-called "foodies": from the housewife who publishes cooking recipes and shares them with friends on social networks to the little lonely blogger who reviews everything she tastes and becomes so expert of food, wine and restaurants, even without a proper education.

The phenomenon of *gastromania* leads us to speak of culinary broadcasts, in the plural. In fact, various television genres that talk about food are widespread: from documentaries (Eat parade) to entertainment (''The ceremonial boss'' or ''Cake Boss''), from talent shows (Masterchef) to reality shows (Nightmare Kitchen). In this new context, successful chefs became TV stars and very popular characters, taking on the role of real superheroes or people to be imitated at all costs. Their nature as experts in the sector is transformed: they seem ready to trade secular traditions and anthropological symbols for a moment of popularity. In fact, very often it happens that chefs leave the kitchen and wander around the tables in the dining room to collect opinions, consents and to make themselves known.

Each of these genres has a different narrative function. For example, documentaries have a practical aim and their intent is pedagogical: they want to teach the consumer some skills or tricks to cook something delicious by describing each step.

The woman who brought ``cooking on TV " is Julia Child: in fact in 1962, for the first time in history, she conducted the first American cooking program in which she demonstrated and explained, directly from her home, step by step with a frank tone of voice how to prepare the simplest traditional French dishes. Numerous programs were inspired by this: to give a current example we cite " Cotto e mangiato" by Benedetta Parodi in which the young woman explains in an hilarious way how to create easy-to-make dishes using sponsored products.

Instead, there are numerous other programs with a "ludic" function in which cooking is a real passion which, as such, is exercised in free time. People cook for those they love, and they want to learn more about certain

foods, which are treated as a rare treasure to discover, and so they want to create a dish that is a work of art, to such an extent that it has given a specific and creative name. An example is "Masterchef".

The `` utopian " broadcasts, on the other hand, are less frequent and are transmitted on specific channels, such as Gambero Rosso Channel. They show great chefs who perform alone in front of the cameras and experience their great cuisine and their complicated recipes that require the use of rare foods and special tools. It is clear that the target is restricted to an audience of specialists.

All these programs, although different, underline a particular phenomenon: everyone cooks and everyone knows how to cook but nobody eats. There is never a correspondence between what people cook and the gustatory moment.

Unfortunately, gastromania is not just a temporary trend: it is a real and persistent one.

Michael Pollan in his work "Cotto" from 2013, states that the "cooking paradox" has established as people are obsessed with and deviated from the pervasiveness of food: the more they talk about culinary art in the media, the less people are at the stove; the more people spend their time in front of the screen watching others cooking, the less they stay in the kitchen sautéing and serving. He argues that "if there are so many recipe books, it is because few know how to cook well; if we discuss so much about taste, it is because it is usually difficult to find someone who knows how to eat".⁵²

In fact, what has changed is the very concept of cooking: up to 50 years ago, this activity required time, dedication and skill since those who cooked had to know how to treat food, how to clean it, how to peel it and how to cook it in an appropriate way using appropriate tools. So people started from scratch, from the raw material " as it is " and created something totally different. The cuisine was the product of a skillful transformation of raw materials and their creative mixing, which also incorporated significant fragments of history, society, culture, politics, ethnic identity.

Today, however, food is emptied of meaning and loses all its value with heavy consequences on culture and society, given their bond. People do not have time to spend in the kitchen because of their routines and they refer to food and cuisine in a rather superficial way since the activity of ``cooking'' consist in even just heating a pre-cooked dish in the microwave or taking something out of the freezer to put it in the oven: the raw material is an unknown object for those who stay in the kitchen who tend to prefer, pre-washed or chopped vegetables, pre-breaded cutlets, pre-fried foods. With the food industry offering ready-made meals, with delivery apps well established in the area and serving meals at all hours of the day, cooking has become almost superfluous. At the same time, the digital world is also characterized by an explosion of food in all its forms (digital, of course): it attracts, more than a supermodel, the lenses of cameras, telephones and cameras. By now all the Facebook or Instagram homes are clogged with photos of pies, desserts, refined dishes prepared at home according to the advice of the numerous (perhaps too many) bloggers, or by the most well-known chefs of the

⁵² Source: Marrone G. (2014, December 18th); Cucina per difetto, un romanzo di formazione; Doppiozero

town with the strangest combinations of ingredients, tutorials that can be watched at any time, and which outline in a few steps the process of saver recipes. There is no shortage of live streams in which food experts perform to entertain the audience of curious consumers. There are also the ''stories'' in which each user geolocates himself by photographing the typical dish or the most particular one of the place he is in, with accompanying comments, just as if he was the expert who publishes his review in a culinary guide.

Added to this are all the dozens of apps which, based on the location of the consumer, identify restaurants and wine bars, street food stalls, luxury delicatessens and lost organic companies and ensure that the consumer is always glued to the universe of food.

No matter where he is, he will always have food notifications on his mobile, he will always hear about food.

Gastromania, and therefore this excessive obsession with the universe of food, derives above all from consumption trends, pumped by marketing and brand communication, which compulsively lead consumers to try yet another new restaurant where they eat not so much to be able to savor the taste of new dishes and to be closer to a new culture, but rather to be able to photograph and comment on what they come into contact with: posting photos of the wine recommended by the Maître or of the cheese platter from France, for example, becomes the real consumer experience. The consumer society and the food industry have imposed an ice age of taste and food valorisation.

All this suggests that when the cuisine dies, *gastromania* expands, eroding above all the value of commensality and the sense of conviviality, of sharing generated through food, thanks to which humanity re-emerges.

2.3.1 FOOD PORN

According to Hegel and his idealist philosophy, whenever art dies, *aesthetics* arises. It is also possible to make the same consideration in the context of the food. When food stops getting emotional and conveying pure and authentic values, it is because it becomes mere exteriority, something ''beautiful to see''.

In this regard, gastronomy is combined with pornography: the phenomenon of food porn originates. They are both pseudo-artistic practices aimed to obtain immediate sensory enjoyment. The aspects emphasized by food porn are the visual ones of food, to the detriment of the other sensory channels that should also concern it such as taste, touch, smell.

This phenomenon, as much as someone might think, is not recent but dates back to 1984 when the author Coward noted that in many speeches circulating in the media such as cinema, photography, fashion, advertising, television, the visual aesthetics of the dish was more important than the act of cooking, the taste and of the person doing it. This phenomenon has been identified as an excess of consideration towards food, to the detriment of the pleasure experienced at the moment of tasting. In fact, food is something purely objective and materialistic, only considered for its aesthetic dimension and empties itself of all the meaning that has always been attributed to it. Even in the early 21st century, it is possible to say that the speech is flawless.

Medial food (in this new temporal context we also speak of " new " media such as the internet) is in fact eaten with the eyes and not with the mouth. Food is photographed rather than eaten and this is shared online rather than with the other members of the table. Starting from television, but also on social media, the implantation has become an index of palatability: the fact that a dish is well presented is synonymous with goodness and recalls its taste. Trivially, a dish in which the spaghetti are not perfectly "nested" seems almost inedible. Food that does not adhere to the standards of " beautiful " and " photogenic " is thrown away, because it is not considered good. Unfortunately, however, there is the tendency to interchange the dimensions of " beautiful " and " good " very easily and anything that does not adhere to social rules becomes waste.

The photos of food in the media culture exclude laden tables, which have always been portrayed by the greatest painters throughout history and were considered as a symbol of ostentation and wealth; in food porn era, daily dishes are preferred.

This is because now it is not the food itself that attracts the eye and the attention of the consumer but its color combinations, the sauces or glazes that cover it: it's all about the aesthetic. It doesn't matter that there is a pizza in the photo, rather than a stuffed sandwich, rather than a set of sweets: what attracts consumers minds is the set of colors that characterize a dish, its internal shades, the saturated and uniform colors, its contrasts that form chiaroscuro and which are determined by light.

The intent of these Caravaggesque games is to bring out some gastronomic details indicated as essential, to stimulate the appetite, to predict taste, and to give the idea of a flavor and therefore to provoke salivation. The images are performative therefore they do not represent the world but intend to intervene on it.

Gastromania, food porn and the general spectacularization of food have progressively eroded the importance of conviviality at the table even where it played a fundamental role, such as in Italian culture.

A positive glimmer of recovery in values is represented by the pandemic: paradoxically, this period of crisis seems to have benefited the gastronomic sector for a while, in the sense that it reversed the trend of *gastromania*: food porn has turned into comfort food porn, prepared directly from home and shared (from home, on social) with other friends.

But above all, according to Marrone and Stano, Covid has highlighted new forms of conviviality ("covid-viviality")⁵³: online tastings, aperitifs and dinners via Skype, sharing of recipes and photographs via WhatsApp and on various social networks....

⁵³ Source: Stano, S. (2021); Nostalgia, prefiguration, rediscovery: semiotic paths between pre- and post-gastromania. E|C

The lockdown have induced to a "backward movement" but not to a "return to the past" and therefore recalled the importance of "commensality" and "conviviality" in the routine between families gathered around at the table more than they did in the pre-pandemic period, due to the frenetic pace of work.

Video calls have always replaced looks, gestures, interactions, conviviality.

In particular, the pandemic presented the possibility of recovering tradition. Therefore, it is not a question of looking at the past as a moment in which perfect flavors become irretrievable and of emulating the tradition of nostalgic behavior, but the opportunity of the pandemic coincides with the ability to look with the eyes of the future at a past re-seen that not only recovers but re-invents and re-creates food with its values.

This represented only a brief parenthesis and, for the *gastromania* future, it is hoped to maintain the euphoria, the aestheticization, the attention to food that arose in the period of the pandemic, while at the same time recovering its political, ethical and aesthetics.

3. CULTURE OF WASTE

It is clear that because of the phenomenon of *gastromania*, food has its roots in society and undoubtedly its value has changed.

But, what is the other side of the phenomenon that encompasses the fact that now food is perceived in a distorted way? *Waste*

It is to acknowledge that culture produces not just ingenious devices, innovation and cutting-edge solutions to the most modern issues or threats but also a tons of waste per year. In particular growth is entirely dependent on the relentless and ruthlessly efficient generation of waste. It is possible to say that the other (dark) side of consumption and evolution is waste. Over the years there have been many evolutions in the field of food production: new machinery and new methods of cultivation, conservation and production have been introduced, but also new products that are more sustainable or that better combine consumer tastes or new trends. Researchers and engineers, therefore, think about how to produce the output of the agri-food chain more efficiently to meet the needs of an ever-growing and ever-changing population and to increase companies' profits.

But they don't think about what remains after the consumption of the final product: food waste.

If waste is the mesh that entangles nature and culture, it's necessarily the defining material of our time. Food waste is not merely a byproduct of culture: this problem is so monumental that experts define it as a *culture*. We live in the culture of waste.

By definition, "culture", refers to the set of customary beliefs, social forms and material behavior of everyday existence shared by people in place or time. In fact, what characterizes today's society is the little attention

that is paid in several moments (from the meals planning, at the time of shopping, to the conservation of food until the moment of consumption) to those food and drink products that are considered as inedible.

According to the Food Waste Report (2021), "food waste" is defined as any food (intended for human consumption) and the associated inedible parts of it (components associated with a food that are not intended to be consumed by humans), removed from the human food supply chain in the following sectors: retail, food service, households. The majority of food is wasted, in fact, at the beginning and end of the supply chain, as we will see.

Instead food losses are all the crop and livestock human-edible commodity quantities that, directly or indirectly, completely exit the production/supply chain by being discarded, incinerated or otherwise, and do not re-enter in any other utilization, up to, and excluding, the retail level.

In reality, the fact that the consumer does not places anymore a strong value on food, as specified, justifies the fact that he has developed a wasteful lifestyle throughout food management processes or in pre-post consumption routines: food waste occurs within many different but interconnected practices of everyday life such as shopping routines, storing, cooking, and eating. The act of waste is executed without deliberate consideration, and result from automatic processes.

The attitude to waste is influenced by life contexts, social norms and acquired habits of people or companies. People throw away large quantities of food not on purpose, but automatically and without thinking about it. And this is *much more dangerous*.

Basically, the culture of waste is generated by the fact that food is an item to which little economic value is given: it is a "commodity" that costs too little. If it is cheap it is not a problem to throw it away, or, even better, throwing food away can be less costly than intervening to prevent food waste.

The common trend is that consumers tend to buy more than they need to, since they want to reflect the 'good provider' identity according to that, a good parent is one who is able to provide plenty of food in abundance. In addition, filling the pantry at home and buying food in bulk or with 3X2 discounts gives a psychological reassuring effect. In this sense, marketers have to take some of the blame since, with powerful promotional campaigns, they push consumers to buy more.

All this generates the problem of disposal of surpluses and is a potential source of waste since consumers tend to forget their things in the refrigerator or pantry and many foods are thrown away as most consumers do not trust to eat them near the expiration dates (while in reality they could be perfectly edible) or because the words 'to be consumed preferably by' is interpreted in a misleading way as a real expiration date. In fact, they let themselves be guided too much by the presumption of deterioration since they do not have the knowledge to judge the state of conservation and to distinguish whether a food is edible or not, thus ending up wasting uselessly. Furthermore, especially the younger generations, they refuse to eat " what's left " since they are looking for "whims ".

Instead, past generations considered the reuse of leftovers as a value and a virtue. Those who knew how to give a new life to leftovers (food or production waste) were seen as "inventors" or people of value. Today, however, in households the regenerating of leftovers seems to have taken on a vaguely depressive note, as if it were a characteristic behavior of poor families who, unable to afford fresh food every day, recycle what they have. Also, reinventing waste is a time-consuming activity, so people prefer to throw it away.

3.1 THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF WASTE

The history of waste replies that of the societies that produced it, their relationship with the environment and the resources mobilized. The origins can be tackled back to the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Before that time, waste was not a developed concept because most discarded material from civilizations were used as inputs for other processes, retaining their value in a circular way, just like nature does.

In fact, during the 18-19 century people left the countryside to populate the cities where they found work in factories: they had a fixed salary, thus achieving economic independence. The urbanization process and the subsequent industrialization were social evolutions that led to an alteration in the food sector, creating an unprecedented demand for food.

In the UK where this phenomenon started, the population of the cities, which until that moment was able to meet their needs with local trade, increased exponentially therefore the demand for food of the population was unable to be met by local resources. The great pressure generated in the food production sector encouraged the introduction of new production and conservation techniques.

Furthermore, many raw materials began to be imported thanks to the newborn railway system which was becoming more and more efficient.

This massive stimulation of production, the material byproducts of extraction and manufacturing and food leftover began to accumulate in mountainous heaps. The problem with waste generation and management will likely compound owing to the need to industrialize, In fact, starting from there, a considerable amount of polluting substances were produced, especially by the big factories that were built in towns or nearby.

This development has its advantages but also its drawbacks.

3.2 THE 20TH CENTURY AND THE CHANGE OF LIFESTYLE : CONSUMERISM AND ''CONVENIENCE'' TREND

During the first decades of the 20th century, characterized by an harsh recession, in which poverty and malnutrition became inherent in society because of the world war, food waste was significantly reduced.
With the end of the second world war (1950s) a renewed vivacity came to the world and waste was one of the protagonist of the period.

The most advanced countries made progress in agriculture, food industry and transport and thus overcame the condition of foodstuffs scarcity. This historical period is characterized by a high level of production, a tendency to decline in prices and an ever higher percentage of income destined for food, motivated by the fact that, after the war and the period of poverty, people sought abundance of what had been lacking in previous years.

In fact, people abandoned the fear, the experience and the memory of the famine and they changed their attitudes towards consumption: everyone, especially those belonging to the poorer working classes, began to consume in large quantities, especially those particular foods that for years they had always been denied because they were very expensive or reserved for exclusive moments of celebration, such as meat or fish.

This has progressively and consequently favored a greater tendency towards food waste. Thus, people could reasonably afford a variety of goods also because of an increase of the per capita income: from a socioeconomic perspective, this phenomenon is known as 'consumerism'.

Studies confirmed that the trends of those years are responsible for the rapid increase in solid waste generation and management problems:

- Urbanization: a great number of people started to live in big cities and this has determined the progressive lengthening of the agri-food chain to meet the needs of the ever-increasing population. Raw materials came from the fields and lands that were located outside towns: it was therefore necessary to transport the food but, at the time, vehicles were not fast so often the quality and freshness of some produces were not maintained and this implied additional losses even before that those reached the final consumer.
- Variation of the food diet: as people had a higher spending power, they preferred to mostly meat, fish and fresh products, such as fruit and vegetables, all more perishable, instead of starchy foods such as bread or potatoes, which have always been source of livelihood for the population.
- Diffusion of great distribution (GDO): in many emerging countries towards the second half of the 20th century, there has been the spread of supermarkets which had strict standards of quality and food safety for consumers and therefore it often happened that the products supplied by farmers were not suitable because they were not treated with chemicals elements: people did not want ``ugly'' or non-standard products and this had consequences on the levels of waste generated.

The products sold in small town or little shops gradually gave way to that packaged food obtained with industrial methods, sold in supermarkets. The supermarket, if on the one hand was considered as a convenient intermediary given that it better suited the needs of those who had frenetic rhythms due to their work activity, on the other hand it established a loss of the authentic link between food and territory. In fact, the spread of

supermarkets changed the rituals and spaces of consumption: people preferred convenience over tradition and in fact they tried to find solutions that could make their life easier.

In particular, after the war, men returned to work and the position of women changed within the household: as during the fight, they were busy working in the textile industries or in activities as first aid for the war wounded or the sick, they found it really difficult to go back home and work as housewives. So, also women understood that they could be useful for the society, not only as housewives or cookers. In fact, once the war was over, women also found their position within society and began to contribute to the family by finding an occupation.

This change transformed woman's time and in general also the vision of life: she no longer had time to devote to the care of the house and the kitchen. 'Convenience' started to be considered as one of the most important driver for consumer choices in daily life.

The society was defined as "mobile" not only because it was constantly on the move, but also because people were perpetually away from home due to work commitments and various activities, and therefore those did not allow a break to be able to go home and have a lunch with the family.

The demand for convenience arises as individuals struggle to cope with the challenge of allocating activities and coordinating them and other people in time and space in a 'do-it-yourself' society.

The consumerism matched with the new vision of the middle-consumer that had become careless about food related behavior as he had a busy lifestyle and preferred convenience and so solutions that made his life easier over anything else: he looked for snacks or pre-packed foods, to eat anywhere and anytime, especially in the office or quick take-away food to satisfy the pleasure of deliveries to their homes and offer to their families a delicious meal without any additional effort of preparing it.

Consequently, companies perceived consumers' need and started to commercialize in supermarkets or fast foods snacks that they could just 'grab and go' like pre-packed meat, hamburger, confectionery, beverages, canned goods to be consumed in short work lunch breaks or on returning home after a busy day at work, even alone. The new concept of food was surely able to save time, money, labor and enabled them to live without cooking appliances and skills, considering also the decline of cooking skills in modern societies. But on the other hand they did not take into account the consequences of waste.

In particular, lazy consumers took advantage of convenience food as they did not want to purchase or to go for regular grocery and cook it. Such laziness was not simply a way to overcome his busyness during working days for a valued life purpose, but also his understanding of a comfortable or ideal lifestyle.

In fact, in those years people also starter to eat out: not only during the lunch break at work, but also in free time, going to the restaurant seemed to be a good alternative to homemade food as made it possible to optimize time and energy.

On this purpose, the introduction of GDO, the development of fast foods, the advent of help-yourself service culture, if on the one hand responded to the needs of the population, on the other hand they are often blamed and in fact have not been much useful because they contributed to a (negative) change in consumer mindset.

Moreover, also companies have been complicit in the throwaway economy: their aim was to produce always more in order to satisfy the demand and avoid the ''out of stock situations'' and thus to maximize their revenues. Not only they tried to create a growing desire in consumers and push them to buy over and over, but they also tried to offer the most beautiful produces (discarding those that do not adhere to aesthetic standards) or to entomb them in layers of seductive packaging made of polluting materials (such as plastic) to make them survive on the shelves. All of those generate tons of food and food-related waste.

And this means additional waste and damages for the environment.

Indeed, such a convenient lifestyle induced people to develop a new mindset toward all kind of goods, especially food: as there were abondance of goods that could be rapidly substituted each other, people seldom care about how many food and food-related wastes were produced and did not intend to keep the leftovers in fridges for future meals, neither reuse them or the meal boxes or plastic bags in an alternative way. All types of waste can be understood as a consequence of consumerism and overconsumption.

The most serious factor that has generated a real culture of waste is the fact that consumers tend to consider only how these convenience produces save time and work. They only see one side of the coin and they do not think about the environmental consequences of their choices.

The arising food practices, in fact, were considered to be social and environmental immoral as they reflected people failure of caring both of their family members (people, especially children, are feed with unhealthy food or pre-packed food) both of the wider environment. 'Convenience' and disposability have become the key determinants of overconsumption and waste (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2018)⁵⁴ which threat environmental sustainability.

3.3 A NEW AWARENESS: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

As we have seen, the origins of food waste and the wasteful lifestyle date back mainly to the end of the previous century. By generating food waste, all sources used in the production, transport or distributions of food are degraded. Wasting food also implies a waste of water, energy, soil and money, which in turn has an additional environmental impact.

⁵⁴ Source: Aschemann-Witzel, J., Giménez, A., & Ares, G. (2018). Convenience or price orientation? Consumer characteristics influencing food waste behaviour in the context of an emerging country and the impact on future sustainability of the global food sector. *Global Environmental Change*, 49, 85-94.

Heaps of non-degradable solid wastes littering the roads, streets and water ways, are prevalent within urban and rural areas and threaten the environment, pollute air and contaminate water bodies, and further impact public health.

The 21st century not only welcomes all this harmful consequences but it also brings a glimmer of positivity: new awareness and new trends towards more mindful consumption have accelerated and changes in attitudes and actions are expected.

According to Mintel's "Global Food and Drink Trends 2019" report⁵⁵, the trends that run on food are linked to sustainability. In fact, from 2019, precisely 3 trends are affirmed:

- 4. The concept of **sustainability** must be able to touch every part of the life cycle of the product, no longer alone and only its packaging: from the harvest in the field, to the arrival at the point of sale, to then move on to the table and the waste, up to the its rebirth in another form.
- 5. Food is linked to the concepts of **health and well-being**: it becomes a tool for extending life and, as such, it must be rich in vitamins, minerals, and other ingredients that are invigorating for bone, joint, immune system and brain health. The secret to living longer is in the food we eat.
- 6. **Convenience food and drink** is what consumer looks for: he requires practicality that can be found in ready meals, quick services and personalization. But all of this necessarily has to combine with the preferences toward a more natural, nutritious, or customizable products that help people keep pace with busy schedules without sacrificing their health goals or curiosity for new ingredients, flavours, and that have a look and a positive impact on the planet.

The food universe and the culture of waste are in constant transformation and redefinition, based on translation processes that mediate between innovative drives and resistance to change. This sort of revolution is a gradual process which, however, has undergone a strong acceleration, especially in the globalized world. Thus, with reference on the third trend, ''conscious consumerism'' is spreading (even if slowly) as more and more individuals are becoming aware of the fact that everything they buy and everything they do not consume can have evil consequences on the entire world, such as climate change and planet pollution.

⁵⁵ Source: Mintel report (2019); Global Food and Drink Trends 2019

In the wake of environmental sustainability, a new trend focused on conserving natural resources and protecting global ecosystems to support health and wellbeing is spreading among consumers.



Source: Personal elaboration

For some time, in fact, people have been searching on the internet to find out more about the topic: as confirmed by Google Trends⁵⁶, there has been a high search on the web for the keyword ``environmental sustainability" on the Google search engine in the last 5 years all over the world: since 2017, in fact, people globally want to learn more and more about the phenomenon and about how to prevent damages. The lowest peaks are recorded during the months of July and August and at the end of December: this perhaps happens because, during these periods, people are on vacation, they disconnect from work and don't want to think about conserving natural resources and protecting global ecosystems or ways to avoid waste.

In particular, researchers clarify that this trend is not a temporary fad but represents an innovation and has an experimental character. Therefore people are witnessing for the first time to a phenomenon outside the known paradigms and the brand discourse, and therefore it needs an interpretation and support to understand how it is articulated in society and how it can simplify and benefit the lives of human beings. As such, it is classified as a semiotic phenomenon and needs analysis.

For this reason, many scholars are conducting surveys confirming that many individuals are now engaging in pro-environmental behavior that include activist behavior (such as being part of an environmental organization), 'good' behavior (such as looking at 3R) and healthy or sustainable consumption behavior (for example, avoiding plastic). People's interest arises in response to a combination of self-interest and concerns for others and the environment: at the same time they want to live in a healthy world, they want to have abundant and genuine resources also for the future generations and want to reduce their sense of guilt because they are aware of the fact that they are responsible for the damages caused to Earth that prevent to live in a proper way.

⁵⁶ https://trends.google.it/trends/?geo=IT

As a new study⁵⁷ across 24 countries confirms, 58% of adults are more mindful of their impact on the environment, and 85% said they're willing to take personal action to combat environmental and sustainability challenges in 2021. At a global level, the same analysis shows that:

- More than half (54%) of those surveyed across the world believe it's more important to reduce their own carbon footprint
- More than three in five (62%) say it's now more important than before that companies behave in a more sustainable and eco-friendly way. In particular the research also revealed that the top three issues consumers want brands to focus on, in addition to dealing with the pandemic, are reducing waste (37%), reducing air and water pollution (35%), and tackling the issue of plastic pollution in packaging and products (35%)
- Social media have increased awareness around environmental and climate change issues by 30% since 2019

It is becoming abundantly clear that consumers care about the environment and are staring to pay mind to the impact their actions: the majority (73%) of global consumers, according to a research⁵⁸ conducted by Nielsen, say they would definitely or probably change their consumption behavior to reduce their impact on the environment as they want a better world for their future.

In particular, according to another research conducted across six European countries (Germany, the UK, Sweden, Turkey, France and Italy) by the research firm Morar⁵⁹, about consumer attitudes on sustainability and food waste, with over 3000 respondents, it has highlighted an additional factor that motives people with children to reduce food waste: 84% said that it is very important to teach this to the children at their home, in order to help them to develop a sustainable lifestyle (81%), to learn to be responsible with money (63%) and to protect the environment (55%).

The increased interest on the issue stems from several factors working together: first of all, the role of media as an actor and a method for making the issue visible must not be underestimated. In fact, thanks to advertising spread on internet or news on social media, there is the formation of a network of people that benefits the availability of data and information and contributes to an increase in societal environmental awareness in order to fight together against waste. Also the increased media coverage of good examples from retailers that take up charity donations has been beneficial in this sense. The recent spread of apps that connect restaurants or retailers to the local community for free meals or big discounts has sustained the positive trend and

⁵⁷ <u>https://www.mastercard.com/news/insights/2021/consumer-attitudes-environment/</u>

⁵⁸ https://nielseniq.com/global/en/insights/analysis/2019/a-natural-rise-in-sustainability-around-the-world/

⁵⁹ <u>https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/grundig-consumers-want-to-reduce-food-waste-but-lack-time-and-means-642456933.html</u>

mainly it has represented a concrete incentive to act and to pay attention toward a new style of consumption.

Indeed, the implementation of this trend occur through the application of the so-called 3R: Reuse, Reduce, Recycle: not only newspapers but also social media are going to spread these principles by encouraging consumers to have a more attentive lifestyle.

It is possible to distinguish:

7. Reuse: this activity involves the remanufacturing or repairing produces after their first life.

The company that gives the example in this sense is Patagonia. The brand is a strong activist in this sense as it encourage consumers to repair their jacket, whether possible, rather than throwing them away. In this way, the duration of a product increases and there is an advantage for the environment, and for the consumer, too!

In the field of food, a good solution to achieve sustainability in this sense is to introduce refillable packaging in order to expand the life of a product even after its first use.

US-based startup <u>Trashless</u> offers an e-Commerce where consumers can order products and refills without new packaging: in particular the product comes at home in a box which has a QR-code. When the consumer wants to refill the packaging, he can scan the code and receive it at home. Trashless, it also collects the containers in which the reordered products are delivered and eliminates the use of additional packaging.

8. **Reduce**: this activity implies the minimization of inputs, emission and waste produced throughout the supply chain, not only at the consumer level.

This activity is totally embraced by Too Good TO Go app which, fighting against food waste, makes partnership with important suppliers in order to sell unsold food, that otherwise would go wasted, at a reduced price. Moreover, when the consumer goes to collect the food, he is suggested to bring its own package, in order to minimize the use of new bags or boxes.

Also other companies, such as the Milanese start up 'Bella dentro", throughout their app for mobile, sell damaged food or ugly produces that is not accepted by the GDO because it does not respect aesthetic standards but it is still good to eat, thus helping to reduce wastes in the first part of the food supply chain.

9. Recycle: this activity involves the conversion and the transformation of waste material into something new, into something that has different characteristic from the initial material. Items that are discarded may have value for others. In fact consumers and mainly firms and star ups are committed to give a new life to unvaluable material and thus transforming some components in a new resources. The keyword is reinvent: instead of throwing something away, people should give a second life to produces and recycle them and create something innovative.

This notion fits also in the field of food waste: one example comes from the partnership between Orange Fiber and Ferragamo, the Italian luxury firm which is known all over the world. In 2017 it was launched a fashion collection of scarves and tissues obtained from the by-products of orange waste of Sicily. Science shows that food scraps can also be composted and give nutrients back to the soil, thus reducing carbon footprint

On the basis of this scientific evidence, in Spain an ambitious start up at the same way, has tried to give a second life to coffee grounds, which is considered as an unvaluable material given that it could not be reused to make coffee again. A young entrepreneur found out that it could be transformed into organic mushrooms by adding a bit of water and conserving it in a proper place with a proper temperature for few days. These initiatives aim to underline the prevailing need for environmental protection and attention to food waste management.

In restaurants, however, it is not possible to reinvent what a customer leaves on his plate: people resort to the "doggy bag" solution. This practice has spread in the United States during the Second World War and, literally, it would seem to refer to the "dog leftover box" but in reality it is used to bring home what is not consumed to eat it later. This practice is very common, in fact, in America and in European countries such as France and Great Britain, but in Italy there is still not a wide diffusion. In fact, in America portions in restaurants are often large and people don't like to leave paid food on their plates, so they prefer to leave the restaurant with a tray containing leftovers. This practice is widespread at all levels of society, from the common population to First Lady Michelle Obama. France, on the other hand, which is a country actively engaged in the fight against food waste, has a law that obliges restaurants of certain sizes to have a doggy bag supplied for those who request it. In China, however, the practice is still widespread but with the name of " dabao ".

Italy is the most timid country in this sense: basically because people are ashamed to leave the restaurant with leftovers. However, marketers should try as much as possible to create positive associations in this sense.

Suffice it to say that Expo 2015, held in Milan, was an opportunity to promote the launch of doggy bags since a competition was launched for university students and designers to offer the best design bag to visitors. In general, the event has been an opportunity to the exchange of ideas and shared solutions on the theme of food waste that had stimulated each country's creativity and promoted innovation for a sustainable future.

Also in the Masterchef Italia television program, starting from the sixth edition, the doggy bag was included for the competitors who could take home what they cooked and this helped to raise awareness among the public.

Moreover, the internet has a fundamental role in this sense as through websites and apps, it provides tempting and easy recipes with leftover foods or suggests alternative ways to give a second life to unvaluable food waste, just like big corporations do.

Useful suggestions come from, for example, 'Riciblog' or 'Eco dal frigo'. Also several campaigns across Europe (e.g. Love Food Hate Waste (UK), Matvett (Norway), Kliekipedia (the Netherlands) and Stop Spild av Mad (Denmark) try to bring this ideal and would like to inspire the use of leftovers. However, utilizing this information requires time, effort and dedication that might not be present in every-day life, and may only appeal to consumers that already have the intention to prevent waste.

1. RELEVANCE OF FOOD WASTE

Already in 2015, the <u>G20</u>, a forum of the 20 greatest countries in the world, had understood the seriousness of food waste and defined it as "a global problem of enormous economic, environmental and societal significance. Food waste has negative consequences for food security, nutrition, use of natural resources and the environment," and decided to take action in this sense. The UN, accordingly, set the sustainable development goal to **'halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer level, and reduce food losses along production and supply chains by 2030''**.

More than 30 companies are part of the 2030 Champions group and they have committed to reduce food loss and waste in their U.S. operations and activities by 50% by 2030. Among these, there are Amazon, Campbell Soup Company, Hilton, Kellogg Company, PepsiCo, Wendy's Company, Unilever, Walmart, Walt Disney World Resort.

For example, Pepsico states that the company will strive to reduce food loss and waste through several interventions such as working with their suppliers and customers to identify innovative ways to reduce food waste and loss in the value chain.

But, authorities and companies were not taken seriously and all their (little) effort seems to be vain as people *did not* understood the size, the harmfulness and the danger of the phenomenon.

In 2016, just 1 year after all those hopeful promises, the FUSIONS report (Food Use for Social Innovation by Optimising Waste Prevention Strategies) stated that in the EU in that year, around 88 million tons of food waste were generated with associated costs estimated at 143 billion euros. In particular, the World Resources Institute⁶⁰ in 2016 came up with a shocking information: wasting food is worse than total emission from flying

⁶⁰ Source : Zheng J., Shu S. (2019); '*Strategies to reduce the global carbon footprint of plastic*''; Nature Climate Change Journal

(1,9%), plastic production (2,8%) and oil extraction: this means that, according to those estimate, if food waste was a country, it would be the third biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, after USA and CHINA.

The trend continues in this sense, as *the Food Waste Index Report* of 2021 confirms⁶¹. In 2019 it has been estimated that around 931 million tons of food waste was generated in that year, 61 per cent of which came from households, 26 per cent from food service and 13 per cent from retail: over a half of all food waste takes place in the home. Consequently, 17 per cent of total global food production may be wasted (11 per cent in households, 5 per cent in food service and 2 per cent in retail). It is impressive to notice that in only 3 years, the numbers of waste have exponentially increased.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), instead, estimates ⁶² that about one-third of all the food produced for human consumption, is lost or wasted every year. This an amount of lost produces represents a missed opportunity to achieve global food security as well as to moderate the use of resources and the resulting environmental. Instead the World Economic Forum's Incentivizing Food Systems Transformation report estimates the economic cost which derives from food loss and waste per region: in particular it amounts to roughly US\$ 650 billion in industrialized countries and US\$ 290 billion in developing countries. More specifically, according to UN environmental program⁶³, per capita waste by consumers is between 95-115 kg a year in Europe and North America, while consumers in sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeastern Asia, each throw away only 6-11 kg a year. Overall, food systems cost society \$12 trillion dollars in health, economic and environmental costs – which is 20% more than the market value of food systems.

Moreover, the World Counts⁶⁴, which offers live world statistics, evaluates that, around 1.4 billion hectares of agricultural land is used to produce food that is lost or wasted: its surface is estimated to be 28% of the world's total agricultural area that, on this purpose, is deforested. In order to have a more concrete idea of its dimensions, it is possible to compare the area where grow food that is never eaten as big as US, India, and Egypt combined. These facts underline that it is important to reduce the amount of food wasted and that people learn how to manage properly their leftover to feed humans and animals or to produce energy and compost.

2. ACTORS AND FACTORS AT PLAY: MAIN CONTRIBUTORS OF FOOD WASTE

The FAO report explains that the causes and the actors of food waste are highly influenced by both the local socio-economic context of a given country and by the organization of its food system.

It was also able to discern a clear pattern in food waste at the global level. Middle and higher income regions, such as United States, Europe, China, Japan and Australia, show greater food loss and waste during

⁶¹ Source: UNEP report (2021) Food Waste Index Report

⁶² Source : FAO Report (2019); *The state of food and a griculture*

⁶³ Source : <u>https://www.unep.org/thinkeatsave/get-informed/worldwide-food-waste</u>

⁶⁴ Source: <u>https://www.theworldcounts.com/challenges/people-and-poverty/hunger-and-obesity/food-waste-statistics/story</u>

the downstream phase or at the consumption level where the emphasis is on food quality and appearance. Instead developing countries are more likely to lose or waste food at the upstream phase due to lack of proper harvest techniques and infrastructures: for example, often many fields are abandoned because it has not rained enough and farmers do not have the equipment to irrigate, thus producing food (and resource) waste.

Food waste occurs throughout the food supply chain, and a variety of interconnected factors and actors at various stages of production and consumption can cause it.

5.1 PRODUCTION LEVEL

In particular, food could potentially be lost even before being collected. In fact, farmers are often forced to harvest prematurely to meet an urgent demand, or due to insecurity and fear of theft; nevertheless this food could never reach the table as, because of early harvesting, it may lack flavor or fail to ripen.

Moreover, also harvest and handling practices adopted could be a factor that induce food lost before produces reach consumer: part of a crop may be missing during harvest due to lack or inadequacy of machinery, insufficient or excessive drying of crops, or damage to cereals during the harvesting procedure.

Unexpected harsh climatic conditions that are out of farmer's control such as excessive rainfall or a lack of rain causes significant preharvest and postharvest losses. Insect and pest infestations are another important threat, especially for biological production. All those factors make food inedible or unsuitable to standards: in fact, certain size or form are required to meet the national and international legislation or the wholesalers' and retailers' standards.

Transportation, even in the fast and hyperconnected world of today, can also be a source of damage or lost due to due to excessive heat or cold, damage in transit, contamination. Fresh perishable, such as fruits and vegetables or fish and meat, compared to cereals or processed food, are the most sensitive category in this sense given their fragile nature or even because they are poorly packed or not packed at all. In particular, low temperature and relative humidity could lead to discoloration, accelerated ripening, weight loss due to increased transpiration and accelerated decay.

Also the processing and packaging step could become a critical moment in the supply chain which is responsible for food lost.

5.2 RETAIL LEVEL

The causes of food waste in retail are linked to the limited shelf life of perishable foods, to private quality standards of buyers, variability of demand and storage conditions.

In general, companies in order to avoid out of stock situation, often make inappropriate ordering bases and are in surplus of stock. While, on one side, this operation could seem positive because consumer has always available whatever he needs and wants, on the other side there are drawbacks. Many produces suffer quality loss. In particular, there are some that cannot stay too much time in the inventory because they undergo deterioration process, such as fruit, vegetables, meat or fish, or other type of goods cannot be sold by the expiration date such as bakery products and cooked foods: those all suffer higher levels of waste at the retail stage than those such as cereals, pulses and canned foods, which can be stored for longer time.

As "The State of Food and Agriculture" report mentions, the median waste percentage for fruits and vegetables at the retail level is lowest in Northern America and Europe. However, this data continues to have a significant value (3.75 percent) and losses range is about 10 percent, supporting the finding that retail waste levels can be high in high-income countries.

Another factor that causes high level of food waste is the adaptation to standards: indeed, retailers, such as suppliers, must take into account consumers wants. Thus there is the tendency to sell homogenous and "perfect" produces (in terms of color, shape, size, etc.) because this is what consumer mainly requires. Food that fails to meet these high standards is discarded, reflecting high level of waste.

Losses may be high also in the case in which there is inadequate protective packaging: when it gets damaged, retailers cannot sell it to the consumer because it does not respect standards. In some cases, when it happens, also the content gets damaged because it becomes exposed to humidity or external agents, thus becomes waste.

Always regarding the container, also its size could be a problem that generates waste: dimensions should reflect market and consumer needs. Instead, nowadays companies tend to make big packages in order to communicate a sense of abundance or to be more visible on the shelves. But, a lot of food gets wasted in small households as they are unable to finish the product before it goes bad. And moreover it is important to remember that people tend more often to eat alone. Indeed, the real problem of packaging is not its material composition: researchers and engineer, in fact, over the years, have found substitutes to the most harmful element such as plastic: in fact nowadays produces are wrapped with materials that biodegrade or are reused for other purposes, thus having zero (or minor) impact on the environment.

5.3 CONSUMER LEVEL

The majority of food waste investigations have focused on households and consumers. To be precise, a household is classified as either:

 a one-person household, defined as an arrangement in which one person makes provision for his or her own food or other essentials for living without combining with any other person to form part of a multiperson household; - a multi-person household, defined as a group of two or more people living together who make common provision for food or other essentials for living (*UNSD*, 2020)⁶⁵.

Data from the *Food waste index report 2021*, assess the estimates of household food waste for each country in the world.

- In United States of America household food waste estimate (kg/capita/year) is 59 while the household food waste estimate (tons/year) is 19.359.951
- Canada instead has a higher household food waste estimate (kg/capita/year) (79) while household food waste estimate (tons/year) is much lower 2.938.321
- Data from China instead suggest that Household food waste estimate (kg/capita/year) is 64 while Household food waste estimate (tons/year) 91.646.213. This number is huge but we also have to consider that it is the most populated country
- Italy has household food waste estimate (kg/capita/year) equal to 67 while household food waste estimate (tons/year) is 4.059.806
- With a similar waste per capita, (65) Finland has a very low (361.937) household food waste estimate (tons/year) and this is probably because this place has a low population density and it is very committed to investing in low-emission technologies and more sustainable facilities.

The BCG⁶⁶ estimates that the category that suffers the higher level of waste is the fresh fruit and vegetable one (42% of the total production is wasted). Such findings are not surprising because they are highly perishable and more likely to become inedible and be discarded. At the same time, fresh fruit and vegetables are relatively cheap products such that consumers could throw away spoiled products carelessly. The following category is the one of cereals (22%) which include rice and bread, while meat and fish generate the minor waste (5% and 1%)

Russell et al⁶⁷. (2017) stated, that habits and emotions have a great influence on the amount of food wasted at household level. Food waste seems to be *an unwanted consequence of consumption* prediction errors or of inadequate practices in consumer food-related activities such as planning, shopping, storing, preparing and cooking. Thus, it depends on behavioral factors. Some level of food waste by consumers may be the result of rational decisions: in this case, when the opportunity cost of time for an individual is high, he might choose to go food shopping only once a week, purchase more food than necessary and throw away the excess food, rather than purchasing only what is needed more or less on a daily basis.

⁶⁵ Source: <u>https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/sconcerns/family/#docs</u>

⁶⁶ Source: Abecasis et al; (23 June 2020) 'A recipe to Reduce Food Loss and Waste' BCG article

⁶⁷ Source : Russellet al; (2017); Bringing habits and emotions into food waste behavior; Resources, Conservation & Recycling

In addition, waste is also related to social factors. A study⁶⁸ conducted in 2016 confirms that consumers' food waste behavior was significantly correlated with social factors such as household size, income and age: lower amounts of food waste were associated with older consumers, fewer members in the household and lower income.

In particular, Heng et al. show in their study⁶⁹ that people over 65 years of age waste less food than other age groups. This behavior is not motivated by environmental concerns, but rather by financial and moral considerations about wastefulness: in fact, this target has strong cultural values and is strongly linked and influenced by its past. People over 65, in fact, experienced war and scarcity periods, so they bring with them a different "education" when it comes to handling food: they are driven by the value of "nostalgia" and thus they consider food as a valuable resource that keeps them and their traditions alive. Moreover, they know well how to manage waste as, in the past, people used to recycle leftovers as they couldn't go to grocery shop very often. Thus, they have the lowest wastage rates.

The presence of children complicates the situation as their needs are difficult to manage. The youngest generations rarely eat leftovers, they want different diets, so they are always looking for new flavors. This behavior is driven by the fear of losing experiences, both gastronomic and social, shared by peers, as demonstrated by researchers at the University of Reading, based on the preliminary results of Cook Clever, an EIT Food funded project, conducted among young people 18 and 25 years old. Despite the trend of environmental sustainability that is spreading among this target, *they embody a paradox* as they underestimate the impact they have by wasting food: this target does not perceive waste as a threat.

Instead, young babies have diets based on healthy organic food which, given their perishable nature, lead to more food waste.

Intuitively, it is possible to imagine that, as the number of members of a family increases, waste increases, too.

But all these considerations are debated as results from the study of Heng and House conducted in 2021 provides that there are differences across countries, implying an *important role played by culture* in food waste behavior across families: kids tends to reduce the food waste frequency among US respondents but increase for those in the UK. This might because American parents have a strong motivation to reduce food waste to set a good example for children (Neff et al., 2015), but more studies are necessary to test this in other countries.

Researchers noticed that higher-income households which have healthier diets wasted more food than lowerincome families. Since healthier diets tend to include more fruits, vegetables and other perishable items, some of the waste can be explained by food spoiling before the household had a chance to eat it. Or, moreover,

⁶⁸ Source: Stancu et al; (2016); Determinants of consumer food waste behavior: Two routes to food waste; Appetite

⁶⁹ Source: Heng and House; (2021); Consumers' perceptions and behavior toward food waste across countries

people tend to discard many parts of the vegetable and this produces additional waste. The researchers underlined that healthy-eating programs may inadvertently encourage more food waste.

According to Food waste index report 2021, there is a negligible correlation between household food waste and GDP per capita. However, lower-GDP countries did exhibit a wider range of variation in their food waste estimates compared to countries with higher GDP. This could be caused by a genuine wider variation of food waste in lower-income countries, or by some factors related to the studies measuring food waste (e.g., smaller sample sizes leading to more variability in the measured value).

As said before, consumers generate waste also out of home because they do not know how to treat food before taking it home, how to store it when it arrives in the household, and how to plan meals. The insufficient purchase planning activity can be crucial for generating food waste. Establishing food supply and deciding meal composition in advance is an hard (if not impossible) mission to accomplish for those who have a busy lifestyle and children. In fact this activity, if once was possible, demands stability and coordination of complex flows and relations between foods, products, technologies, skills, all within the spatial and temporal conditions of people's lived days.

Considering the fact that the organization of the household has changed in recent history, given that women started to participate in work life, so has the management of food and food related behavior. As people usually work every day from Monday to Friday, many go for a weekly large shopping trip but it is difficult to know in advance what and how much food to buy for a given day in the week. It can be difficult to anticipate how much food children eat at each meal, which often results in over-preparing. Similarly, it can be difficult to plan and to purchase food in quantities that make sense for families, but also for people who live alone. All of this leads to regular over-purchasing and impulse buying: people don't value what they put in their cart basically because they can afford it and they do not experience scarcity. The feeling of indifference towards food, therefore evolves into wasteful attitude and behavior at home as to leftovers is given even less value than to food. People, in fact, tend to buy some food because of desire or by impulse, because they are not really focused on what they really need, or ''just in case'' it could be useful.

On this purpose, a study from Grewal et al⁷⁰ underlines an important aspect of consumer behavior: phones are integral part of each one's life and distract individuals from reality. This is valid also in shops, of course. In particular, results confirm that when consumers focus more on their phones, they are more distracted and thus they divert from their conventional shopping loop and pay less attention to products on the shelves and so they purchase more unplanned items. On the contrary, a shopping list is an useful tool in this sense: making a shopping list may avoid the purchase of unnecessary products, which are more likely to be wasted of course, thus decreasing the quantity of food discarded at home. But in reality it is not used and those few consumers

⁷⁰ Source: Grewal D. et al (2018); In-Store Mobile Phone Use and Customer Shopping Behavior: Evidence from the Field; Journal of Marketing

that make shopping list, write it only for items they might forget, not to plan what to buy in order to avoid waste.

Before going shopping and also in the point of purchase consumers should also look at the expiring dates: this is a crucial element because it is responsible, in Europe, for the 10% of food waste as people incorrectly interpret the labels⁷¹ and it represents one of the main causes for food waste and environmental impact.

The consumer uses the date indicated on the package to justify or confirm the disposal decision, not so much when deciding what to eat. The fact that food overcomes the date indicated on it, according to the consumer, indicates that it is not safe anymore and, in order to avoid disease or illnesses, he prefers to throw it away.

In particular, generally, they do not rely on their senses to understand whether food is edible or not, and moreover they are neither able to distinguish between the ''best-before'' and the ''expiration date'' and this mistake leads to waste of food even if it is still perfectly safe. In particular, the *expiration date is a safety indicator and* tells consumers the last day a product is riskless to eat while the *best-before date*, which is usually accompanied by the claim ''to be consumed *preferably* by...'' doesn't mean that food is no longer edible: it suggests consumer that food, starting from the moment indicated, is no longer in its perfect shape. It may just lose its freshness, taste, aroma or nutrients. The latter refers to a the quality dimension, not the safety one.

In particular, the management of the risk associated with food in families is determined by emotions and a sense of responsibility, especially from adults that have to "provide and protect" their children: people do not want to risk getting ill so they prefer to dispose of food, even if it is still edible or close to the expiration date. Indeed, parents never want their children to get sick because of their choices.

At the basis of all this actions that could and should be corrected, there is a careless consumers' attitude that contributes to waste. This happens because consumers look for convenience and want to minimize constraints in their routines. This causes trade-offs between what they *do* and what they *would like*: people would like to manage leftovers and food risks, to eat healthy, to be hospitable, to plan, and food diversity. But actually, because of lack of time and frenetic lifestyle, they engage in wasteful and unconscious behavior.

First of all, there is an incorrect management of the food: people are incapable of handling and organizing the preparation and consumption of food, so they tend to produce too many leftovers which are inevitably thrown away. Generally, they prepare more food than it could be consumed, because they do not know how to portion or do not care, and because they are afraid that there will not be sufficient food, especially for special occasions with guests. Even if the majority of consumers know (and facts confirm) that they would not eat leftover, these are put in the fridge after the meal in order to postpone any uncomfortable feelings that may result from wasting

⁷¹ Source: EU-Commission: Date marketing and food waste, food safety

it immediately. Consumers forget about it and so when it has gone bad and became inedible, it is "easier" to withdraw a product without any negative feeling of guilt. Instead it could happen that some people cook more than they need on purpose to store leftovers in the fridge or freezer in order to save time on a later occasion (convenience). Even though, at the same way, they may forget about and find it undesirable or unsafe to eat after a while, and dispose of it after all.

Indeed, the management of leftovers and the relationship with food is influenced by different socio-cultural aspects of food consumption. For example, the individual preferences of what he consider to be a proper meal depend on his identification with the "the good provider" or "good mother" identity: before serving leftovers, a mother, for example, must understand if this activity is compatible with this identity and so if giving her family something "old" makes her a good person.

This latest aspect suggest that people find undesirable to eat their leftovers or to use them as new ingredients in new dishes.

Another thing that should be revised and that is cause of waste and implies a socio-cultural aspect is the fact that people have expectations concerning aesthetic characteristics of produces. People tend to overlook naturalness and quality of a product and his consumption choices are guided by appearance, which is not necessarily synonymous of taste.

As an investigation from Mookerjee⁷² explains, for the majority of consumers, food consumption is related to aesthetic aspects. This phenomenon is based on the so called ''ugliness penalty effect'' according to which people reject a product because they find it ugly or unattractive. In particular unattractive produces suffer from negative tastiness and healthiness expectations while enjoy positive naturalness expectations as the consumer associates those, especially when referring to fresh perishable, with absence of pesticides, preservatives, or wax coatings. Consequently, consumers devalue unattractive produce, because imagining eating them negatively affects how they view themselves: in fact this induce them to think that eating these products makes them be as less attractive, less moral and less healthy. As a result, because of this bias food producers and retailers throw away large amounts of perfectly edible produce, contributing to the environmental issue of food waste.

3. IMPACT OF FOOD WASTE

Bearing in mind all the facts and considerations about food waste, it is clear that it has become a priority to face, considering the economic, environmental and ethical consequences it has on society. Consumers are relatively unaware of the high environmental impact of food production and of how the impact is aggravated

⁷² Source: Mookerjee S. et al; (2021) From Waste to Taste: How "Ugly" Labels Can Increase Purchase of Unattractive Produce; Journal of Marketing

when food is wasted. But they should be conscious and sensitive to the issue since continuing to waste means continuing to destroy our planet.

Thus, the role of the companies should be the one to increase consumer awareness of the fact that food waste is one of the main causes for the pollution of the environment so that he can act consistently.

It is interesting to observe that consumer is worried about food waste, mainly because he sees it as a waste of money. Then he considers it as a negative factor for society and, eventually, as a discomfort for the environment. Despite that, he continues to produce waste. So the role of companies or authorities should be to align these two concerns.

6.1 ECONOMIC SIDE

Wasting food means wasting the money that is used not only by consumers for purchasing produces that will end in rubbish, but also by the other members of the supply chain to cultivate, transport and package it.

According to the Food Waste Index Report 2021, food waste of the entire supply chain, which therefore includes waste from production, households, retail stores and the catering service amounts to about 1,000 million tons every year and the its commercial value, according to related estimates, costs the global economy \$936 billion a year. About a third of the food produced in the world is wasted every year and, in economic terms, is equal to the GDP of Switzerland. Overall, food systems cost society \$12 trillion dollars in health, economic and environmental costs, which is 20% more than the market value of food systems.



Source: Food Waste Index Report 2021

The figure illustrates the values for each of the countries on which the survey was conducted. Not surprisingly, the most populous countries, such as China, India and the United States, have the highest values. A survey from Save the Food explains that in the United States, consumers collectively throw away more food than all retailers combined. In fact, about 20 million tons of food, worth more than \$ 90 billion, ends up in landfills every year. In total, US households are the biggest culprits and waste about 43% of all available food, and for a family of four this translates to an annual financial loss of \$ 1,500.

UK-based WRAP organization found that in the country, which ranks seventh globally as the world's largest food waste, households are responsible for 70% of edible food waste, so they waste 4 million tons of food every year that could have been consumed, for a total value of 14 billion pounds.

The least dangerous country is Australia which wastes a total of 7.3 million tons of food every year, with an estimated annual economic cost of the order of 9 billion dollars Australians.

Food waste causes additional costs: in fact in developed countries it also affects pricing policy. Higher waste depends on influencing demand, which leads to a rise in the price level of food stocks. Consequently, people more at risk are those with minimum incomes who cannot afford to spend more money on food.

6.2 MORAL IMPACT

Moreover, with a staggering 3 billion people that cannot afford a healthy diet (FAO, 2020) or struggle to find sufficient resources to feed their families, the message is clear, food waste is morally and ethically unacceptable and represents a social dilemma. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that 690 million people were hungry in 2019, and the number has grown sharply during and after COVID-19, which has aggravated economic difficulties and social inequalities: at the end of 2021 statistics estimated that there are about 838 million people who do not have to eat, 148 million more. This number is expected to increase to as much as 50 million people in 2022 due to the employment drop and financial fallout from the pandemic and the growing threat of the war in Ukraine. This means that while tons of food are wasted every day, there are many people who, at the same time, live in extreme poverty condition and cannot afford to provide meals for themselves and their family. If it would be possible to save one quarter of the food currently lost or wasted, it would be enough to feed 870 million hungry people.. This phenomenon is known as the hunger paradox.

Hunger, which is different from famine that consist in food crises of varying size and scope, is defined by the UN as 'a minimum of one year where a group or community are unable to consume enough calories and

nutrients to maintain a healthy weight⁷³. This is a category as broad as dangerous in fact a hunger crisis can still have disastrous implications for a community.. As expected, the most detrimental effect touches children. Because of malnutrition, globally, one in four children under the age of five is stunted, too small for their age. Of course, a stunted child becomes an adult with health challenges later in life. Unfortunately, many countries are hit by this situation: Poland, Portugal and Lithuania are the European countries where this paradox is most evident. Globally, regions most affected by hunger are south Asia and Africa south of the Sahara. Here people's main occupation is linked to land and whether cultivations goes lost, do not meet the market standards, or do not even make it to the market, they are out of income.

At European level, according to the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture⁷⁴, up to 50% of edible and harmless food is unnecessarily depreciated and thrown away, while 79 million citizens live below the poverty line and 16 million depend on food aid provided by charities.

6.3 ENVIRONMENTAL SIDE

Food waste has its major effects on the environment: in particular, it directly contributes to the exploitation of natural resources such as air, land, water and biodiversity. This generates more serious problems that threat the health not only of people but of the whole planet such as climate change and water pollution.

Starting from landfills, where tons of food is discarded, as explained, for several reasons: this leads to an unnecessary waste of *other* valuable resources like the energy and natural ones.

Agriculture is a dangerous activity since it is responsible for the threats to at-risk plant and animal species tracked by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Accordingly a report of Move For Hunger⁷⁵ non-profit organization, confirms that agriculture accounts for 70% of the water used throughout the world, and food waste also represents a great waste of freshwater and ground water resources. About 1.4 billion hectares of land are used to produce foods that will never be consumed and a huge quantity of the world's fresh water is used to grow produces that will be later thrown away. To make an estimation, researchers count that a volume of water roughly three times the volume of Lake Geneva is used just to produce food that is not eaten.

Fruits and vegetables are the largest source of loss and waste on a weight basis, basically because, comparing to other produces, they contain more water. Meat also requires a lot of water in its production because animals

global approach to their elimination"

⁷³ Source: Douglas G.; (2020, November 17th); Global Hunger Facts: Everything you've wants to know (but were a fraid to ask) ⁷⁴ Source: Seberini A.; (2020) '*Economic, social and environmental world impacts of food waste on society and Zero waste as*

⁷⁵ Source: https://moveforhunger.org/

need to drink and eat so much feed that in turn has to be grown with water. Meat production requires between 8 and 10 times more water than grain production, according to the WWAP⁷⁶.

Moreover, modern cultivation techniques require the use of chemical substances in order to obtain good looking produces, according to the standards. Fertilizers used on food that will potentially go to waste are released into the environment, poisoning groundwater, as well as the bodies of water that this water flows into. They releases excessive amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus into the environment, poisoning drinking water and aquatic ecosystems. The excessive pressure to increase crop or the reach of aesthetic standards yields is a result of our society wasting so much perfectly edible food.

At the same way, food waste is responsible for a growing deforestation, given that it is necessary to cut trees and vegetation in order to cultivate plantation of foods, most of which would be thrown away. The alteration or destruction of habitats generates a negative impact on the living species as well on a vital resources such as oxygen, with damages to human respiration. Biodiversity loss refers to the decline or disappearance of a variety of living animals that inhabit the planet, its different levels of biological organization and their respective genetic variability. With a chain reaction, this can cause the extinction of some species or an increase in CO2 emissions, given that the capacity of forests and oceans to absorb CO_2 decreases.

Effects on air also come from households wasteful behavior, and in general from food waste of course: in fact, only a low percentage of all food wastage is composted: much of it (96%) ends up in landfills, and represents a large part of municipal solid waste, resulting in the release of methane, a more powerful greenhouse gas than even CO2 (28x stronger), that traps solar radiation and contributes to climate change: United Nations Environment Program estimates that up to 10% of global greenhouse gases, which is the equivalent of 3.3 billion tons, comes from food that is produced but not eaten⁷⁷. Moreover, according to Project DrawDown reducing food waste is the #1 solution to the climate crisis, coming above electric cars, solar power and plant-based diets

The damage to climate would become ''circular'' as UNEP (2009) explains: it estimates that up to 25% of the world food production may become 'lost' during this century as a result of climate change, water scarcity, invasive pests and land degradation⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ Source : Life Foster (2020, February 4^{th}) Food waste = water waste

⁷⁷ Source: Ritchie H., Roser M.; (2021, June) Environmental impacts of food production

⁷⁸ Source: UNEP (2009, February 17th); The environmental food crisis: the environment's role in adverting future food crises

4. FIGHTING FOOD WASTE

Consumers are relatively unaware of the social, economic and environmental footprint caused by their food waste. Many of its causes can be prevented through the spread of information and the generation of awareness, both among consumers both among the participants in the food chain. Those actions should raise at the same time a sense of responsibility and guilt in consumers, which can change his reactions towards waste and can further influence their practices. For example, increasing the awareness of poverty and hunger and highlighting the moral implications of waste can generate a sense of remorse and shame that can induce them to reflect and act.

Moreover, they should also be conscious of a set of behavior of "good conduct" to implement in their houses, since it has been proven to be the most dangerous place for waste generation: they must be educated on the alternative and potential uses of leftovers, on the accurate management of food products all along the food chain stages, on the planification of the food purchasing, and above all, on the correct understanding of labels.

On the other side some studies find that interventions aimed at increasing awareness do not sufficiently reduce food waste and does not change facts, because it is caused by complex processes that are in motion. Some researchers (M. Hebrok, C. Boks) believe that awareness may define people's intentions not to waste food, but it does not necessarily impact behavior, thus preventing waste⁷⁹. Nevertheless, the generation of awareness is a good starting point for action: in fact, according to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) intention is connected to awareness, knowledge, and attitude, and hence determines actions.

Indeed, some efforts have been made in this respect by 3 different agents (local and national organizations, consumer themselves and companies) and seem to be good examples of a wider movement against waste which is acquiring interest and favor in the public opinion.

7.1 LOCAL AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

The first interventions come from the "upstream influencers" which include policy and regulatory factors from Governments and Institutions.

Given the critical need to decrease food waste to more sustainably feed the world's population and ensure a wealthy future to other generations, countries and national organizations around the world have set goals for reducing food waste. In particular, the European Commission, United States Department of Agriculture and US Environmental and the FAO are the 3 organs that are globally committed to tackle the problem.

⁷⁹ Source: Hebrok M., Boks C. (2017); *Household food waste: drivers and potential intervention points for design – an extensive review*

In 2015 the Sustainable Development Goal were established by all 193 UN member countries: it was a set of objectives to achieve at a national level by 2030 and the most ambitious ones concern the fight for producing a more sustainable consumption and for halving the global per capita food waste at retail and consumption stage.

In particular, the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste was activated and it is a tool that gathers together public entities and operators in the food supply chain, including consumers and non-governmental organizations. It aims to accelerate the EU's progress towards Sustainable Development Goal by developing guidelines for countries that facilitate food donation and food use as animal feed, while always ensuring food safety

In parallel in the same year, the US Department of Agriculture and Environmental Protection Agency partnered to create food waste reduction goals to reduce per capita food waste by 50% by 2030.

National Day against Food Waste has been established in Italy on The 5th February in 2014 and only in 2020 FAO e United Nations have introduced it with the aim of raising public awareness on an issue whose relevance is increasingly crucial.

Furthermore, in 2019, the EU launched the Green Deal, an agreement between member states with the general objective of achieving climate neutrality in Europe by 2050. At the heart of the Green Deal there is the new "Farm to Fork" strategy aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly, thus promoting a fight against food waste.

In addition, many interventions have been set up at a national level: for example, French ministers have evaluated that food waste is a *costly* issue: each year either lost or wasted in the country, costs 16 billion euros. Not to mention the damages on the environment: food waste is responsible for the emission of 15.3 million tons of CO2, 3% of the country's total CO2 emissions in France only. As a result, already in 2012, the government decided to take action and introduced new laws and regulations that encouraged food waste reduction at the retail stage: companies in the private sector were forced to recycle their organic waste if they produced more than 120 tons of it per year. Nowadays this is mandatory for all French businesses, including those in the hospitality and foodservice sector. Another big contribution was made in this sense in 2016 when France, before many other countries understood the threat of the expiration date, and thus became the first country to ban supermarkets from throwing away unsold food or those approaching its "best-before" date: it was introduced a new practice according to which they are forced to donate surplus food to charities and food banks. On the same model of France, also Italian government agreed to make it easier for retailers to donate unsold food to specific associations.

In 2016, the Danish minister for food, Esben Lunde Larsen, launched a subsidy scheme to combat the issue: it distributed almost USD 750,000 to projects trying to tackle waste throughout the food chain. But this wasn't'

the one and only effort of the government. In fact the ministry had already conducted campaigns to educate consumers about best-before and use-by labels. Unlike other countries, in Denmark, it is legal to sell date-expired food so long as it is clearly labelled and shows no sign of health risk.

Also in Australia the authorities set a target to reduce the amount of food waste it generates by 50% by 2030. In order to achieve this goal, the Australian Government decided to invest 1.2 million dollars over two years to support food rescue organizations.

Furthermore, several NGOs deal with the collection and recovery of products along the agricultural and industrial chain and their redistribution to charitable structures. In Italy there is the Banco Alimentare Foundation where food is considered as valuable and it is given a second life: food recovery prevents it from becoming waste, and therefore saves the planet, the environment but also the lives of hundreds of people who are unable to buy food.

Around the world there are several others food banks that carry out the same activity: in Europe there are more than 229 and in the United States more than 200 grouped in Feeding America.

<u>WRAP</u> is a non profit company which works with governments, businesses and communities from UK to deliver practical solutions to improve resource efficiency and to provide a better world to future generations.

In 2007 it promoted an information campaign called *Love Food Hate Waste*, with an event at London's Borough Market, where a celebrity chef demonstrated food waste-saving recipes and tips. Its aim was to spread the knowledge about practical everyday activities to waste less food. Through the creation of a webpage displaying optimal storage information, local radio adverts, local online advertising, and cooking clubs the campaign was able to achieve a 14% decrease in avoidable food waste in West London with the 2007 campaign.

More recently, very interesting campaign have been launched:

The 2019 'ComplEATing campaign'⁸⁰, as the name suggests, motivates consumers to complete, and thus finish, their food, meaning that things like potato skins, bread ends and crusts, broccoli and cauliflower stalks and pizza crusts should be eaten or reinvented in a new recipe to reduce UK food waste and to benefit the environment. Using provoking sentences and images such as 'it's all about that sexy peel' when referring to reinventing the apple peel, the campaign gained a lot of success especially on social media and it has intrigued consumers.

2022 campaign launched during Food Waste Action Week 81, instead, is more focused on raising awareness about the consequences that waste can generate on the environment such as climate change and the extinction of some animal species. Posts or banners spread on social media show small videos that represent animals that

⁸⁰ See Appendix : Image 8

⁸¹ See Appendix : Image 10

try to swim in the waters from melted glaciers due to climate change caused by food waste and that cling to leftovers. This does not want to underline that food waste is the solution to the environmental problem but that it is its main and most dangerous cause.

In general and unfortunately all these efforts have not shown so many results. Some regulatory provisions, willy-nilly, are respected by consumers but these do not represent a force that induces them to change their behavior and their way of seeing waste. This is why many thinks that setting economic incentives would be a better way to reach those that are not reached by awareness campaigns.

7.2 CONSUMER ACTIVISM

The younger generation no longer wants to wait for politicians to act: it wants to take responsibility for its future into its own hands. More often social movements are set up by consumers for consumers, this is why it is appropriate to talk about "horizontal" influencers.

Responsible consumers organize themselves into collectives and form a temporary self-organized network in which they can work together to complement the existing welfare institutions' work. In particular, social groups of individual that share the same ideals and values mobilize mass of other individuals through shared moral outrage over what they perceive as injustices or ethical problems within markets or consumer culture. After mobilization, a movement crafts a collective identity and vision for change that allow the movement to publicize its message and recruit new members and to take action accordingly. People make the difference by showing a presence on the street.

Stop Wasting Food movement is Denmark's largest non-profit consumer movement against food waste which arose from a small Facebook group and it has come to involve the biggest Danish NGO against food waste collaborating with EU and UN. Since 2008 people needed to be listened as they started to perceive the threat of waste and the movement has generated over 7,000 Danish and international media coverages and has brought massive focus on food waste, leading it on Denmark's agenda. Above all, it contributes to the raise of awareness in fact 83% of Danes say that they have become more interested to minimize food waste in their households.

Also Fridays for Future is a globally known movement that claims actions aimed at preventing global warming and climate change. It rallies about food waste which is one of the drivers of climate change. In particular the main actors are young students which decides not to attend school lessons to participate in events, as they're facing an uncertain future due to the possible threat of climate change ⁸² In relation to the young age of the target concerned, Fridays for Future is attracting huge media attention and this helps to generate wider

⁸² Source: www.deutschland.de/en/topic/environment/climate-change-and-securit

results and to involve more and more people. In particular, the movement has increased attention to sustainability in everyday life and has initiated reflections on the matter.

7.2 BRAND ACTIVISM

But, consumers alone are not able to bring a real change. Responsible and proactive ones do not always reach their purpose basically because they may lack the resources, competences and strength to fulfill their role, which thus prevents them from taking action. Additionally, consumers may react negatively to being responsibilized: they may struggle between costs and benefits related to the intended change and thus there is the risk that they could become indifferent, considering the fact that food waste is strictly link to their basic need of convenience. This can create a counter tendency and thus resistance in consumers, not only to act responsibly, but also to the idea that sustainable actions can provide real solutions to the complex social problem. So, they need "midstream" influencers, which include companies, that should help and guide them to find the right way toward the fight against food waste. Kotler⁸³, in fact, indicates that consumers may be the major driving force that pressures companies to change their marketing practices and attitude toward problems, in light of the fact that globally, up to a reported third of consumers make purchase decisions influenced by higher purpose and principal values shared by the company.

And brands are acting in this sense: they are 'taking a stand' toward the issue of food waste and so they use socio-cultural contradiction as an opportunity to innovate and become icons.

They, as seen in the case of *merenda-merendina*, brands shape our food culture and instill new values in consumers' minds and help them to uncover new meanings: they should guide consumers to consider food loss no longer as an unvaluable material, so as something that must only be thrown away if it is not eaten anymore. Instead, it should be seen as a valuable material, as a starting point for the creation of a new resource.

In this sense, companies goals for food waste reduction could have a significant impact on the overall amount of discards and on changing consumer mind. Consequently, the role of organizations should be helping to identify targeted actions and to align existing ones with consumer behaviors, so that CSR activities of food sector can be most effective.

Actually, there are some examples of some companies that are aligning their explicit purpose and values with their activist marketing messaging and prosocial corporate practice: both incumbents (such as Unilever, and many others...) both new ones such as Too Good To Go. All of them try to act on one particular causes of food waste (misreading of labels, ugliness penalty bias, lack of creativity for the reworking of leftovers...) and therefore want to induce the consumer to act accordingly.

⁸³ Source: Kotler P. Sarkar C. (2020) Brand acivism: from purpose to action ; Milano ; Hoepli

7.3.1 INCUMBENTS INTERVENTIONS

In particular, since 2016, more than 30 corporations have reunited under the name of U.S. Food Loss and Waste 2030 Champions with the aim of reducing food loss and waste in their operations and periodically reporting their progress on their websites. Unilever, just like Amazon, Walmart, Walt Disney World Resort and many others, are joining this organization. The British multinational, in particular, will strive to reduce food loss and waste in its operation by 50% by 2030 and has set up several initiatives in this sense. One of these is a partnership with ''Feed the Children'' or ''Feeding America'' in which it commits to donate surplus of food. Moreover, throughout the work with some key suppliers, it introduced the ''easy out'' device which prevents mayonnaise or ketchup sauce from sticking to the sides of the tube. This has reduced the average amount of leftover in a bottle from 13% to just 3%.

Among the several initiatives taken up by companies that decided to take a stand against food waste, there is the one from Algida⁸⁴ (brand belonging to Unilever) that in Germany, has launched a line of chocolate ice cream, Cremissimo produced with otherwise unused ice cream (40%): very often, in fact, it happens to throw away the product leftover that remain on the bottom of the tray. The company has well thought of reusing this waste, saving 160 tons of product, thus proposing a product that do not generate waste and thus that is not harmful for the ecosystem and teaching consumers that even what seems the most unthinkable thing to save can be an excellent starting point for a new (very tasty) life.

Instead, the American multinational Mondelez, whose brand portfolio includes products such as Philadelphia or Ritz snacks, has collaborated with the Upcycled Food Association and has enabled the birth of various startups whose goal is to put SnacksFutures⁸⁵ or products on the market made by converting possible organic waste into ingredients such as beverages, protein bars and more. Interesting examples are CaPao Fruit Bites, snacks made with cocoa fruit scraps, and Dirt Kitchen Snacks, or veggie crisps based on dried tomatoes, courgettes and carrots.

Intermarchè, one of the most important French supermarket chain, was activated in 2015 with a very interesting and provocative campaign called '*Inglorious Fruits and Vegetables*''⁸⁶: it illustrated fruit and vegetables that are not aesthetically pleasing (they were called: 'ridiculous potato'', ''the hideous orange'' or ''the failed lemon''), and aimed to persuade consumers to buy less aesthetically pleasing products by leveraging on their funny side and to induce them to consider that they have the same taste as the ''beautiful'' ones. In parallel, also the chain Tesco decided to fight against this aspect. In 2018 it became the exclusive retailer for a range of fruit juices, Waste NOT, made from fruit and vegetables that fall outside of the aesthetic standards set by retailers. An 'ugly' produce was set sold as fresh produce.

⁸⁴ Source: <u>https://www.circularonline.co.uk/cremissimo-proves-waste-makes-for-delicious-taste/</u>

⁸⁵ Source: <u>https://www.snackfutures.com/</u>

⁸⁶ See Appendix : Image 24

Grundig company, main producer of household technologies of the Koç group, welcomes United Nations' call against food waste and decides to join the fight as it firmly believes that, as numerous facts and investigations show, since the main source of food waste occurs at household level, it is necessary to intervene directly on consumers.

Whether new technologies and innovative products are combined with changes in consumer behavior, they are able to bring about real change. Grundig supports the cause of reducing food waste and encourages everyone to value food resources with the message; "Wasting food is wasting life". Throughout its activity, especially on social media, it gives suggestions about how to use some forgotten or unused produces, providing creative recipes. The brand made a partnership with the Italian Massimo Bottura Michelin star chef to accomplish this goal and to get closer to the consumer through the message "The More We Are, The More We Halve". The choice of an Italian ambassador is not causal; he has been preferred for the commonality of values with the brand such as the obsession for quality, attention to aesthetics and details and the sharing of the mission devoted to sustainability at 360°. In particular, he has been named a social activist, as well as one of the most influential creative personalities according to the New York Times. Furthermore, Bottura was in fact recently appointed Goodwill Ambassador of UNEP (Goodwill Ambassador of the United Nations Environment Program) with the aim of intensifying the fight against food waste and loss around the world. Another factor justifying the choice is that the chef is the founder of a non-profit organization called Food for Soul, whose aim is to encourage communities to fight food waste in the interest of social inclusion and individual wellbeing. In particular, he sustains that "Culture brings knowledge. Knowledge leads to consciousness. And when we become conscious we are one short step away from becoming socially responsible. Culture is the key"

Together with the chef, the brand has launched an awareness campaign featuring 7 video animations containing some reflections on food waste and simple but fundamental suggestions on how it is possible to fight it starting from home.

7.3.2 START UPs INTERVENTIONS

There are many businesses that are born in recent years whose main purpose is to defend the Planet and fight against food waste.

The first to mention is Too Good To Go (TGTG) which, with its Magic Boxes full of unsold products still "too good " to be thrown away, calls people to value the leftovers of the shops (supermarkets, bakery, restaurants) and those in their own houses. In particular, before the Covid-19, much of Too Good To Go's communications had been encouraging people to go outside and collect their 'magic boxes' of surplus food. The crisis generated by the pandemic made people be more careful not to waste food and to consume everything that remained in the house since it was not possible to go out very often. In fact, from this moment the company's efforts have

also focused on suggestions for creative recipes starting from forgotten or never valued elements. What is needed, is a "new version " of consumers who must change their behavior, and become real " waste warriors" capable of building a real movement.

TGTG is not simply an app. It is much more. Even if in just a few years, since it was born in 2015, it has had an exponential growth and, with reference to Italy, has undertaken to establish the "Pact against food waste": the brand, in fact, has established a virtuous partnership with important stakeholders who want to combat food waste both through concrete actions and with information and communication campaigns. For example, among the actors involved there are large brands and associations such as Sperlari, whose aims to inspire and make aware, through awareness campaigns and practical actions, not only consumers but also its collaborators (other suppliers or retailers); Peroni also joined the pact, recalling the concept according to which sustainability is a fundamental and transversal value to all the brand's business strategies and that it is important that this value be recognized and appreciated also by end consumers; Bauli, in the same way approaches the fight against waste on the basis of the value of tradition that has always characterized the creation of products: in fact, just like the grandmothers, the company is also committed to proper waste management and sustainable logistics. At the level of large-scale distribution, the Carrefour retailer, thanks to its widespread presence throughout the country, circulates good practices against waste and carries out numerous projects during the year, thus giving our concrete contribution to changing consumer behavior. Likewise, large corporations such as Kraft, Nestle and Unilever, thanks to their large portfolios of brands close to consumers and their territorial extension, partner with TGTG thus setting a good example by adopting sustainable and careful practices to fight the issue of food waste.

However, it is through the presence and activity on all social platforms that TGTG manages to make itself known but above all to implement sustainable behaviors.

Beyond this, there are numerous other start-ups around the world that have taken action on the subject.

Especially in America, new born companies try to fight ugliness penalty bias and therefore their purpose is to convince consumers to buy aesthetically unpleasant products that, in the same way, are edible.

<u>Imperfect Foods</u> is a good example in this sense. Based in San Francisco, the company at first started to deliver surplus and ugly produces to customers. Everything in their food box, though not as pretty to look at compared to their average selection at the supermarket, is by all other measures just as healthy, fresh and delicious. Today, after 5 years, the startup is one of the biggest anti-food waste actor in the U.S.

In other parts of the country such as in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington DC, Hungry Harvest is the startup that embraced the cause and makes its money by taking products that would otherwise be landfilled food waste and selling to a list of subscribers with discounts up to 20%. Ugly commodity boxes range from \$ 15 to \$ 55 per week depending on size and include leafy greens, veggies, fruits, and even condiments.

Instead, startups like OLIO focus on food donation. Throughout its app, it sets the food sharing revolution. In fact it allows individuals or businesses such as food retailers, restaurants, corporate canteens, food photographers to donate excess food occasionally or periodically. For example, some supermarket chains in the UK, including Tesco, the Midcounties Co-operative, Morrisons and Sainsbury's have experimented with OLIO as an "online food bank to reduce their waste and, at the same time, to provide the less fortunate with something to eat.

Instead, start-ups like Nosh focus more on food (correct) storage: the company created an app for the food management. By registering the food products purchased and their respective expiration dates, the tool reminds the consumer what food he needs to use first, to plan his meals, to create a shopping list, to avoid unnecessary purchases to avoid food being thrown away. Likewise NO WASTE business created an app to be closer to the consumer whose main functionality is to make a list with all the freezer, fridge and pantry produces whose expiration date can be checked.

8 MARKETING STANDPOINT : LACK OF RESEARCH

There is a lack of research on food waste from a marketing standpoint, addressing the issue of tackling food waste through marketing actions taken up by companies. In fact current researches on ways to reduce food waste is limited, focusing mainly on encouraging behavior change through information written on flyers or on packaging which provide just facts about a phenomenon or a sentence claiming that the brand has made effort to use sustainable material for it, for example.

Indeed, nowadays informational interventions are the most used type by companies and NGOs to promote sustainable actions and they aim to increase knowledge and skills, on the basis of the assumption that providing information, facts and data about the negative consequences of an undesired behavior (in this case, throw away resources) generates awareness and a sense of guilt. The AIDA model, whose acronymous stands for awareness–interest–desire–action," is at the basis of those campaigns or companies efforts and, of course, aims at generating awareness about a specific phenomenon; consequently, the fact that consumer is conscious about it and its relevance, should boost his interest thus leading him to desire the change. The ultimate goal is to drive the receiver of the message to initiate an action hat could revolutionize the world.

However, information per se seldom changes behavior, as the study of Osbaldiston and Schott (2012) confirms⁸⁷.

More recent studies sustain that behavioral decisions are more easily influenced by emotions and habits: in fact consumers tend to act by impulse or on the basis or routinary actions, rather than on the basis of a real

⁸⁷ Source: Septianto F. et al.; (2020); *Thanks, but no thanks: The influence of gratitude on consumer awareness offood waste*; Journal of Cleaner Production

reasoning that implies a waste energy. So companies should try to think to change their approach, thus introducing emotions in their discourses.

The neglect of emotion in this area is somewhat surprising given its widespread application for other fields on the basis of the fact that ''emotions influence, skew or sometimes completely determine the outcome of a large number of decisions we are confronted with''⁸⁸, as Dr. Simon, American Nobel Laureate scientist, has pointed out. So, what companies should care about is not just one single advertising or one single action but they should have an eye on the ''discourse'' and thus on entire brand language whose aim should not be the promotion of a product but the analysis of the relationship between brand and the identity in the contemporary culture in order to make sure to shape a new food culture and instill new values in consumers' minds.

Emotions signal the importance of an issue and therefore provide an impetus for action, meaning that when emotion are triggered, consumer tend to act in an automatic way. But, according to Russell et al , yet less is known about how emotions affect individual pro-environmental behavior⁸⁹.

There few evidence that emerges from a study conducted by Webb et al. (2013) and Bissing-Olson et al. (2016)⁹⁰ that suggest that positive emotions may be important in determining environmentally relevant behaviors: positive anticipated emotions (just like pleasure or reward) had a positive effect on intentions to engage in energy saving behavior or feeling of pride in relation to an action positively predicts future behavior: for example if the company promotes a product or an action (turn off lights) and associate it with a positive emotion, thus anticipating reward (get discount or prize), the consumer would engage in an specific behavior, intended by the company. From a neuromarketing standpoint, it has been proven that emotions can lead consumer to behave in a certain (unintended and unexpected) way, because they give a sort of reward in terms of excitement: once the consumer sees the reward, the brain releases dopamine (which is the pleasure hormone) and promotes feeling of enjoyment and thus act automatically, without think too much.

So, these studies have identified emotion as a determinant of pro-environmental behavior yet to date we know of none that have quantitatively identified emotion as a predictor of food waste. Although qualitative research has suggested that emotions may be related to consumers' food waste behavior, in particular the feeling of boredom or guilt toward leftovers and their conservation, or feeling of concern when dealing with expiration dates, it is not clear in these studies whether emotion is driving food waste or is a consequence of it.

⁸⁸ Source: Whitener S. (2018, May 9th) How emotions influence your decisions, Forbes

 ⁸⁹ Source: Russell et al; (2017); Bringing habits and emotions into food waste behavior; Resources, Conservation & Recycling
⁹⁰ Source: Bissing-Olson, M.J., Fielding, K.S., Iyer, A. (2016) Experiences of pride, not guilt, predict pro-environmental behavior

when pro-environmental descriptive norms are more positive. J. Environ. Psychol

CHAPTER 3 : RESEARCH PROCESS

1. THE RESEARCH QUESTION

As said in previous chapter, the massive spread of a new mindset which provides that the very important need for convenience is also accompanied by that of sustainability, meaning that people today also look for pristine, natural, nutritious products that respect the environment. This has put a greater attention to the phenomenon of environmental sustainability and its related issues.

Nowadays people start to be attentive to everything they buy: they tend to choose organic food cultivated with standards that respect the biodiversity, they look for sustainable packaging that reduce the impact of plastic, they buy food from organic crops for which no pesticides that pollute the water have been used... but, as seen, this attention is not always paid when they *finish* to consume those products. Thus, it emerges the other sad face of consumption: food waste

This is why we live in the *culture of waste* and consumers are the main responsible for this...the highest percentages of wastes happen within the household because of incautious and careless behavior.

But they only need a guide and a good example.

Especially the Gen Z is increasingly aware of the importance of sustainable actions and at the same time they believe companies have a responsibility to address environmental and social issues and want to hear from them their opinion about a specific socio-environmental concern and want to see concrete actions in order to behave accordingly.

As Kotler and Sarkar stress⁹¹, brands are not anymore appreciated only for the quality of their products. They are required to take a proactive approach and given that they are a vehicle for the communication of powerful messages, it is expected that they include in their public activities their ideals or products that embody and vehicle those messages.

They have to roll up their sleeves and take the field and align with the needs and the requests of the youngest target, which is uncertain and ever changing. This target is particularly interest to focus on as it incorporates a great paradox: on one side, in fact, it wastes a large amounts of food but on the other side it is more likely to respond positively to encouragement to reduce the amount wasted. This is because wasting food is ruining their future and the planet they have to live in: CO2 emissions cause climate changes which, in turn, causes the extinction of many animal species, reduces natural resources such as water, land and energy.

What contributes to aggravating this situation is, precisely, the fact that the attitude to waste is influenced by people life contexts and habits: they basically tend to throw away large quantities of food not on purpose, but automatically and without thinking about it. And this is extremely dangerous because people hardly manage

⁹¹ Source: Kotler P., Sarkar C. (2020); Brand activism: from purpose to action; Hoepli

to be educated and corrected, even if they want to: in fact, when the consumer acts according to an unplanned stimulus and hence according to habit, it happens that they does not realize the danger or superficiality of their actions. In order to trigger an improvement in behavior, it is important to educate them and put them in front of the true reality: they are the cause of their own evil.

The consumer himself does not have the strength and the ability to act alone, therefore he needs the support of companies or external actors which, for such a complex and sensitive issue, must seek and identify the right communication approach in relation to the culture of the identified target consumer.

Indeed, the most used approach until now by "upstream" influencers involves the creation of consumer awareness. However, this seems a rather old and ineffective concept since the mere awareness of the existence of a problem is not the solution to this. Undoubtedly, awareness on the issue of food waste is necessary, also because, especially young people, they are not conscious of the seriousness of their impact and their actions.

Therefore awareness, which is currently achieved mainly through mere information tools, like facts and data about the negative consequences of an undesired behavior like throwing away perfectly edible food, represents a starting point. But that is not all. There is a need to act and change the consumers' value system and the way in which they view food and finally implement practices that can truly reduce food waste.

It is necessary to understand how brands or companies can define the sociocultural contradictions facing their target of consumers and create a resonant brand myth that not only eases these consumers' collective anxieties, but also provides a more innovative cultural resource for their identity. Their aim must be to understand how brands modify culture, thus introducing new beliefs and values in it, and how they are modified by culture.

Taking as reference what has been said so far, the research question to which this dissertation intends to answer is:

Which is the right way for companies to sensitize consumers and induce them to act in a sustainable way (reduce food waste) through their discourses? Is it more proper for firms to use a discourse based on the spread of information and facts and real images or a discourse which instead relies on feeling and mood generated by spectacularization?

Therefore, in the light of what is expressed by the literature, and justified the relevance of the research question through facts and researches conducted all over the world by institutes, shown in the previous chapters, the work aims to try to understand if brands can generate a consumer response on the topic of food waste using a method of communication based on entertainment and leisure rather than on information and facts, which on the contrary induce reflection and a sense of guilt.

In particular, as it has emerged throughout the script, brands communicate with consumers in many forms: only talking about advertising could be reductive as also other forms such as the design of product, the

packaging, or the retail position have the same aim. Indeed in order to answer to the research question it is proper to talk about brand *discourse*.

By definition, a '*discourse is made up by not only a single advertising campaig*n''⁹², of which the goal is both informative and persuasive, '*but on the entire brand language instead*'', which is composed by texts: '*its goal would be not only to promote a specific product, but to examine the relationship between brands and identity in the contemporary consumer culture and to shape a new mindset*.'' A single communication vehicle is implicated in a broader system of meanings related to the historical positioning and cultural context of the brand, which is the discourse.

2. THE METHODOLOGY : BRANDSCAPE MODEL

To address the research question, I think that it is not appropriate to simply taking a traditional perspective and interpreting food waste on the basis of the current brand communication basically because this topic is a taboo, and therefore it is hardly discussed in an explicit and linear way. The main reason lies in the fact that waste represents the other side or dark side of consumption: with difficulty companies, which on the one hand want to encourage consumption in order to increase their profits, tend to intimidate them to avoid waste, which, in most cases, would lead to reducing purchases. I would like to structure my investigation on Laura Oswald's concept of *brandscapes*⁹³ and thus I would like to build links between consumer research, the brand legacy, and developments in the category.

Indeed, the word "*brandscape*" has been used by several authors such as Sherry (1998), Thompson and Arsel (2004) and Klingman (2007) to describe the branded corporate environment, the constellation of meanings consumers associate with brands and branded urban architecture. Laura Oswald, instead, uses the term to define a symbolic system that integrates the social, cultural, and semiotic dimensions of brands in a coherent yet flexible whole. The *brandscape* system "includes several dimensions of meaning: the codes structuring the cultural category, the emotional territories associated with the category, and the material signifiers used to communicate these meanings in representations such as packaging and advertising"⁹⁴. Like a mental landscape, the *brandscape* frames the reach and depth of the brand context and engages consumers in the world of the brand. In fact, it is built through a cyclical process of giving and taking between brand heritage, consumer culture and competitive environment: the three factors are linked.

⁹² Source: Marrone G. (2007); 'Il discorso dimarce: modelli semiotici per il branding''; Editori Laterza

⁹³⁻⁴ Source : Oswald L. (2012) ''Marketing semiotics: Signs, strategies and brand value'' Oxford

I believe this methodology is crucial and interesting to use when dealing with food waste because, as said, the topic is delicate, of global interest; it is declined in different ways and is faced with different approaches, according to the cultural contexts, and therefore there are different meanings that can be attributed to the phenomenon.

Food waste, in fact, is a concept that, as seen in the second chapter, has a strong relevance in today's global society and will have an even stronger and more dangerous impact on future society. It is a very broad phenomenon, which occurs throughout the food supply chain, and a variety of interconnected factors and actors at various stages of production and consumption can cause it, such as sociocultural factors, expectations about aesthetic standards, planning procedures, post purchase management of leftovers, misunderstanding of labels.

Although it is still not possible to understand the seriousness of its impact today, facts and figures confirm that, both from an economic, environmental and moral point of view, it represents a threat and contributes to the rooting of the "culture of waste ".

The *brandscape* is used to have a stable vision as it allows to identify a network of meanings derived from these multiple cultural contexts. Consumers create symbolic connections between distant systems of meaning, from brand advertisements and logos to icons of celebrities, legends and personal history; therefore what linguists call "meaning transfers" occurs. According to the famous theory of McCracken (1986), in fact advertising and marketing communication mediate the transfer of meaning between different cultural categories and then associate them with brands: meanings move from the culture and society to consumer goods or brands over time, these transfers of meaning are rooted in popular culture and therefore contribute to building the culture of consumption and the new values that are established in it.

Thus, the *brandscape* methodology is used to explicate the cultural discourses, consumption practices, and symbolic identifications through which consumers experience and articulate personal and collective relationships with food waste.

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

First of all, in order to identify a *brandscape* it is necessary to explore the external environment and the trends in the category and popular culture. So, first of all it is necessary to select and analyze a data set consisting of texts, that are the minimal unit of semiotic analysis, a sign system comprising words, images, physical spaces, posters at the bus stop or in the point of purchase, television or online media, or other signifiers.

In the field of semiotics, a text is a unit that is used to convey the values of a society. In particular, it does not only include texts properly so-called, such as written material supports, but more generally includes any

portion of meaningful reality that can be studied by semiotic methodology, acquiring formal traits of closure, coherence, cohesion, narrative articulation. Therefore a text can be an advertising, an image, a packaging, a television channel. In particular, the media texts are not rigid and isolated from the social environment in which they are born and circulate but, there is a link between the text itself and what surrounds it, in fact the latter is influenced by the cultural and social dynamics that intertwine. (Marrone, 2007)

The collection of data and information that I made is mainly made up of advertising campaigns of the past years in the world and of some initiatives undertaken by various important actors.

I have not conducted interpretive advertising research since it focuses on the production and reception of meaning in *individual* advertisements; therefore, the limitation of this approach consists in the fact that it assumes that advertising *is isolated* from the complex social and cultural contexts of marketing discourse

On the contrary, it acts as a sponge, therefore it absorbs and incorporates the factors that characterize the context in which it is shown: only in this sense will communication be more able to hit the target audience. In fact, by definition, '*'advertising is a public discourse that draws upon the shared cultural codes of the target market*" (L. Oswald, 2015)⁹⁵.

In this work, therefore, I also explored the environment in which the phenomenon of food waste develops and the trends in the category. This first step would be useful for the identification of categories and to understand the association among each ones.

After a detailed description, for these categories, I will identify different codes: dominant and relevant ones.

2.1.1 DATA COLLECTION

All over the world, several companies or national organizations have decided to take the floor and involve the consumer through various initiatives, starting as early as the first decade of the 21st century. Unfortunately, the phenomenon seems relatively recent to us but, in reality, the main actors have already started to move for some time.

The UNEP (the United Nations Environment Program) and FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organization) have launched in 2013 a "Think.Eat.Save - Reduce Your Foodprint" advertising competition in the 5 Nordic countries of the EU, of the 3 of the Baltic and of the Russian zone to support the fight against food waste. Partners include Stop Wasting Food Movement in Denmark and Feeding the 5,000, based in the UK.

⁹⁵ Source: Oswald L. (2015); Creating value: the theory and practice of marketing semiotics research; Oxford
The name of the competition alludes to a process that the consumer must go through when approaching food:

- 1. **Think⁹⁶:** Planning meals and creating a grocery list before shopping is a great way to ensure that you're only buying what you will eat.
- 2. Eat: Be mindful of what you eat, and save time and money by eating food out of the fridge first.
- 3. Save: Freeze produce so it stays fresh longer and don't forget to make the most of leftovers.

The advertising competition invited designers to create an advertisement to raise public awareness of the growing scale on food waste in our modern society and to draw attention to the problem. The winner was a young girl from Riga who proposes a strong image and a provoking tagline to underline the drama of the problem: "*The last wish was to be eaten* "⁹⁷

It is an explicit example of "Social Guerrilla" which is a type of communication that goes out from the narrow boundaries of traditional media and tries to grab the sensibility of the receiver about "social" issues through a composite and continuously evolving set of expressive solutions. In this sense advertisers, through a series of metaphors, *aim to ''hit the target'' off guard with ''small arms'', acting directly on their territory, practicing the art of "mimicry and ambush"*. (Peverini, 2015)

Therefore they tend a real *semiotic trap* to the consumer which is all the more effective the more able to transform the doubt, the indifference and prejudices of the recipient in an awareness-raising action that allows the social dimension of the issues to emerge strongly.

The print adv that won the competition depicts leftover fries in a in a coffin-shaped paper pack, with ketchup on the surface, to simulate blood.

The box can be seen as a *remix*, which is a practice used to affect the audience, aiming to stimulate engagement with a social cause. It is defined by Eduardo Navas as a *rearrangement of something already recognizable⁹⁸*. The remix practices in the context of digital media ''*cannot but take into consideration the fact that these forms of rewriting are based on a semiotic logic performed with a combined set of actions consisting of the selection, decomposition, hybridization, and rewriting of (pre)existing texts''(Peverini, 2015) The coffin, in fact, isa pre-existing symbol, usually associated with negative events and with death, which represents the end of a lifecycle.*

Only looking at the image, the watcher is able to understand the message behind considering that the remix practice allows him to produce signification repurposing preexisting meaning; indeed he understands that the food represented is going to be wasted, even if is still perfectly edible. And, his ultimate desire was to be used in a proper way, and therefore to be eaten, perhaps accompanied with other dishes or sauces.

⁹⁶ Source: <u>https://borgenproject.org/food-waste-contributing-poverty/</u>

⁹⁷ Source: See Appendix: Image 1

⁹⁸ Source : Peverini, P.; 2015; Activism, remix and mashup. A semiotic analysis of creative dissent

This unconventional social advertising is different from the typical examples that rely on the creative strategy characterized by unexpected and disorienting performances of guerrilla marketing weapons which are distributed on the Internet or in urban locations.

The unconventionality is due to the fact that the textual form and the elements used by advertisers provide an unexpected and original opportunity to reflect on the topic of food waste.

Similarly, another print ady⁹⁹ was made with the same tagline but the character is different: a deformed carrot is positioned in the same way in a coffin and is about to be thrown, as it does not conform to the standards. Although, again, her last wish was to be used and eaten!

Other interesting ideas from the same university competition illustrate, for example, the hands of a man emptying a plate of pasta into the bin: the tagline reads "Not hungry? Someone is'': 4 words that have the power to induce the consumer to reflect and to make him question his values, principles and actions. Yes, because the consumer, faced with such a statement, feels guilty, he understands that what he is throwing could be useful to feed someone or to save lives.¹⁰⁰

Another adv, again, simply illustrates a basket with a lid and an inscription on it ``THINK"¹⁰¹: the use of a simple word manages to express more than a thousand concepts; it is necessary to reflect, reason before performing any act with food.

UK is the first of the States to lead the fight against food waste. WRAP, a British registered charity, can be defined as the activist organization par excellence: it collaborates with companies, individuals and communities to achieve a circular economy, and annually launches initiatives aimed at raising public awareness about food waste, a particularly significant phenomenon, extremely relevant for the country. There are numerous virtuous examples in this sense, but among these I have selected the most impactful.

In 2015 it launched a campaign "Don't be ... " in which are represented different types of fruit which were half "beautiful and good" and half "ugly, rotten and to throw away", underlining the fact that, globally, almost half of the food, worth two billion tons, is wasted as it is left to rot in the fridge. In fact, consumers tend to postpone the feeling of guilt linked to the fact that they throw away the foods they do not eat, and therefore abandon them in the fridge. As a matter of facts, the campaign, trying to impress the consumer by using the `'rotten" part of the fruit to make him feel doubly guilty, suggests to ``make a list" or to implement a series of behavior that would help him to rationalize the things to buy, in order to avoid that some of them end up in the trash.

⁹⁹ Source: See Appendix: image 2
¹⁰⁰ Source: See Appendix: image 3
¹⁰¹ Source: See Appendix: image 4

In public print adv campaigns, the most popular subject was the lemon¹⁰². It not only represents a fruit but indicates, in a broader sense, an unsatisfactory or weak person or thing. The term, in common language, in fact, represents thing that proves to be defective, or a person that proves to be a loser, and is used to describe imperfect or unsatisfactory things, just like in this case. The imperative quote wants to suggest to the consumer not to be *loser*, but to wake up and understand that the real sense of guilt is created when you buy too much, when you mistreat leftovers, when you voluntarily abandon food.

The organization from this word pun, then, created other print adv using also other fruits such as a rotten apple¹⁰³ which, likewise in a broader sense, indicates a bad or corrupt person in a group. In particular it alludes to a person whose behavior can have a harmful influence on others. Even bananas¹⁰⁴ have been used with a double purpose: the term, in common parlance, has an offensive nuance and indicates a person who is not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity.

In 2019, again, WRAP launches a new campaign, ``*ComplEAT it* " in which it suggests to eat the whole ingredient or food and letting no edible parts go to waste because when food goes uneaten, all the resource that have gave into bringing that food to our plates (such as land, water and energy, which are limited) go waste too. The message is simple: it's about eating the whole ingredient or food and letting no edible parts go to waste, thus getting the best value from the food we buy and makes the most of those nutrients: generally stalks, peelings and bread ends become waste.

This campaign is very impactful, but it does not forget or abandon the hinges identified so far: it consists of a simple but eye catching communication, through short and impactful taglines and bright colors, and a neutral and didactic tone of voice. The main character is an object, namely a broccoli, a potato, a slice of pizza or a loaf of bread¹⁰⁵.

For example, the print adv depicting a broccoli brings the claim "stems with benefits": it takes up the expression used in everyday life' 'friends with benefits'. In this case, the advertisers wanted to create a play on words by inserting "stems" instead of "friends" to ensure that the latter is nice and remains etched in the consumer's mind.

The basic idea that advertisers and the organization want to communicate is that if more people ate things like potato skins and peels, bread ends and crusts, broccoli and cauliflower stalks and pizza crusts, which are generally discarded for any specific and serious reason, this would greatly help to reduce UK food waste and would benefit our environment.

¹⁰² Source: See Appendix: image 5

¹⁰³ Source: See Appendix: image 6

¹⁰⁴ Source: See Appendix: image 7

¹⁰⁵ Source: See Appendix: image 8

In 2021 the same organization launched another campaign which, this time, was more focused on digital channels: VOD, digital video, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and PR, as the audience identified was UK citizens aged 18-34. In fact the organization launched the hashtag *#KEEPCRUSHING* which encouraged people to keep up their pre-shop planning, smart storage like freezing, and creative cooking. In particular, the campaign uses the tagline "keep" to invite to hold on the habit of using leftovers underlined during 2020 lockdown where people "smashed" the issue by preparing creative receipts he could do the shopping very often. Eating a slice of bread instead of throwing it away, for example, is the equivalent of saving the CO2 that produces a plane that travels from London to New York, as the tagline of one of the campaign posters says¹⁰⁶. These data are impressive and they want to induce a sense of guilt and subsequent responsibility.

Instead, 2022 campaign was much more impactful: it does not use bright tones and strong colors, as in the previous cases. WRAP indeed, during the Food waste action week, on the basis of researches into greenhouse gas emissions, launched a campaign made up of posters and banners, and Web and social media animations.

They are made up of an image, a tagline ('*'Wasting food feeds climate change''*) and a short text in which it is explained the issue of wasting food and numbers and statistics are exposed.

In particular, images illustrates animals (such as goat, polar bear, cows, koalas)¹⁰⁷ located in natural environments destroyed by climate change: the koala is found in a fiery forest, the goat is found in an arid desert, the polar bear instead is located in an area that should have been covered by glaciers but, due to climate change, has turned into the sea. They do not know where to take refuge so they rely on fruit or vegetables that replace their natural habitats: the polar bear clings to a cauliflower that replaces an iceberg, the koala clings to a stalk of celery that replaces a tree, the cow it is placed on a broccoli instead of on a flowering prairie.

These images make us reflect strongly: animals are in trouble and food is a lifeline for them which, beyond being the cause of the phenomenon of climate change, is also its solution. In fact, the reflection originates from the fact that the correct care and conservation of food can be a lifeline for us (and for animal species, many endangered today).

Moving the focus to other regions of Europe, there are many other initiatives against food waste.

In Greece there is a "*Bruties* (Brutal + Fruties) "brand that has developed an initiative, based on the model of the French supermarkets chain Intermarchè: according to which the aim is to put an end to *racism* against non-standardized fruit and vegetables¹⁰⁸. The brand packages and promotes the sale of vegetables that are usually

¹⁰⁶ Source: See Appendix: image 9

¹⁰⁷ Source: See Appendix: image 10

¹⁰⁸ Source: <u>https://www.behance.net/gallery/76254945/Bruties</u>

scorned and discarded due to their irregular shape or appearance: according to their vision, all fruits are created equal and beauty comes from within.

On the packs are affixed labels with: "unconventional cucumbers" and "irregularly sized grapes and vegetables", and with fruit illustrations that protest against the racism of fruit. ¹⁰⁹

On other packs more provocative claims are affixed: for example, the bag full of irregular potatoes bears the claim "The king of the potato. Long live the king"¹¹⁰. Here too, an expression of everyday life, often used to read fairy tales with a happy ending, is used in a strategic way to induce the consumer to reflect that even an ugly and deformed potato can be considered a powerful ingredient that can live a long time.

In addition, the brand distributes packs of stickers¹¹¹, so that the consumer can personalize their Brutys, make them look fun and give them a little more life. This also contributes to the buzz effect of the phenomenon.

In Spain, however, since 2013, the government has promoted the "*More food, less waste*" program to reduce food losses and waste and recover the value of food waste. The strategy encourages all sectors of society to collaborate by bringing their opinions, ideas, knowledge and experiences to contribute, together, to the reduction of food waste.

Among the initiatives that the Ministerio de agricultura y pesca, alimentación y medio ambiente has undertaken, there is the publication of a handbook¹¹², which is a real manual that wants to help the consumer to become aware of the importance of reducing food waste, not only from the point of view of the economic profitability of the company, but also of the contribution given to the conservation of resources. The guide is published annually and uses an instructional tone of voice. The goal is that this tool allows a real change in the attitudes and management of food within the restaurant business, and that it helps to convey to the final consumer the need to consume responsibly, to collaborate in the construction of a society whose consumption habits are based on ethical, healthy and rational criteria. The guide opens with an illustration of data, facts that inform the consumer of the amount of avoidable waste he is responsible for. In the end, advice on proper management is dispensed.

Moving the focus on Italy, there are several initiatives coming mainly from non-governmental organizations that are committed to the issue of food waste, which is becoming increasingly popular despite the country

¹⁰⁹ Source: See Appendix: image 11

¹¹⁰ Source: See Appendix: image 12

¹¹¹ Source: See Appendix : image 13

¹¹² Source: <u>https://www.restaurantessostenibles.com/Uploads/docs/magrama%20guia_restauracion_web.pdf</u>

being, par excellence, the homeland where the culture of food and of eating reigns... evidently it is also becoming the homeland of "wasting "!

Confirming the global trend illustrated in the previous chapter, the "Il Caso Italia" 2022 Report by Waste Watcher International¹¹³ released on the occasion of the 9th National Food Waste Prevention Day, on the initiative of the Last Minute Market Zero Waste campaign, also confirms this trend for our Country and underlines that in 2021 the return to social life, and coexistence with the virus has made the Italian consumer less attentive to the management and use of food and therefore the values relating to domestic food waste have increased.

In fact, in 2021 Italians throw an average of 595.3 grams per capita per week, which is 30.956 kg per year, about 15% more than in 2021. In the South of the country the phenomenon is more marked, with an increase of +18% of waste compared to the national average.

At an economic level¹¹⁴, food waste in Italy is worth 0.88% of GDP and therefore amounts to over \in 15 billion, of which 4/5 from the domestic environment.

Among the most important initiatives there is the campaign LAST MINUTE MARKET born from a research conducted at a productive and social level which aims to quantify the edible waste related to the large-scale distribution of the food sector to promote its "reuse" within the solidarity circuits. The name itself suggests that the project creates a parallel "last minute" market, because the assets are close to expiry or because they are being disposed of or because they are ruined after being displayed in supermarkets, and therefore considered unsaleable. The campaign is widespread in about forty Italian cities and in 2016 a "pact against food waste" was signed in partnership with, Confesercenti and Federconsumatori and GDO distribution brands such as Conad and Despar while among the main entities the regions that collaborate with LMM include: Emilia Romagna, Puglia, and Sardinia.

Therefore, the pillar of Last Minute Market is to transform waste into a resource.

In 2010, LMM launched the European awareness campaign called WASTE ZERO, in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment which builds a vast international movement of commitment for the reduction and prevention of food waste. The campaign is illustrated by the unmistakable trait of Altan, an Italian satirical illustrator, it is the only permanent awareness campaign in Italy on the issue of food waste. In particular, the logo¹¹⁵ of the movement shows an individual who, with a shovel, throws an immense and undifferentiated quantity of food. Behind him it is possible to see a blue monster that opens its mouth wide and is about to

¹¹³ Source: <u>https://www.sprecozero.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/II-caso-Italia-2022-4-febbraio-2022.pdf</u>

 $^{^{114}} Source: https://www.sprecozero.it/comunicati-stampa/spreco-alimentare-in-italia-vale-quasi-16-miliardi-e-quasi-12-nelle-nostre-case-nos$

¹¹⁵ Source: See Appendix: image 14

devour man: it symbolizes the looming threat that is at our heels, of food waste that will end up engulfing us if we continue to behave like the man in the cartoon: in an irresponsible and careless way. The circular shape of the logo is not accidental: it refers to the desired circular economy, a solution to the problem of food waste.

In Italy, the food bank foundation '*Banco Alimentare*'' is a non-profit organization that deals with the collection of foodstuffs and the recovery of food surpluses from agricultural and industrial production and their redistribution to charitable structures scattered throughout the territory. It shares the same pillar as LMM: food is a resource. Specifically, *Banco Alimentare* mainly evaluates and communicates the moral implications of food waste: the hunger paradox is increasingly a threat and consumers must be aware of this. Not only that, they must feel bad at the moment that they throw away senselessly food just because it is bad or because they think it is not good.

Particularly impressive is the campaign of 2020 launched in the Piedmont region created by designer Anna Carolina Robbiati who designed prints with an unprecedented visual language, capable of immediately transmitting the values that the food bank represents¹¹⁶. Particular emphasis is paid on the term DIGNITY not only from a graphic point of view. The concept alludes to the intrinsic value of human existence according to which every man, as a person, is aware of his own moral value and must translate this value into behavior consistent with society. If an individual is endowed with dignity he is worthy of respect.

The fact that the "dignity of food" is mentioned means that the food itself, whether discarded, leftover or not, is considered by *Banco Alimentare* as worthy of respect and should be seen in this light. The use of dark colors is not accidental but generally they are used to communicate sadness and seriousness and in this sense they help to generate a sense of responsibility and a sense of guilt on those who waste food.

In the same way we speak of "dignity of the person": the author hopes that there can be a recovery of the dignity and values of the individual and of society, in light of the frightening and threatening phenomenon of food waste. The tagline *"Are you one of us?"* takes on an inclusive and less harsh tone than the previous ones: it wants to reassure the consumer that it is not too late to change his attitude.

In recent years, in Italy, the most virtuous example of an organization that takes sides against the fight against food waste comes from Too Good To Go, a service company. The start-up is widespread in many European countries but, in this case, we focus on its business in the Italian territory. Specifically, given the current circumstances, TGTG has decided to focus its communication efforts on digital and social channels with the hope of doing more out-of-home advertising in the future.

¹¹⁶ Source: See Appendix: image 15

The goal of TGTG, in line with the approaches used in other European countries, is to increase the awareness of consumers and induce them to reflect through mainly visual content or small reels videos posted on its social media account. Compared to the campaigns illustrated previously, this start-up certainly proposes a "fresh" approach, while maintaining a simple and eye catching style of communication that uses a neutral, professional and educational tone of voice.

TGTG, unlike the Banco Alimentare, since it also caters to a younger audience which having no fixed income is attentive and price sensitive, underlines the *economic implications* of food waste: it is a waste of money but, at the same time way, it can be a way to save money. In fact, if you buy the "magic boxes" or if you '*'save the* panettone", as the challenge mentions, or the Easter eggs leftovers, or if you reuse the parts of the fruit and vegetables that should be thrown away, you can achieve a win-win advantage: economic savings and respect for environment.

Looking at the print communication on Instagram, there are several categories of content.

OLD ME NEW ME posts¹¹⁷: The premise of the posts is simple: "Old Me" is a wasteful habit that you adopt all the time, while "New Me" is the greener way you should aspire to. These taglines are usually accompanied by a caption in which careless behavior is briefly described in the first person. From this brief but effective reading of the information, the consumer is baffled since he reads impacting information and realizes that what they do is not so right and moral. The caption that instead describes the "new version of me" is clearly more honest, attentive, and would make the person better. The reader almost considers the old and (real) version unacceptable and unfair: he recognizes himself and feels guilty for what he reads and does, and therefore decides to seize the opportunity for change.

The parallelism of the image suggests that, in the end, it is not necessary to make radical changes in order to be a better person. Small steps are required that can make a difference.

DA UNA PARTE, DALL'ALTRA posts¹¹⁸: on the same model as the previous parallelism, TGTG presents contents to fight against one of the factors of food waste: aesthetics and compliance with standards. The premise illustrates "on the one hand" accompanies the image of an imperfect fruit and "on the other" there is the perfect version of the same product. Provocative is the use of the same caption that describes the product. These information mixed with the images wants to induce the consumer to reflect on the fact that he dwells excessively on appearances, not taking care of the true reality and the true nutritional qualities of the product. The aesthetic factor is something that is inculcated in today's society, tending towards capitalism and standardization not only of food but of people in general. TGTG wants to generate a sense of responsibility

¹¹⁷ Source: See Appendix: image 16 ¹¹⁸ Source: See Appendix: image 17

and wants to make the consumer understand in a rational way that it is appropriate to correct their behavior on the basis of these considerations.

POST-RECIPES¹¹⁹: TGTG also shares post images in which it illustrates recipes revisited in a modern way, such as "Rainbow Hummus", "Pancakes with coffee grounds " "Meatballs with stale bread ", " Sweet zero waste" in which, in fact, the main ingredient is the unused raw material. Emphasis is placed on the latter also in the list of ingredients the claim "whose existence you did not remember" is added, "what remains" ...

All are made using simple language, close to speech. The captions all have a common element: they use a didactic tone of voice and they want to educate consumer by simply asking "You don't know how to use it?" "What recipe are you thinking of?"

With the same approach, short reels are also published on the IG platform, created in collaboration with food content creators: these testimonials, however, unlike the American scenario, are not stars, celebrity chefs but simple guys who are very close to the identified target audience. The contents illustrated so far are fully informative, despite presenting colored patterns and graphics, unlike the examples identified in the same area and listed above, in relation to the fact that the target identified this time is younger.

In addition, Too Good To Go always posts something on holiday or national days to remember people that they have to continue to fight food waste and be attentive to their habits, especially in those moments in which people tend to eat (and waste) the most. A nice example comes from Valentine's day when TGTG published a very clever post on Instagram¹²⁰: to make those people who spend the lovers' day as single feel less alone, it has created a mock up that remember the Tinder format but this time the protagonists are not human being but fruit and vegetables that are generally discarded because of their appereance. On Valentine's day they want to try to break into someone's heart. In fact, TGTG posts 3 screenshots, each representing a different subject: the deformed strawberry, the crooked pepper and the deformed carrot.

Despite their unattractive looks, they do have qualities. Using a simple but eye catching language, the products describe themselves with a tone of "hope": the strawberry, for example, underlines that " it is ready to love with its sweetness ", to emphasize that it is not necessary to be beautiful, in order to be also good and edible to taste. Peppers, on the other hand, are looking for "something serious, not the usual recovery recipes". Instead the carrot is looking for someone who "knows how to go beyond aesthetics ": the message is clear. The company wants to educate the consumer to reflect that perfection does not exist and is not synonymous with negativity or exclusion.

All of these posts don't have a large number of comments so I was not able to make a content analysis.

¹¹⁹ Source: See Appendix: image 18 ¹²⁰ Source: See appendix: image 19

But, from a manual reading, it is clear that two types of comments emerge for these posts: on one hand, consumers express the fact that they are not aware of the topic treated or of the food potentiality.

Regarding, for example, recipes prepared from leftovers, there are numerous comments that confirm that consumers do not have the basic knowledge to distinguish the edibility of a product or how to dose ingredients to obtain a perfect recipe: they do not know how to treat food.

In other cases, however, consumers see the platform as a tool to share their experience and therefore they express their point of view and their own re-use practices to value leftovers. A real community is creating around this topic as consumers give each other advice and therefore generate inspiration for always different and creative reuses.

Another typology of content identified among alternatives proposed by TGTG is totally informative: it conveys facts and figures, therefore numbers and statistics using creative and colorful patterns. This information numerically describes how much our actions can dissipate nature's resources: for example, one of the posts¹²¹ carries the claim ``throwing a hamburger is equivalent to running the water in the shower for 90 *minutes*": the numbers are impressive, they induce consumers to think that a gesture that takes place (almost) daily such as throwing away the residues of fast food purchased before returning home to show a dark side that is not seen but which is resentful.

Furthermore, since 2019 TGTG has signed and joined the pact against food waste, one of which pillars concerns the conscious label. In light of the fact that 10% of food waste in Europe is caused by an incorrect interpretation of the labels. In fact, two claims may appear on the packaging "to be consumed preferably within" and "often good beyond". These are two different indicators but the majority (if not all) of consumers are not aware of the difference. With didactic tones, TGTG wants to empower the confident consumer that, once he has learned the "lesson" and once he has analyzed the information provided, he will be able to "walk alone".

TGTG, in collaboration with some large-scale retail brands, has decided to put a new label on the packs, the so called "concious label" suggesting that the product can often be consumed even after the indicated date. It is accompanied by a series of pictograms that will advise to sense-check our food instead of blindly binning it due to the date indicated.¹²²

On this purpose in the last few weeks, Too Good To Go, following the launch in supermarkets of the conscious label on the packs of many products, has created initiatives on social networks that make the consumer aware of the distinction that exists between the label `` to be consumed. within " and " to be consumed *preferably* within " and of the new practice that involves the use of the senses that they should adopt.

¹²¹ Source: See Appendix: image 20 ¹²² Source: See Appendix: image 21

Still, the comments to the contents posted on social networks are not many. I decided to focus on Instagram platform because it has a higher level of engagement: from a manual reading, considering all the posts that deal with this topic, it emerges that, surprisingly, there is a percentage of people who *already* adopt this behavior: therefore they already trust of their senses to judge the edibility of products.

Other consumers, on the other hand, " ask for advice ": perhaps they have at home expired or still sealed products that they do not want to throw away as they are not rotten and appear perfectly edible. *But are they dangerous for their health? These people* would like to be reassured that this food could be eaten as they realize that it may still be good. So " they ask TGTG " or other members of the community for advice on how to act.

Furthermore, another part of consumers, as expected, was not at all aware of this initiative and in general of the distinction between labels. Indeed, they are excited to welcome this new "lesson". As an interview carried out by TGTG on a basis of 1,000 citizens in Italy confirms, most of these (73%) felt more motivated to act more consciously regarding the consumption of certain foods after reading the addition in label

A minimal percentage, also in this case as expected, however, claims not to trust the label "to be consumed *preferably* within " and therefore does not want to rely on their senses to understand whether the food is edible or not

Also in *North American*, companies have decided to take the floor and involve the consumer in an appropriate way. To increase their awareness of food waste, companies use an attitude that takes into account the fact that the average American consumer seeks happiness and light-heartedness, not only in their lifestyle but also in the things they watch on TV.

First of all the companies in America that is taking action in this sense is Hellmann's, the mayonnaise brand owned by Unilever. Through various initiatives over the years, the brand is an activist in the field and has made the fight against food waste the core of its business. *Food waste isn't a laughing matter*. *But Hellmann's promo and activities gets consumers smiling and thinking about how to avoid the issue*. It's a win-win. Consumers get what they want to see and the world (hopefully) will hand waste.

Beyond the mentioned initiative from 2019 and the Superbowl sponsor ad in 2021, Hellmann's has come a long way!

Considering that Canada is the second most wasteful country per capita and that over 46% of Canada's food waste come from homes, the brand has thought that it could be useful to start sensitizing those that are mainly responsible for this shameful event: of course, consumers. In fact, to raise the awareness of Canadians, the brand decided to surprise them during a football match by offering them rescue food from local suppliers and to turn into delicious meals that were used to feed an entire stadium free of charge. Then, a big screen was used to reveal the secret: the food they enjoyed was rescued.

In reality, given the gravity of the phenomenon, the country is trying to address people's attention. In 2015, for example, the documentary "*JUST EAT IT*" was launched which narrates the experiment of a Canadian couple who eats food found in the garbage: an amused and amusing tone is used to deal with a serious topic. Specifically, they show that with everything that is thrown away by retailers (because it does not comply with aesthetic standards) it is possible to feed people, thus solving not only environmental but a lso ethical problems. The main character of the film confirms that its purpose is to "entertain the public by informing it". The documentary itself is a genre considered arid and boring, but in this case it is enriched with spin shots, films accelerated and special effects that keep the consumer glued to the screen. The film received several awards and accolades from critics.

The poster¹²³ of the film is stimulating and interesting: the title "Just eat it "refers to the Nike claim" Just do it" and the swoosh, symbol of the clothing brand, is replaced by a ripe banana, not compliant with standard that the population would generally tend to discard.

Returning to Hellman's, the brand has well thought of involving even the youngest in this movement against waste: its mission took a virtual form with the partnership with *Nintendo Animal crossing New Horizons*. The brand had its island in the game and gave users the opportunity to make change in the real world by converting their virtual waste into (virtual) currency. The brand then donated this money to Second Harvest, Canada's largest food-rescue charity, proving 25,000 meals for vulnerable communities.

In 2021 the brand launched a commercial, taking up the concept of "fridge blindness" illustrated before the one launched during the Superbowl final in February, starring Amy Shumer.

In fact, the commercial¹²⁴ explains that every perfect meal starts with some of what's left the fridge and the magic touch of Hellmann's. The hashtag that has been spread on social media is #MakeTasteNotWaste. It shows people opening the fridge and looking inside it and exclaiming "nothing", as saying that they do not find or have anything eatable. With a tired air they are about to close the fridge but their gaze falls on the jar of Hellmann's mayonnaise, wrapped in a white light. Here's the real magic. The spot turns into a musical: the actors start singing the jingle *"Turn nothing into something"* while dancing and cooking dishes by reusing leftovers. The use of the song, simple but which remains fixed in the head, is strategic: the consumer will in fact tend to recode his words and the lively rhythm and, perhaps, sing it while repeating the same actions. Or, again, they will come to mind as he searches the fridge.

¹²³ Source: See Appendix: image 22

¹²⁴ Source: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sx2oDDJ_zCQ</u>

In 2022, in the same way, the brand during the Superbowl launched another spot, much more particular. As in 2021, the choice of the event in which to launch the content is not random: it is the second biggest day for food consumption in the US which means it is also a big originator of food waste.

The spot gives funny suggestions on how to practically fight it.

Another way Hellmann's is educating initiative launched in 2022 is called *Fridge night*: it is a four-week program that people can join by using the accompanying app (available for US consumers on iOS and Android) that is proven to help people reduce their food waste at home. In fact it provides that users become more confident and resourceful cookers, use up the food they buy, and save money while reducing food waste. The program consist in the fact that consumers, once a week for 4 weeks have to grab their left- behind food they have forgotten in the fridge and select a ''flexible recipe'' or '' Flexipes'' they can prepare with the food they have. It will inspire them to use food in new or unconventional ways, thus increasing creativity. Accordingly, the company has launched a hashtag on the social pages #FridgeHunting: as explained by the famous and well known chef Josè Andrès, partner of Hellman's it represent the act of searching in the fridge whatever seems unusual or unvaluable, just like the half egg, the piece of ham, the half canned tuna, and making with it a delicious meal. The chef and the brand call consumers directly to action and ask them to make a lunch with what they have and be more resourceful with the food. On a weekly basis, the brand posts a ''roundup'' on the Instagram page in which it shows tasty meals that the fridge hunters have created from various foods found in their refrigerator. From the interaction via social media, even a younger audience feels inspired, in a creative and fun way, to take part in food waste.

Numerous others have been the efforts of other actors to raise awareness on the issue of food waste, using the same approach.

In 2017, the Center for Biological Diversity, an American non-profit organization known and active for its work to protect endangered species through legal actions, scientific petitions, creative media, launched some very interesting video advertising.

Each of the 3 videos is aimed at raising awareness of a different problem: energy waste, food waste and unsustainable growth of our human population. The video content focused on food waste¹²⁵ sees as the protagonist the famous actor and activist Ed Begley Jr. who is represented in a dumpster while he eats with taste and pleasure everything that has been thrown away. Finally, it invites us to reflect, in an ironic and joking way, that it is not necessary to fish for food from the bin to save the world: the important thing is to act consciously (smart shopping, using leftovers ...).

¹²⁵ Source: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5Us69fSM9M</u>

Changing scenery, a few years later, in 2020 in America the culinary show "*Up to the last advance*" was launched on Netflix in which competitors completely transform leftovers into delicious creations, find surprising ways to give life to leftovers to win. The prize pool of \$ 10,000. This television format is very popular in North America and is pure entertainment: the consumer is captured by the frenzy, passion and pressure of the competitors who struggle to complete the service or to make the requested dish. This show was launched in December 2020, to inspire and encourage consumers, especially after the Christmas holidays and after the pandemic period, to realize that everything in their fridge continues to have value.

Furthermore, the Save the food community, based on numbers and data, has decided to target families since food is wasted more within the domestic walls: in particular the campaign, made up of various initiatives, combines the "theory to practice": in this way, it provides consumers with a concrete "fun" and interactive way to solve the problem. But it represents only the beginning of the Save the food strategy which, as mentioned, passes directly to action and provides the consumer with tools and digital content that help him, in an innovative and creative way, to fight food waste wherever it occurs. Among these are the GUEST-IMATOR¹²⁶, an online dinner party calculator with which you can know how much food you need to cook when you have guests.

Quantities are calculated on the basis of information entered. Initially you are asked to identify the characteristics of the guests: there are people who eat more than others, so the calculator classifies' 'small' ',' 'average' " " big " eaters; after that, the calculator asks how many leftover meals it wants to get, so the tool also helps to calculate how many meals you want to keep after dinner. After that, the consumer is asked to specify what type of dinner he wants to prepare: classic inner, veggy dinner or a mix meal. Finally, he has the quantities ready!

Another very interesting Save the food initiative concerns the partnership dated 2019 with Alexa¹²⁷, the voice assistant. The initiative starts from the assumption that the consumer lacks creativity and, in light of the phenomenon of fridge blindness, always tends to throw away the leftovers because he doesn't know how to cook them. With this funny partnership, just say "*Alexa, open Save the Food*" and then ask about food storage, freshness checks and suggestions. In this way the consumer can ask Alexa, just as if he were talking to an experienced friend, how to store the food so that it lasts longer, to understand if it is still good and even to revive it once the first one has passed.

¹²⁶ Source: <u>https://savethefood.com/guestimator</u>

¹²⁷ Source: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCJ8p-s28Sw</u>

2.1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF CATEGORIES

From the collection of all those initiatives it emerges that the main category of food waste can be divided in 2 different branches, as it appears clear that the phenomenon is treated in different ways.

The first one includes advertising campaigns and all those initiatives that use an informative, descriptive and objective approach thus the phenomenon of food waste is treated in a more objective and detached way.

In the latter branch, instead, it prevails an aesthetic and narrative approach.

2.1.2.1 THE FIRST CATEGORY : INFORMATIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND OBJECTIVE APPROACH

In particular, some organizations, when talking about food waste, have the tendency to use standardized media products and to convey facts, figures and information or suggestions on how to improve a behavior, to combat indifference and open up eyes to people when faced with truths that are uncomfortable to accept.

This type of approach, is mostly focused, as said, on information content, facts and figures (data about food waste, short illustrations of the shocking impact it has), and descriptive images or taglines that place special emphasis on consumer responsibility. This strategy is aimed at increasing the awareness of the problem, and also at teaching good practices in the production chain, and establishing collaboration frameworks with NGOs, food banks, consumer associations and charity groups.

The most significant types of intervention are focuses on awareness, information and education campaigns. All the initiatives that involve the fight against food waste include multistakeholder collaboration, especially public-private partnerships.

The organizations use a simple but eye catching communication, based on numbers elaborated from statistics, real images or data that characterize the phenomenon of food waste considered, in front of which an individual cannot remain indifferent and this leads to reflect and to revisit his relationship with food and therefore with waste.

All this contributes to making the consumer more fragile from a rational point of view, meaning that when faced with the decision to buy a certain products or take a certain actions, in light of the food waste problem and remembering, even vaguely, the frightening numbers or observations read on advertising, he feels guilty about the actions he takes and is more ready to change his attitude.

Guilt in this sense could be also seen as a positive feeling if we consider that it is a key emotion and the starting point for self-regulation processes: in fact, when a consumer understands that he is the responsible for a

negative outcome or, in this specific case, when he feels responsible for wrong treating leftovers or food waste, he feels guilty thus generating the motivation to control his negative behavior and self-regulate.

In this sense, he is more encouraged to review his behavior and to behave better. In particular, individuals need to be able to construe an association between the self and certain negative outcomes in order to experience guilt, and advertising in this sense could be the key.

Often, in English-speaking countries the words of "guilt" and "shame" are used interchangeably. However they have a different meaning and it is important for advertisers to understand the difference. Guilt is associated with a threat to personal identity *goals* rather than *traits* of personal identity. This means that, ceteris paribus, shame is more likely to be associated with the perception that there is something wrong or negative with stable personal characteristics, while guilt is more contextualized and linked to a specific behavior: this therefore confirms the fact that, when companies want to sensitize the consumer towards food waste and invite him to revisit his behavior, it is necessary to generate a feeling of guilt and thus having a focus on consumer *actions*.

The post-covid period has further endorsed this aspect since, given the economic and social difficulties, the consumer has developed a more mature and attentive mentality, especially on the economic side: he is more inclined to weigh his choices and to implement and rewarding sustainable behaviors that are attentive to the territory and society and feels guilty considering that most of the food he buys (and therefore of the money he spends) is thrown away for superficiality.

Therefore the consumer, even if he leads a lifestyle looking for "convenience" (mentioned in chapter 2) is sensitive, on the other hand, to a series of solicitations that come from the so-called "upstream influencers" aimed at raising awareness.

2.1.2.2 THE SECOND CATEGORY : AESTHETIC AND NARRATIVE APPROACH

Instead, the second branch favors an aesthetic and narrative approach.

From the analysis of the data collected, it emerges that in the initiatives and campaigns launched in this area certain tones prevail and they seem to almost spectacularize the phenomenon of food waste. This practice is also known as *infotainment* which is a strategy that gives appeal and a ludic dimension to the news and to the images shown, with the aim of making them appealing and attractive to the widest possible audience.

Infotainment programs use, in fact, linguistic elements and rhetorical and expressive techniques that are characteristic of the logic of entertainment, favoring sensationalist tones, beautiful images that are retouched to become perfect, making sure that style predominates over substance.

This approach, applied to food universe, is strictly linked with the phenomenon of foodporn, according to which when food stops getting emotional and conveying pure and authentic values, it is because it becomes mere exteriority, something 'beautiful to see''. Food is presented and framed in an aesthetic way and thus what matters is the *exteriority* and therefore for the consumer food is nothing more than *something that should be eaten with eyes*, rather than with mouth, something that must be continually changed and modernized, something that must be in step with the times in order to *be trendy*, rather than a nutritive substance or the "glue'' that fills moments of sociability.

Therefore, some organization face the problem of food *waste* in a trasversal way, because they are more intended to place emphasis on those external elements that some consumers value more. As a consequence, a more light-hearted approach is preferred to a serious one and the focus, of course, is on the product or service that should be sold to the final consumer.

Organizations present a fun or comfortable situation, in which their produces are the perfect tools that helps the consumer to overcome a tension and thus that help to satisfy a need or a desire... and, ultimately, as a solver of food waste.

To make the messages "beautiful and interesting to look at" using joke, using entertainment and the Hollywood effect is the answer! Indeed, the best strategy is to make the content to be communicated in a spectacular way: using this strategy, a lot of attention is paid to the colors, the actors, the taglines inserted, the music ... all elements that must be memorable. All information, even those concerning food waste and its consequences that threaten our future, are inserted in a frame of lightness in which witty conversation is exercised and scenes of everyday life are made fun of. In particular, the risk that can be generated is linked to the underestimation and the values that spectacular communication transmits.

The communication of food waste is made up of key elements that are carefully chosen and modeled to conform to the characteristics, fashions and trends of the moment, stifling the authenticity and seriousness of the topic. In this apparently superficial communication, the outside and therefore the form and appearance, seems to be worth more than the inside and therefore its content, and everything is treated as if it were merchandise displayed in a permanently visible and planetary "showcase".

2.1.3 MAIN ACTORS

Before going ahead with a deeper analysis of the related classifications for each category, it is appropriate to differentiate between 2 types of actors who fight food waste.

Considering the first branch identified, the main activists are the so-called upstream influencers, therefore the institutions themselves or the NGOs which implement a type of "social" communication: their messages have not a commercial purpose, they do not want to push the consumer to buy a specific product but they want to persuade and convey a message of general interest, they want to raise public awareness on a cause or problem and promote or discourage a certain behavior.

In addition, in recent years there have been numerous start-ups in the form of service companies, that have launched an innovative way of doing business: they sell scrap not a product... they sell an idea and a status symbol.

The second category, that privileges an "aestethic and narrative approach", includes texts that are mainly realized by large companies and multinationals that take action against food waste. They mainly tend to promote their own product and, on the other hand, deal with and include social causes in their forms of communication using specific tones of voice, as will be detailed. Those organizations take on the responsibility of including concern for the consequences of human actions on society and the environment in their business strategies. This happens because companies are considered almost public bodies with responsibility towards employees and the territories where they are located.

2.1.4 TONE OF VOICE

From this preliminary collection of data, initiatives and information derives a further observation: the tone of voice used are certainly different and adapted to the identified contexts.

The contents conveyed by organizations that use an informative, descriptive and objective approach, thus the ones belonging to the first branch, although they want to trigger reflection, they are not presented with an accusatory tone, they do not want to violently point the finger at the consumer while showing that they think they have done something wrong.

Indeed, they adopt a soft approach and use a neutral, professional and didactic tone of voice: in particular, a neutral stimulus becomes capable of eliciting a polarized response (positive or negative) when associated with something (image or tagline) that it usually elicits a polarized reaction. In fact, while using a comprehensible language, organizations charge consumer of responsibility with some direct question or sentences or astounding images that aim to move and intrigue the viewer and to induce reflection to ensure that he performs certain actions by leveraging personal responsibility and inciting respect for the rules.

For example, looking at the 2015 campaign '*Don't be...*'' from WRAP, it is clear that advertisers uses a neutral tone of voice, with simple and direct expression, coming from everyday language and used in households, which tend to establish a certain closeness and familiarity with the consumer. The claim is

combined with "Make a list before you go shopping and buy only what you need" introduces a series of suggestions and indications on how to recycle leftovers. It is a key sentence because it suggest to limit consumption and to think before buying too much. This claim could not be made by any large multinational, as it could have negative consequences for profits.

Using the '*Don't be...*'' claim is part of a strategy: the organization wants to place itself above the consumer and, just as a teacher with didactic tones gives the lesson to the student, in the same way it aims to educate the consumer to behave, it wants to open his eyes and show him the right way to proceed and wants to sensitize him to the issue. In this way, the organization also empowers the consumer and gives him the tools, from now on, to become a better person and that fights waste. From this moment he is free from the guilt of ignoring the existence of the threat and, if he continues to waste and ignore the advice, if he continues to throw away rotten produces, he is a bad person and should feel guilty for this. From now on he has the tools to be able to fight waste. And it must do it. He has to join the movement.

The consumer, faced with this type of communication, becomes serious and understands the seriousness of the information itself. By simply illustrating numbers or easy taglines combined with powerful images, just like in the previous case where an ugly image is shown, the consumer is confronted with the truth of the facts: he realizes that, in the end, his actions or behaviors oriented towards the convenience, the appereance or mere ecstasy of a product are futile and superficial: he feels blameworthy for his behavior, therefore he realizes that he has done something wrong, and hence he generates an episodic sense of guilt, connected to the specific situation of food waste. In this context, the organization wants to generate this feeling in order to be able to exercise control over the behavior and future actions of the consumer, knowing that, basically, he is empathetic and open to listening.

A further clarifying example is represented by the LOVE FOOD HATE WASTE campaign promoted by WRAP in the UK in 2011 whose tagline was: "*Wasting food wastes: energy, water, natural resources that is used to grow, package, transport, market food. Sad, isn't it?*"¹²⁸

The campaign shows crying food and provocative facts that contribute to raise awareness about food waste; it also gives consumers simple tips on how to best store food, from breads, pastry and cakes to meat, dairy, cereals, and fruit and vegetables. But above all, the content wants to induce the consumer to think that it's sad (and bad) to see good food go to waste. And the use of the final question tag (*sad, isn't it*) is crucial: its use is kind of imperative and intimates a sense of urgency and directly tackles consumer mind: the NGO uses it to have a kind of confirmation by the consumer about the truth of the facts illustrated, which are real and scary. In this way, it has the aim to change preconceived notions of the potential waster and makes him belie ve in

¹²⁸ See Appendix: image 23

new possibilities and new behavior. In reality, the consumer questions himself and thinks ''if I throw away a tomato that is too mature, I'm a bad person!'; the implication is that if he continues to behave in a careless way and not to notice that even a 'too red tomato' is good and edible in the same way, then he is a person guilty of the threat to humanity.

The goal of this type of tone of voice adopted is, in fact, to make the consumer responsible to ensure that they acquire full awareness that their behavior and decisions produce consequences for themselves and for the world.

On the other side, with reference to the *'aestehthic and narrative'* approach, however, in accordance with what has been said and looking at the numerous examples above, the information is perfectly mixed with entertainment, so much so that we talk about "*infotainment*": whatever a company wants to communicate about food waste, is said in an engaging way, and a special emphasis is put on the aesthetic part: therefore, definitely in this context we speak of a playful and friendly tone of voice, tending to informal and characterized by a language similar to speech, sometimes with the use of slang (for example "Move over ", repeated by Amy Schumer in Hellmann's adv or " Sorry man ")

It must be remembered that the concept of advertising and communication in the identified context follows a more "commercial" trend in the sense that the organizations mainly aim to push the consumer to buy a product: therefore, even when they present a delicate social problem, the product it is always present and, in some way, it represents the solution to the problem itself and it is the tool able to solve the tension. It follows that using serious and informal tones would result in an inauthentic and inconsistent form of communication.

Thus, the consumer is made conscious of facts and of the delicate social problems through a "light" approach, aimed not exclusively at generating awareness and a new perspective, which crumbles the idea, uncontested in some ways, of objectivity and usefulness of information.

A "funny" campaign or an initiative which uses beautiful and perfect actors or food produces is not the same as a "silly and meaningless" one, and it does not necessarily imply that the consumer simply appreciates the content per se, as it could increase the influence that the company exerts on consumers and induce him to change his behavior, replicating that of the company or of the testimonial.

One of the several examples that emerged from the data collection comes from the Hellmann's brand from Unilever. In 2021 it launched its first commercial during the Superbowl¹²⁹ '*Fairy GodMayo*'', starring Amy Schumer, a comic actress who underlines, with a funny tone of voice, the issue of "fridge blindness", one of the main causes of food waste according to which the consumer looks at the fridge and thinks there is nothing to eat, yet the fridge is full of food.

¹²⁹ Source: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxNttO9oxdg</u>

The adv shows an average American consumer who, as expected, looks in the fridge and thinks he has nothing to eat, despite the fact that it appears full of containers and things to eat. The testimonial solves the problem of food waste thanks to a magic wand that transforms, with Hellmann's maionaise help, some leftovers (in the spot it is mentioned an '' artichoke'' that is difficult to cook), into really beautiful dishes, presented at the end of the spot. She, in the end, envisions food waste as child's play, it's magic .. it's not a big deal and everyone can do it: everyone can make the imperfect as perfect.

2.1.5 FORMAT

After the identification of the tone of voice, another branch of the main category emerges, concerning the type of format used to communicate a message.

For the category that includes those texts that use an informative, descriptive and objective approach, the most suitable and the most selected genre is the print advertising format: therefore the message of food waste is communicated through visual and textual elements: images, accompanied by short (but powerful) texts mainly offline in the form of billboards, posters or signs. Many, in recent years, have also been disseminated online, on official pages or on social media, in order to generate awareness and awareness on the phenomenon of food waste to a younger target audience.

In general, neuromarketing studies confirm that the human brain is designed to perceive the world visually, thus consumers crave constant visual input. Images are so attractive to us because we devote more of our brain's processing power to vision than to any other sense or ability. In particular, the consumer tends to interpret images intuitively, even if he is in a crowded environment, in fact the speed at which he analyzes an image is astounding, at least 1/10th of a second, which is much faster than getting the essence of any text or video he sees. In fact, the video is a set of images that makes sense as a whole: often the message or the meaning of a video is explained at the end of it (therefore after the consumer has seen a multitude of images).

Organizations that decide to communicate and raise awareness on the issue of food waste believe that it is more impactful to use an image, accompanied by a short tagline, on the basis of this theory to ensure that the consumer, at first glance, can get an idea of what they are talking about.

Not only do they easily enter our brain, but the images themselves are also easy and immediate to understand and capable of arousing reactions and reflections, so they remain in our heads. The use of a captivating and well-coupled image with a tagline not only makes the content more memorable, engaging, but also has another advantage that is perhaps more surprising: people will use the memory of the image to find the same content in future or in their daily routine. In practice, through this approach, the organizations want to make sure that, once the consumer is exposed to a print communication that focuses on the fight against food waste by using impactful images of real produces, even if they are ugly to see, or images of personified produces with impactful taglines (such as fruit and ugly vegetables, who cry because their cycle is about to end of life and the tagline says: `Sad, isn'tit? ''), his attention is captured and this leads him to to a reflection about the superficiality of his lifestyle, of his actions and his beliefs. The use of short but powerful taglines, perhaps also coming from commonly used language to ensure that they remain in the consumer's mind and are easy to understand, facilitates this process.

It is clear that the advantage of print adv is linked to the fact that people's ability to remember information, as reported by a Bynder investigation¹³⁰, after three days goes from 10% in the case of text only to 65% when the content is associated with an image.

Furthermore, using a print type advertising guarantees the fact that the message, positioned in a strategic point that offers high visibility, will be around longer and will reach diversified consumer target, basically because it remains ``glued and printed " in a newspaper, that tends to be passed around from reader to reader, or on a wall, if it is a poster, thus expanding the viewership of the message. In this way, print ads reach many readers also over time.

On the contrary, on the basis of the trends and the tone of voice identified for the category where an aesthetic and narrative approach prevails, it is clear that organizations prefer to use multimedia or interactive contents, rather than static images which mark a clear separation between the viewer and the communicator and are unable to keep company in a pleasant and carefree way.

Consequently, the preferred format that best achieves these factors is audiovisual content or the creation of applications or entertainment tools that are able to better combine with information using interactions and to create a narrative.

In this way, organizations would be able to involve the consumer in a short time, thanks to a combination of audio and key visual elements that involve multiple senses, using a light and funny tone of voice, and they also show him, in a joking way, that the problem exists and it is real and it is a threat.

The goal, therefore, is to arise emotional responses that will create a lasting memory in the mind of the beholder. Saying funny things, showing aesthetic pleasant dishes, making jokes, creating visual tricks, improvising chefs, and inducing audience laugh allow them to leave deep impressions in someone's mind much more than saying or doing trivial or normal things.

¹³⁰ Source: <u>https://www.bynder.com/en/blog/the-impact-of-images/</u>

In fact, what advertisers want is to generate a positive reaction in consumers and the appeal and the sensationalist tones of the content are fundamental: in order to attract attention on the product itself it is necessary to go ``out of the ordinary", therefore to overcome the objective and impersonal vision of communication, typical of the other model: in this sense, information takes a back seat since it is accompanied by a majestic and creative frame that captures and focuses attention.

In fact, advertisers tend to revisit news or social problems such as food waste, highlighting whim sical aspects that tend to 'anesthetize" the consciences of individuals and simplify the message itself, allowing the latter to enter into consumer mind.

Creativity is the key to being able to cross the minimum threshold of the consumer's attention and to then be able to directly access their long-term memory: content, especially if it is nice and light, is a powerful tool and represents a winning strategy.

The impact of the contents proposed in this way must not be underestimated because they build through storytelling a solid personal relationship that connects the emotions of a viewer to the product or service or idea that the marketer wants to convey: in this case the consumer sees the actions that are taken and replies them as if it were a game, of course using the same product shown in the advertising: so he buys the product that he sees.

2.1.6 MAIN CHARACTERS

Taking a step forward, it is possible to identify another branch of the main category within the text collected: the main characters.

In the examples analyzed for the first category identified, there are *never* represented physical characters or people, even stereotypes of everyday life, but objects always appear, generally realistic and imperfect food products, such as spoiled or fresh perishable fruit and vegetables that are those who are wasted the most.

The protagonists of the campaign are not testimonials who give orders to the consumer and impose them to reduce food waste and to take action. Rather, communication, simple, direct and effective, requires the main actor to be the product itself, the waste that 'makes itself human' and wants to convince the consumer that it is still valid and deserves a new opportunity.

The rhetorical figure of *personification* is often used: through an allegorical representation, real characteristics typical of human beings are attributed to the inanimate objects depicted: also produces, just like people, can have defects and be imperfect but this does not mean that other qualities are compromised.

For example, in the WRAP campaign mentioned above, the fruit, vegetables or fresh perishable that are no longer considered eatable are crying, in fact they are represented with a tear, indicating that the situation is sad.

Similarly, Intermarchè, a French supermarket chain, launched a hit campaign in 2015, "Inglorious fruit and vegetables", to raise awareness among consumers against the issue of food waste and to alter their perception of the aesthetics of products. It reached 13 million people in its home country of France, and helped boost Intermarché's store traffic by 24% ... from his performance it is possible to say that it was a "glorious" battle against food waste.

The main characters of the campaign, in fact, are fresh perishables¹³¹ such as auberges, potatoes, carrots, lemons or pears which, like human beings, have aesthetic imperfections which, however, do not make them less good to taste. They are represented as the disfigured eggplant, grotesque apple, ugly carrot, failed lemon or the ridiculous potato.

For example, the latter case represents an ugly, misshaped and grotesque potato which, on average, would never be looked at or purchased by a consumer as it is believed to be dangerous to health or rotten. The visible tagline "Elected miss mashed potato 2014 " underlines the fact that, despite its appearance, it is still good for preparing an edible and delicious parade puree, therefore it is equally a valid basis for delicious recipes.

These advertisements have been positioned inside supermarkets, at the point of purchase to ensure that the consumer, during the purchase process, bears in mind the fact that, no matter what, even a ``moche " product must not be discarded but can be saved and is edible. The billboards in question, therefore, tend to generate a sense of responsibility in the consumer, some will tend to be much more rational and will tend to ponder the purchase decision, in light of the fact that their actions may have an influence on the environment and the planet.

In the other category, in line with the idea that communication is accompanied by entertainment, the choice of main characters is very precise and different from the previous one: ordinary subjects never appear, but there are always famous people, testimonials such as Michelin stars, actors or characters from sports or from the world of music who become Hollywood stars, all in perfect shape and hood looking and in this sense they contribute to the spectacularization of the phenomenon that arouses the interest and curiosity of the spectator. They are always accompanied by a product (generally the company's one)

¹³¹ Source: See Appendix: image 24

that present the same aesthetic characteristics as the ones of their ambassadors and that would be the perfect tool that help consumers to have beautiful and perfect dishes to eat.

Surely a famous ambassador attracts the attention of the public more easily, especially if he is a comedian or an expert in the sector or a person of whom people have a positive opinion. He/she guarantees the credibility of an advertising message and therefore contributes to providing authority to the message hidden by aesthetics and playful scenes.

For example, the Hellmann's brand developed a "Bring your own food"¹³² initiative in 2019 in collaboration with the famous celebrity chef David Hertz. The brand invites customers to bring leftovers to the restaurant or produces that they would throw away and the creative chef, with the with the help of some other chefs, transforms people's forgotten ingredients into delicious and beautiful 5-star dishes using Hellmann products and, at the end of the meal, they give the consumer the recipe so that they can replicate starred dishes at home and avoid wasting food. The use of an expert testimonial of the sector is not accidental: too often, in fact, the population believes that leftovers are dangerous foods to eat for health as, unlike fresh foods, they may lack some nutritional properties or may be damaged or gone bad.

The starred chef, as a true food expert, starts from these unvaluable materials to create creative works of art and in this sense he wants to reassure consumers that this type of activity is not dangerous, obsolete or tied to the past (let's say, ''vintage''). Since a celebrity acts in a certain way, the consumer has more incentive to behave in the same way and to follow the advice received.

The brand, through a pleasant and carefree activity, such as going to a restaurant and having dinner with friends and enjoying 5-star dishes, introduced consumers to the uncomfortable theme of food waste and wanted to sensitize them across the board.

2.2 CLASSIFICATION OF THE CASES

From the illustration of the brandscape model and all the categories it is composed of, it is possible to make a net distinction of all the cases.

Among all the initiative illustrated in the dataset, it is evident that there are some campaign and some initiatives that follow the objective, descriptive and informative approach. Here, information and facts prevail and the main characters are objects, generally food products, such as spoiled or fresh perishable fruit and vegetables that are those who are wasted the most. They are personified, thus they are given traits typical

¹³² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJZyIfcsNeE

of human beings in order to make sure that the consumer, while watching, feels more involved and thus responsible.

Moreover, these campaigns tend to show the reality of the product of the good itself: for example, the campaign illustrated before "*Don't be* ... " by WRAP from 2015 (See Appendix: Image 5-6-7) is a transposition of reality. In fact, it simply represents the produces as they really are after some days that people forget them in the fridge. The image is real: it is not stylized or modified. The product is real and the communication is unfiltered. Everyone could have some rotten produces in the fridge and it is normal because it goes under the natural process of decomposition.

Again, another significative example is the initiatives launched by BRUTIES brand which packages and promotes the sale of vegetables that are usually scorned and discarded due to their irregular shape or appearance; it also distributes packs of stickers, so that the consumer can personalize the fruit he buys and makes them look fun and give them a little more life. Thoughout the ironical stickers and images, the organization want to highlight and to enhance the imperfection of the natural fruit, emphasizing that an imperfect thing does not necessarily mean a bad thing and without flavor; it does not mean " second choice ". Indeed, people must go further and try to overcome this obstacle. And these stickers are a useful tool in this sense since they ease concerns about the edibility and safety of those foods and try to induce responsible and sustainable behavior.

In general, it is possible to include in the first category also other initiatives such as:

- Think.Eat.Save advertising competition by FAO in 2013
- "Don't be..." campaign by WRAP in 2015
- "ComplEAT" campaign by WRAP in 2019
- #KEEPCRUSHING campaign by WRAP in 2021
- Wasting food feeds climate change by WRAP in 2022
- Bruites brand and initiative
- More food less waste by Spanish government in 2013
- Handbook "Guia Pràctica para reducir el desperdicio alimentario" by Ministerio de agricultura y pesca, alimentación y medio ambiente in 2016
- Last Minute Market initiatives and the "Zero Waste" campaign in 2010
- ''Dignity of food'' campaign from Banco Alimentare in 2020
- Documentary ''JUST EAT IT''
- Hellmann's initiative in Canada ''Feeds a stadium Food Waste''

- Video with Ed Begley Jr realized by Center for Biological Diversity in 2017
- "Sad, isn't it?" campaign by Love Food Hate Waste in 2011
- ''Inglorious Fruit and Vegetables'' by Intermarchè supermarket in 2015
- "Trash" campaign by Boroume in 2021

All other initiatives instead belong to another category which prefers an aestehic and narrative approach and it is the bearer of the concept of food porn: accurate and precise images prevail here and they paint the product in an impeccable and perfect way.

In particular, the emphasis is not on waste, as it happens in the previous case, but, precisely, on the product represented in a spectacular, refined and surreal way, which the brand wants to advertise and which, secondly, represents the solution to the food waste problem. The issue of food waste is not addressed in a central and direct way, as it happens in the previous category, but transversally: in fact the brand invites the consumer to use the product they to revitalize foods (that they would otherwise throw away), making it more beautiful.

Some initiatives of the dataset belong to this typology, including:

- Partnership with Nintendo Animal Crossing by Hellmann's brand in 2020
- "Fairy Godmayo" commercial by Hellmann in 2021 (Superbowl)
- "Turn nothing into something" commercial by Hellmann's in 2021
- "Make Taste Not Waste" commercial by Hellmann's in 2022 (Superbowl)
- Fridge Night app by Hellmann's in 2022
- #FridgeHunting and partnership with chef Josè Andrès
- "Up to the last advance" culinary show by Netflix in 2020
- Guest-Imator webpage by Save the Food in 2018
- "Alexa open Save the Food" by Save the Food in 2019

2.2.1 AN HYBRID CASE

One of the most interesting cases is the Too Good To Go one.

Looking at its Instagram official account, it seems pretty clear that, by illustrating numbers, facts and statistics about food waste, and using an EDUCATIONAL tone of voice, it belongs to the first category.

One of the example from the dataset that could help to understand the reason for this choice is the Image 20, which is one of the Instagram post, which I report below:



Source: Instagrampost

But, on the other side, Too Good To Go adds to the captions written with a simple but eye catching language whose aim is to educate the consumer by showing him facts about the phenomenon of waste, also aesthetic images and frames: every image is treated in detail and attention is paid on graphic features such as the color used, or the shape of the items represented.

Also look at the image below to better understand the nature of this controversy: this is only one of the posts published by Too Good To Go and it shows pieces of an Easter egg that are left from the holiday symbolically coming together as a recipient of wholeness. Although these pieces are the "waste ", "what remains" from chocolate eggs and therefore would generally be considered as something useless and therefore would be represented in an "ugly "way, perhaps with cold and dull colors, they are represented in a very accurate and precise way.

The egg, in fact, has a glossy color, its individual pieces are perfect, the overlap between the two parts is symmetrical and the breaking edge is irregular but defined (it seems to resemble the eggs typically represented in the cartoons): it is so perfect that, at times, it seems fake.



Source: Instagrampost

I will illustrate few more examples to confirm that the communication of the brand is very accurate, especially in the graphic representations of the products, although it maintains a professional and didactic tone of voice to make sure that the consumer understands the seriousness of the problem of food waste and starts to adopt a sustainable behavior,

In this regard, products such as fresh perishable undergo the oxidation process in a very short time, and therefore tend to blacken immediately and become " ugly "; they would tend to be thrown away, since the consumer in his mind would immediately make the association with something "not good" or that "has lost its initial qualities". Too Good To Go, on the contrary, enhances the leftovers and represents it in a refined and perfect way, as the images below can confirm.

Generally the consumer, in the wake of the food porn trend, considers edible everything that is beautiful (in fact, "he eats with his eyes "). So the fact that Too Good To Go in a provocative way represents what would generally be thrown away in an aesthetic way, anticipates that that product can lead to the same satisfaction as an aesthetically beautiful and perfect product.





Source: Instagramposts

Similarly, the products contained in the magic boxes, (those foods that remain unsold by supermarkets such as fruit and vegetables that no longer comply with the standards of large-scale distribution in terms of aesthetics or products close to the expiration date or foods that are no longer perfectly-shaped, sold by restaurants or cafes), are presented more beautiful than ever: looking at one of the many Instagram posts used

to advertise the initiative and to entice the consumer to download the app, the phenomenon is evident and repeats itself.

The food is depicted in great detail and a lot of attention is paid to the aesthetics of the leftover, which makes it seem like a genuine product, "fresh out of the oven" ... in short, to be enjoyed with your eyes!



Source: Instagrampost

2.3 IDENTIFICATION OF CODES

Through the analysis of the socio-cultural environment, it is possible to identify the main codes in the context of food waste.

2.3.1 DOMINANT CODE

The dominant code is the one that is more recognized and accepted in society, however, once it reaches dominance, it begins to lose originality and appeal. According to the analysis conducted, and as widely highlighted in chapter 2, the dominant code, which characterized this century, without distinction between young and old people, is **food porn.**

This code is based on the idea that eating is a multisensory experience but the sense that ''bosses'' is surely sight: our eyes lead the way and our tongue merely follows. "People's perception is typically dominated by what their eyes see", writes Charles Spence, Oxford professor of experimental psychology.¹³³

Thus, to make food palatable it has become necessary to make it beautiful and aesthetically pleseant: so, people interest shifts to artificiality as a form of 'art" and this leads to think that they are less interested in food itself and in its taste or nutritional values than in its artistic recreation.

As a consequence, companies focus on plays of colors, they want to put on the merket perfect shaped produces, they try to find the strategic angle that make food that is filmed with the camera as perfect and without defects, thus searching for the reach of perfect beauty standards.

Indeed, I believe there is a clear affinity between the food and the human beings: the actual society is governed by perfect body-shaped people that appear on television, perfect faces on social media that influence personal aesthetic standards and the relationship with their bodies, leading people to believe that exist several guidelines that define how each one should aesthetically be. This contributes to the de-substantialization of an individual, increasingly declined only in a social image.

In parallel this happens also with food and the phenomenon of food porn: food is witnessing a process of desubstantialization that has led to the constitution of an 'imaginal world', governed by a "way of being and thinking pervaded by the image, the imaginary, the symbolic and the immaterial" (Maffesoli, 2005, 104). In this way, only what appears beautiful is considered to be as ''normal'' and '' compliant with standards''

In particular, the introduction of this new vision brings with it the decay of values connected to food: in general terms, in fact, superficiality and carelessness prevail in the choice of food (consumers shop without a list, buying more and more things on impulse) and in food management (consumers throw away things that are not aesthetic pleasant just because they believe they are not edible anymore or they think those produces may be harmful to health, or because they don't know how to interpret labels)

However, all of this has a dark side and evil consequences on the environment and on the health of the planet. This is why it is losing its originality and appeal and people are increasingly trying to take up sustainable behavior.

 $^{^{\}rm 133}$ Source: Ramsden J. (2011, January 28th) ; Eating with the eyes ; The Guardian Journal

2.3.2 EMERGENT CODE

The emergent code is the one that has born and evolved in response to a social and cultural transition in society. In fact people are becoming more and more aware of the fact that everything they buy and everything they do not consume can have evil consequences on the entire world, such as climate change and planet pollution. As a result, they are moving toward a more mindful and conscious consumption.

The code that I have identified on the basis of the analysis conducted is **''the real taste''**. Companies, first, and consumers, after, are trying to introduce and accept the idea that food, regardless of its shape, color or the number of days it is stored in the fridge, can still be used and can be as good as the ''aestetically pleseant'' version. In particular, in recent years the idea that beauty is an indicator of healthiness, naturalness and above all of the edibility of food has been undermining because people want to go beyond the appearances and the artificiality that rule the modern society. They want to discover the real taste of the real food.

The pivotal idea challenges the assumptions of the dominant code and provides that the theme of sustainability is catching on: it want to shed light on some social issues that prevent us from having an healthy and safe world for our future. In this case, companies are trying to reveal and to communicate that the "appereance" is not always about "beauty". What really matters in reality is taste of food, its nutritional characteristics and not merely just its aesthetic. Taste can be also found in produces with dull colors and imperfect shapes.

This assumption is based on the cultural and social shift that leads individuals to become aware that change is necessary if we want to preserve the world and if we want to ensure a better future to other generations.

2.3.3 THE CULTURAL TENSION

Thanks to the *brandscape* model I was able to identify a tension that emerges in society and that would be useful for companies that, in order to make sure that the consumer adopts a sustainable behavior, thus learning to reduce food waste, they have to understand the reason why an individual should adopt an intended behavior, rather than maintaining the actual one, to satisfy his needs-desires

My research outlines a cultural tension that I have defined as "real-artifact".

In general, nowadays throughout the globe both in the human world and in that of food, there is the affirmation of the tension between what is *real*, and therefore it is shown `` as it is '', even in its imperfections and what is *artifact*, therefore that lacks naturalness and authenticity as it is elaborated (perhaps even excessively) especially by advertisers or by users on social media that add filter and delete defects. It seems that, in order to present something to today's society, it is necessary to render the imperfect as perfect.

This construct reflects the fact that people would like to save and eat ''ugly'' unsold food or to recycle or reuse produces that they have stored in the fridge for a while or that they do not know how to use, but they are afraid and unable of doing so because they are concerned about health issues or because lack the skills and the capacity to understand how to manage those leftovers properly. And this (careless) behaviour generates waste. They also would prefer to eat something aesthetically pleasant (that they associate with a higher quality and taste) and that is compliant with the standards vehicolated by the infinite discourses about food that circulate on the web.

This tension is the result of the contradiction between the dominant and the emergent code. Thanks to the impulse of the environmental sustainability trend, illustrated in Chapter 1, people's perception of food is evolving.

More and more people feel the need to save what they already have and thus to revisit their careless behavior and to overcome the biases they have toward food and its aesthetic presentation on the basis of the fact that waste has become a threat not only for future generations but also for our times. It is synonyms of destruction of natural resources (such as air, water and land) and also of loss of money, considering that people spend a lot on food that ends in the garbage, also without being consumed. Above all, food waste has moral implications, considering that the tons of food that are thrown away could be used to feed people that can't afford an healthy diet.

However, to achieve this new awareness and new set of behavior, people must face and revise the old dominant code. And companies must help in this sense.

3. THE METHODOLOGY : SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

As Marrone tries to explain, semiotics uncovers "the hidden, naturalized ways in which men, social groups, collectivities, cultures give meaning and value to the world, to themselves and to what surrounds them, using the world themselves, themselves and what surrounds them to do so ".

Indeed, no one speaks solely to make a sound a sentence: in the same way, nothing is communicated without a precise meaning. Everything we say and everything brands say in their different forms of communication hide deeper levels of meaning. Semiotics, in fact, allows the interpretation of communication and aims to investigate the processes and functioning of signification, understanding its mechanisms in depth, and allowing the analysis of all media phenomena. In particular, the purpose of semiotics is not to interpret and

therefore to indicate the more or less hidden meaning that a particular symbol expresses. Rather, it is concerned with reconstructing the mechanisms that have built an interpretation. Semiotics is not knowledge of the world but knowledge of the procedures that led to knowing it.

The semiotic approach to the analysis of communication aims to overcome the simplistic and naive vision of media products and proposes an in-depth study of the mechanisms that determine consumption, only apparently obvious and without complexity. The notion of sign is overcome because it does not allow to give an explanation to very complex phenomena.

The semiologist is a man who wants to open, empty and disassemble a ''box'', which represents a text. The lid of the box represents a discursive surface, that is what is initially perceived. He should go beyond the surface level in order to analyze deeper structures of texts. Having abandoned the narrative surface, he has to empty and decompose the box and therefore pull out the elements and analyze them individually in order to make sense of themselves and of the relationships they have with the other elements in order to access a hidden meaning.

In particular, it might seem superfluous to analyze a media product such as advertising in an analytical way since they are part of our daily life. In particular, they are so common that they seem "transparent" and doomed to the obvious especially if, after seeing them several times, they stop surprising us and stimulate our interpretative activity.

Nowadays, generally, we are no longer surprised when we watch a commercial since we are inundated with media products: we see it on TV, we share it on social media and we listen to it on the radio. However, it is important to analyze it from a semiotic point of view since they mark the rhythm of people's existence and become part of the construction mechanisms of individual and collective identity. therefore they are anything but trivial.

Nothing is random: each sign, each color, each structure, means something deeper than what advertisers currently want to represent. The semiologist, through the tools of decomposition and analysis, must eliminate the intermediate levels and go deeper and access the deeper levels of signification in order to analyze the identity of the text and what determines its effectiveness. He has to overcome a simplistic view of products or media communication.

Abandoning the metaphor of the box, the semiotic analysis begins with the assumption that the media text is a phenomenon that can be divided into its constituent elements organized around a stratification of different levels. In order to proceed within the innermost layers of signification, the passage of decomposition is necessary. It provides that the entire text, whether it is a video advertising or a print one, is subdivided and segmented into smaller elements, according to different criteria, in order to identify the individual elements and the relationships between them. Decomposing a text therefore means going beyond the narrative surface of a text and thus reopening the set of processes that determine its functioning and recognizability.

Next, I have decoded to make a semiotic analysis of 3 cases, which I consider very emblematic: the first one is a perfect example of the first category identified in the brandscape model, in which a descriptive, informative and objective approach prevails; the second case instead embodies the characteristic of the second category, thus the one where an aesthetic and narrative approach to food waste domiates. Finally, I have decided to analyses another case, which I believe is an Hybrid representation of the phenomenon.

3.1 SEMIOTIC ANALISIS OF A PRINT ADVERTISING

"in advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional; the signifieds of the advertising message are formed a priori by certain attributes of the product and these signifieds have to be transmitted as clearly as possible."

This citation from Barthes¹³⁴ is crucial to understand the work that I have developed in the second half of this chapter. In particular, I have analysed 2 different advertising launched in Europe during last years and, in doing so, I had isolated the most relevant elements in each and analyzed their meanings.

Especially when it comes to food waste, which is considered a taboo topic, governmental and nongovernmental organizations or associations do not speak too directly to the consumer and do not insert too strong elements (be they text or images) in the communication messages that can impact their sensitivity, because otherwise they would be tend to avoid the exposure to the scary or negative stimulus to avoid feeling wrong.

They must be very careful and try to get to the problem gradually, perhaps by inserting in the images they decide to launch some signs corresponding to particular contents or values, that can help the consumer to develop awareness or to act properly. Signs are taken from a cultural code, identifiable as forms of knowledge invested with the image of culture. As a matter of fact, as already underlined in the illustration of the *brandscape* model, it is clear that communication is approached differently, depending on the geographic region considered and the relative culture.

The interpretation of these signs is guided, through taglines or captions that ensure that the consumer's attention does not wander but that he gets to the point. According to L. Oswald "The symbolic function of goods transforms ordinary things into signifiers for abstract concepts"¹³⁵.

¹³⁴ Source: Bianchi C. (2011) 'Semiotic approaches to advertising texts and strategies: narrative, passion, marketing''

¹³⁵ Source: Oswald L. (2012) Marketing semiotics : signs, strategies and brand value; Oxford
Thus, a sign has a dual structure:



Figure 25: the dual structure of the sign
Source: L. Oswald

Therefore, the goal of semiotic analysis is to analyze the sign and understand how this contributes to the production of a meaning. The sign, that is what the consumer sees in a commercial, links a material signifier (that is something visible, such as a word, image, gesture) to a set of associations in the consumer's mind. Advertising plays a key role in creating and sustaining the association of a marketing signifier and meaning, that is a concept, over time. Brand signifiers participate in a much more complex semiotic system linking brand symbolism and what the brand wants to communicate to cultural codes structuring meaning production in a given market for a given target: this means that the S/s association is ruled by social convention and perpetuated by habit, thus it is dynamic.

Advertising also regulates the organization of brands in the social space, where they influence behavior and experience. This is why many of the print communications on food waste are positioned in strategic points of the city such as in the streets or in the vicinity of supermarkets...or sometimes inside them, as in the case of the campaign ''Inglorious fruit and vegetables'' launched by ''Intermarchè'' in France, as mentioned above.

3.1.1 BOROUME CASE

The first case I would like to analyse is a print image comes from Boroume, a Greek non-profit organization committed to reducing food waste and the distribution of surplus food for charity. Since its beginning in 2011 more than 2 million meals of surplus food have been donated to welfare organizations: it is a communication hub and uses an innovative approach to saving food thus creating "bridges" between food donors which are those who have surplus food and wish to give it away, and welfare organizations (welfare institutions, soup-kitchens, municipal social services). In fact, the pillar of this organization is the development of a social movement that helps to reduce food waste and at the same time increase nutritional support to people in need based on volunteer support.

This organization approaches the issue of food waste and the fight against food insecurity holistically through several programs: some of them, such as ''Boroume at school'' are focused on the education of children in the classrooms, some programs, such as ''Stop food waste'' are spread on the social media with the aim of generating awareness about food waste, thus have a focus on young consumers, some others instead focus on the reduction of food waste at the farmer's level, such as ''Boroume at the farmer's market''.

In fact, a lot of food produced in the fields is discarded because it does not matches the aesthetic standards even If it is still perfectly edible: Boroume coordinates volunteers who will save the produce from a selected farmers market and distribute it to those people that face food insecurity, thus solving also the moral implication of waste. In particular, food is generally discarded both by the retailer and both *by the consumer* because of "discrimination" so because it does not respect certain standards.

Before focusing on the practical example, I would like to pay attention to the organization's logo (Figure 26) It has *per se* a particular structure that anticipates and summarizes many aspects: it was not created on the basis of mere creativity and imagination of the designers but its structure has a particular meaning that is part of the discourse of the brand itself: in fact, the 'Boroume' name in Greek means 'we can': this suggests that the organization believe that it is possible to fight against food waste involving people from different part of the supply chain, from the farmer to the youngest consumer.

And the company wants to give hope and, with its name, alludes to the fact that it is possible to make something good for others. In fact, at the heart of Boroume there are many volunteers and people that support each other every day in their activity and in the initiatives against food waste.



Figure 26 : Boroume logo

In this regard, the logo has an extreme richness and semiotic complexity: its shape represents the basic ideology of the movement: the creation of a community that fights food waste to do good to the planet and to others. For this reason, I analyzed the structure of the logo itself: it is represented by a very simple image from

a visual point of view, but it has a wide meaning from a symbolic perspective: in fact it consists of a contour line that intertwines and builds a closed structure.

It is orange and has a white background while the words "*Boroume: saving food-saving lives*" are light blue. The first is a color that is often used to highlight or signal or a danger (just think of road signs): in this case, orange wants to attract the consumer's attention and induce him to understand the danger of the food waste phenomenon. However, at the same time orange is recognized also as a warm color and, as such, is associated with the positivity of ideas, health, sociability and vitality. And certainly, on the one hand, these are feelings that Boroume wants to communicate: it wants the fight against food waste to be a pleasant, light activity that does not scare the consumer.

The color of the text, which is light blue, in accordance with what has been said, is associated with reflection and interiorization. It completes the picture and therefore wants to induce the consumer to reflect on his actions and his careless behavior.

Returning to the structure of the logo, it is characterized by horizontal and vertical curves that intertwines: it represents two individuals who, despite being two different entities (there are two ''points'' representing two heads) are composed of the same line, intertwine and unite almost as if to embrace each other. This structure symbolizes the fact that people, even if they are two separate entities, are able to come together to create a community that aims at defeating one of the biggest intimidation to our future: food waste.

Focusing on the practical case, in 2021 the organization Boroume launched a campaign '*TRASH*'' related to the Public Interest, containing 4 media assets whose focus was the intolerance against ugly vegetables. It was launched by the ad agency, Out to Lunch, in Greece in October 2021. The name of the initiative is not chosen by chance: in fact people treat fruit and vegetables that do not respect some standards, like trash, only because of their looks, not their nutritional worth, and this leads to an enormous amount of food waste. In particular, discrimination does not only have to do with humans.

I have decided to analyze this specific one because it is a good expression of the social movement of which Boroume is one of the main actor: saving unvaluable food and helping to put it back into the value chain by illustrating directly to the consumer its potential. Boroume wants the consumer to join the community by making him understand that they ''can'' make something good for the planet and for the others. The print advertising shows a series of ugly vegetables that are verbally abused and they have human-like traits that make them sure that the consumer is able to identify himself.



Figure 27: Trash campaign

It is possible to see that in all the print advertising, although they present different subjects, there are the same characteristics. The first things that the consumers' gaze perceives are the images that represent ugly and deformed vegetables, which are real as people often see them at the market. They have shapes or traits that personify them therefore making similar to human faces or, to make a historical connection, to masks that characterize the Greek tragedies. They have square and coarse features and they almost seem to complain. However, they have bright colors that are normally used to express vitality, positivity and joy .. but, from what has been said, the subjects represented certainly do not express these feelings! The use of these shades is certainly motivated by the fact that the advertisers want to make the content visible and impactful: the bright colors in fact attract the attention and curiosity of the watcher faster than dull colors, and are more effective in triggering the interest of the consumer who, seeing this poster print for the street or online, will stop and observe.

They are accompanied by giant taglines, positioned on the top of the print advertising, also these ones highlighted in bright colors to be more visible, that " insult " the poor subject represented which is considered non-conforming to aesthetic standards and appears to be not healthy or safe to eat.

"MONSTER', cites, for example, the tagline of the poster representing the deformed carrot, which seems to have a discouraged look, as it is aware of its sad fate. The carrot looks like a real person, not only because its features are very similar to a human face, but also because its shape is irregular: it has several branches that resemble, from the point of view of personification, arms and legs of a person who seems to collapse, in fact, with a discouraged tone.

" UGLY ", on the other hand, mentions the poster representing a deformed potato that looks like a wrinkled old man with a big nose and a pouting face.

"USELESS ", on the other hand, is the tagline that accompanies a deformed pepper that seems to have a wide open mouth and open eyes. It seems to reproduce a mask of the tragedies of ancient Greece and almost seems to be complaining about the fact that the consumer does not expect it to achieve the intended purpose.

All these subjects, just like the name of the campaign also suggests, are considered to be "trash" and so as things that are no longer wanted or needed. Retailers would tend to refuse to offer these products in the fruit and vegetables department or on the shelves, and at the same way consumers would be afraid to buy or ingest ugly produces as, on the basis of the ugliness penalty effect, unattractive produces are also considered as less tasty or less healthy.

All of these subjects, of course, are "signs". Every sign, as seen above is the perfect relationship between a signifier and a meaning: in particular, in this case the material signifier is the image of the disfigured vegetable

with bright colour and it carries a particular meaning, so the consumer creates a set of association in his mind that refers to the concept of NON EDIBILITY - DISCRIMINATION

So, until now, the consumer has developed a negative attitude toward whatever he sees, be it a pepper, a carrot, a potato.

After that, the consumer's gaze falls to the bottom left, where there is another textual element which is written on a crumpled piece of paper, which appears to have been thrown away (what a coincidence!):

"Don't let anyone treat them like trash"

The composition of the textual support and the sentence itself have a key objective and, more than all the other elements, contribute to sensitizing the consumer. In fact, reading it, he understands that he assumes the thematic role of a "guardian" or a " warrior " that has to protect something (' 'Don't let anyone...'') since he has to make sure that nobody considers food as garbage: he has to defend the food that is being denigrated and attached and discriminated. The advertiser and therefore the organization Boroume speak to the consumer directly, and use an imperative tone as if to express a command mixed with a prayer. In fact, Boroume wants to intercede with the consumer so that he can change his behavior and can begin to look at food and therefore waste with different eyes: not like trash. In this way, reading the quote, he feels guilty since he realizes that he is an unworthy "guardian" or "warrior" and a superficial person because he would tend to throw that food away or consider it inedible only on the basis of their aesthetic appearance.

The meaning that the consumer attributes to what he sees changes, in the light of this caption that opens the mind and induces the consumer to reflect: now, the ugliness penalty loses its effectiveness and the sign acquires a positive connotation ad and it is linked to the concept of edibility. Simple words, belonging to a common but formal language, can trigger in the consumer a mature consideration of his ability to choose and can induce him to revise his ideas.

3.2 SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF A COMMERCIAL

The second case I would like to analyse is a commercial but the semiotic approach to take up is different. In fact, in order to break down a spot it is necessary to resort to a particular type of analysis: the decomposition into sequences.

This activity is carried out with the help of a technical breakdown sheet that allows to identify relevant units and elements arranged within the text. Through a grid it is possible to carry out a detailed observation and note all the components that play a strategic role, never casual, in the brand's activity. In particular, the commercial in question is divided into sequences.

The sequence is a narrative unit, that is the set of several scenes linked by a unit of action and content; for each, the ''duration'' and the " visual column" are indicated, which include: a detailed description of the contents of the same, the definition of the width of the frame and the camera angle. In addition, the most used lighting and colors must be described. As said several times in a commercial the camera movements, the use of the soundtrack, the dynamics that regulate the different points of view, the editing, the actors chosen, play a decisive role in the construction of the overall sense of the commercial and are the subject of study. Furthermore, for each sequence, the soundtrack must be indicated with the description of the type of sound heard and any notes.

After breaking down the commercial, it is appropriate to use a more reflective approach to understand how the factors used can create meaning and can be functional for the promotion of the product or idea.

3.2.1.COMMERCIAL INTRODUCTION

The semiotic analysis will be conducted on the commercial "Make Taste Not Waste" launched at the SoFi Stadium in Inglewood in California, on February 13, 2022 by the Hellmann's brand in the USA during the Superbowl final that saw the Los Angeles Rams face off against the Cincinnati Bengas. The brand for the second year in a row has chosen to expose itself on the theme of food waste with an attention-grabbing advert during a national holiday in which carefree, lightness, food abundance reign supreme ... and excessive waste, too!

In fact, it ranks as the second largest food consumption day of the year and in turn it is the second largest food waste day of the year for Americans.

The brand has particularly exposed itself to a crucial and delicate issue that could have annoyed Americans or could have generated a negative word of mouth, since they do not want to be reprimanded or blamed for changing their behavior, especially during moments of leisure and fun. Hellmann's, however, saw this moment as an opportunity to inspire people and didn't want to waste it.

However, it was necessary for the brand to use a precise and targeted approach, which couldn't be around guilting or scolding people around their existing behaviors. And it hit the spot! (indeed, it made touchdown) In fact, the campaign that focuses on emotional uplift and entertain recorded at first sight 7 billion earned

impressions, brand love for the spot and coverage from outlets, like 4 stars in Adweek and rankings for some of the best Superbowl spots in People Magazine¹³⁶

The communication agency that took care of the structuring and launch of the campaign is Wunderman Thompson and the famous and well-known actors involved are, exactly, Jerod Mayo, ex legendary linebacker and Pete Davinson, the comedian and director of ''Saturday night live'' show and other extras, like the young guy, the mother, the grandma. It has a duration of 54 seconds.

This spot is part of Hellmann's discourse and a whole series of initiatives that entice the consumer, in a playful and interactive way, not to waste food at home and use it in other aspects, as also analyzed above.

The spot was preceded by a mini-spot that has been launched on social media in the previous days to introduces the character: we're talking about Jerod Mayo, legendary Patriots linebacker and Super Bowl champion turned professional football coach. In this intro-commercial he is on his sofa with his family and is contacted via a phone call from Hellmann's and he agrees to accomplish its mission: tackle food waste.

Following, Terry Tate is shown, an ex American football linebacker who has been an ambassador of Reebook, and was the main character of a spot launched during 2003 Superbowl of that year. In the old commercial it was clear that his strong manners help to solve the problem of employee unproductivity. In fact, he knocks down those people who do not work hard, as if to make a touchdown with the aim of educating them and help increase productivity inside an office.

In 2022 commercial, he is a member of Hellmann's special operation and entrusts Mayo with the important mission. He says " Make me proud, baby! " ... the quote and the reference to Tate are not accidental but they hint at what will happen.

In fact, as emerges from the analysis, Hellmann's spot calls on the linebacker Jerod Mayo to literally and physically tackle those throwing out still eatable food in their kitchens. He invites the watcher to join and to support the "MAYO x MAYO Food Waste Tackling Team ". During the commercial, the champion faces different characters (like the guy, the mother, grandmother) and, one by one, jumps on them as they are about to throw the food in the garbage. With his strong and funny manners he wants to teach them a life lesson. In fact, when he knocks them down, as if to make a touchdown, he suggests an alternative, intelligent and sustainable way to save the food they are throwing away (grilled cheese, potato salad, fritatta).

¹³⁶ Source: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjUdwot3vqE</u>

3.2.2 COMMERCIAL SCOMPOSITION

N*framing	Duration	Visual column	Soundtrack
1	0.00-0.05	Content description: Jerold Mayo is arranging his	Speech: an external
		football gloves in the locker room with a proud air.	voice describes the
		Suddenly he turns his back and shows his sport uniform	scene.
		where his surname, "Mayo " and his signature number	Background music
		"51" are stamped on. He is ready to act. Before to go,	
		he grabs the Mayonnaise jar, which is placed on the	
		bench.	
		Frame width: <i>mid-shot</i> (the footballer is shot from the	
		waist up), then close-up (vision of the t-shirt and	
		product image). This last framing is used to underline	
		the actor's surname, which creates a word pun with the	
		product name, and the product itself, which will be the	
		real main character.	
		Camera angle: horizontal. Jerod Mayo is filmed first	
		from the front $(0-0.02)$ then from behind $(0.03-0.04)$.	
		Finally there is a <i>close</i> view (<i>close up shot</i>) on the	
		product that is taken from the bench on which it is	
		placed.	
		Lighting: artificial light illuminates the dressing room	
		where the protagonist is preparing. The light is warm.	
		Color : Warm colors predominate, such as the yellow	
		of the t-shirt and the brown of the wood in the	
		background. Another color present is blue, which	
		recalls the brand logo. In the final seconds the white	
		light prevails on the product (of the same color) which	
		indicates ''rebirth'' and alludes to change.	
		Internal composition: The scene takes place inside the	
		changing room of a stadium, probably the one where	
		the Superbowl final will be held, and the protagonist is	
		alone.	
		Transition: clear cut	

2	0.06.0.11		
2	0.06-0.11	Content description: Initially, a boy is seen entering	-
		the kitchen from the right and holding a bag in his hand.	character speaks.
		He $(0,07)$ reaches out his hand and opens the lid of the	Background noises in
		basket with his foot. At the moment when the bag is	the moment of the "
		about to fall, the boy is run over by the footballer who	touchdown "
		knocks him down (as if to make a touchdown) and yells	
		at him, as if to block him. The two fall to the ground.	
		Mayo stands up first and resolutely suggests that he use	
		what he is throwing in a creative way.	
		Frame width: The sequence opens with a <i>full-field</i>	
		shot type (0.06-0.09) as the kitchen is framed as a	
		whole. When the footballer arrives on the scene, (0.09-	
		(0.11) the shot type is <i>medium</i> as he is represented from	
		the waist up while dispensing advice.	
		Camera angle: horizontal (0.06-0.09) and from below	
		(0.09-0.11). In these last seconds the protagonist is	
		taken from the perspective of the boy thrown to the	
		ground, as the consumer has to identify himself fully.	
		Lighting: the kitchen is illuminated by the natural	
		sunlight coming from outside.	
		Color : in the first part of the sequence (0.06-0.09) cold	
		colors prevail: sunlight illuminate a bit the room. This	
		is to underline the fact that the environment is a calm,	
		familiar and an ordinary place. In the second part of the	
		scene, the background continues to have cold tones but	
		the footballer is framed closely with bright colors (the	
		ones of its uniform): yellow, which communicates	
		energy and blue, which instead favors meditation.	
		Internal composition: the scene takes place inside a	
		large kitchen of an American house, given its structure.	
		Transition: clear cut	
3	0.12-0.19	Content description : initially (0.12-0.14) we see a	Speech: the main
		woman, a mother in reality, as there is a child doing his	character speaks.
		homework leaning behind the table in the background.	Background noises in
		She is in her kitchen and is wearing crutches as she is	
	1	-	

	1		
		injured and is slowly advancing towards the garbage	the moment of the "
		can, located in the foreground, almost in the center of	touchdown "
		the room. She is about to throw away some leftovers	
		from food preparation and she is smiling. The moment	
		she is about to throw what she has in her hand, she is	
		overwhelmed by Jerod Mayo who knocks her out (as if	
		to make a touchdown) coming from the right and yells	
		at her. The two fall to the ground. (0.015) The son is	
		framed who, with his mouth open, is incredulous at the	
		vision of the champion in his kitchen and at his gesture.	
		Mayo stands up first and, looking at the woman, with	
		her arms outstretched, suggests an alternative method	
		of using food. Then he leaves the room, going to the	
		right.	
		Frame width: the sequence opens with a <i>full-field</i> shot	
		(0.12-0.15) as the kitchen is framed as a whole. The	
		child, on the other hand, is presented at <i>mid shot</i> (0.16)	
		while he is sitting writing in the notebook. After this	
		moment, the <i>full-field</i> shot returns (0.17-0.19)	
		Camera angle: horizontal.	
		Lighting: the kitchen is illuminated by the sunlight	
		coming from outside.	
		Color: cold colors prevail (such as light blue of the	
		kitchen, grey of woman's t-shirt), indicating that the	
		scene reproduced is an ordinary one, in which calm and	
		routine activities reign. The colors of the footballer's	
		shirt are bright colors.	
		Internal composition: the scene takes place inside a	
		large kitchen of an American house, given its structure.	
		Transition: clear cut	
4	0,20-0,24	Content description: A grandmother is rummaging in	Speech: the main
		the refrigerator, looking for something edible. She has	character speaks.
		Hellmann's mayonnaise in her fridge, positioned on the	Background noises in
		left, and in the center there is a container with leftovers,	the moment of the "
		which she moves to the right with an impatient and	touchdown "
		1	

			
		disappointed air. (0.20-0.22) Suddenly a voice is heard:	
		it is Mayo who arrives and overwhelms her	
		grandmother, as if to do touchdow. The two fall to the	
		ground. (0.22) . At the same time we see the grandfather	
		in the background who, impassive, continues to read	
		the newspaper.	
		Frame width : the sequence opens with a <i>close-up</i> shot:	
		the camera shoots from a perspective inside the	
		refrigerator and the subject is shot from the shoulders	
		up. When the grandmother falls, the shot continues to	
		represent the room and the table with the chairs and the	
		seated grandfather, but it becomes a <i>full-field</i> .	
		Camera angle: horizontal.	
		Lighting: the scene is artificially illuminated by the	
		light bulb inside the fridge. The grandmother, who is	
		closest, is illuminated by the latter. The grandfather, on	
		the other hand, remains at the back of the room which	
		is in the half-light, illuminated by the little sunlight.	
		Color : cold colors prevail, indicating that the	
		environment represented is an ordinary, in which calm	
		and routine activities reign. In the initial moments, the	
		light from the refrigerator illuminates the jar of	
		mayonnaise from the left, wrapped in a white light that	
		symbolizes the theme of change.	
		Internal composition : The scene takes place inside a	
		kitchen and it is filmed from inside a refrigerator	
		Transition: clear cut	
5	0,25-0,30	Content description : The scene is dynamic. It shows	Speech: the main
	.,	a boy running into the hallway of his house and passing	character speaks.
		several doors, holding a pack of green vegetables in his	Background noises
		hand. He escapes from Mayo who yells at him and then	when the glass breaks
		catches him and knocks him out, breaking the glass of	and in the moment of
		a door, as if to make a touchdown. The two fall to the	the " touchdown "
		ground (0.28) Mayo, who is on top of him, whispers in	
		his ear the perfect recipe for cooking those spinach he	

		was throwing away. The how looks at him in	[]
		was throwing away. The boy looks at him in	
		amazement.	
		Frame width : initially (0.25-0.26), while the two	
		actors are running, a <i>mid shot</i> view prevails, as the	
		"runners" are represented from the waist up. Later,	
		when Mayo takes the boy, a <i>close-up</i> shot prevails: they	
		are represented from the shoulders up.	
		Camera angle: horizontal.	
		Lighting : the scene is illuminated by sunlight entering	
		the corridor windows and by a light bulbs in the atrium	
		of the house, which follows the corridor. When the	
		actors fall to the ground, the external lighting of the sun	
		still prevails.	
		Colors: the warm colors of the light prevail over the	
		grey tones of the background, underlining the vitality	
		of the scene and the activism of the actions.	
		Internal composition: the scene took place inside a	
		house: in a corridor, first (0.25-0.27) and on the atrium	
		floor, then (0.28-0.30)	
		Transition: clear cut	
6	0,31-0,50	Content description: in this sequence a party is	Speeh
		represented: the guests in the background are	The protagonists
		conversing. In the foreground there are Pete Davinson	speak.
		and his mother while eating. (0.31-0.35) The comedian	Background noises
		grabs and tastes a crunchy nachos that breaks and falls,	while Pete Davinson
		in part, on the floor. Suddenly (0.36) he turns around as	chews the crunchy
		he feels that someone is coming, as he hears a noise: it	nachos and in the
		is Mayo who is taking the run. Pete blocks him in time	moment of the
		as he realizes he wants to lash out at them and, on this	"touchdown"
		purpose, he informs him that his mother already tackles	
		food waste, so he needn't worry. So Mayo leaves (0.41)	
		and Pete comments on his fitness. But Mayo goes back	
		and knocks Pete down, apologizing and saying it's his	
		job! Pete answers and, exhausted, rests his head on the	
		floor	

		Frame width: the scene opens up with a <i>focused shot</i>	
		on the food of the banquet and then, moving away	
		slowly, it becomes <i>a close-up shot</i> on the comedian that	
		eats (0.31-0.33). As Pete turns, the shot becomes	
		<i>medium</i> -level: Mayo is represented from the waist up	
		running towards the banquet, conversing with the other	
		two characters, walking away and returning to the	
		scene to knock Pete out. After that (0,44), when Mayo	
		takes the Pete, a <i>close-up</i> shot from above prevails:	
		they are represented from the shoulders up. In	
		particular, Mayo's perspective prevails this time.	
		Camera angle : horizontal, from <i>above</i> (0,44)	
		Lighting : the salon is illuminated from the outside.	
		This time the light is very strong.	
		Colors : bright colors prevail: they, in fact, indicate the	
		vitality of the convivial and festive moment.	
		Internal composition : the scene takes place inside a	
		hall decorated for a party: in the background there are	
		groups of people and in the foreground, in addition to	
		the three protagonists, there is also a table full of dishes	
		and, on the left, a jar of Hellmann's mayonnaise.	
		Transition: clear cut	
7	0,50-0,54	Content description: at the end of the commercial, the	Speech.
		Hellmann's logo and the claim: ''Make taste not waste	Mayo yells the claim
		". In closing, Jerod Mayo throws himself on the floor	loudly, almost as if he
		and, this time, pushes the words " not waste " to the	were at the stadium
		right, as if to eliminate him and defeat everything.	
		Frame width: full field shot: the room is entirely	
		filmed. In the background there is the living room of	
		the previous scene and the claim.	
		Camera angle: horizontal	
		Lighting: the living room is illuminated from the	
		outside. Colors: bright colors prevail on the bottom and	
		the claim is white. Internal composition: the scene	
		takes place inside the hall.	
		-	

3.2.3 COMMERCIAL ANALYSIS

As anticipated, semiotic analysis involves the decomposition of the spot into sequences.

In general, the brand presents itself in a spectacular way and by portraying scenes from everyday life and adding a " funny " denunciation of a series of routinary actions and common biases people have that are a threat to our planet.

The commercial, as it will be explained, attempts the mediation of the two opposites side of the tension identified: the real (thing in the fridge that people throw away because they are ugly) and artificial (the final product, that is perfect, just like the ones illustrated in the last scenes). It addresses the desire to avoid throwing away leftovers with another one, which instead is the purely aesthetic and non-nutritive need to have something beautiful to consume.

The first commercial sequence is short (0.00-0.005) and serves as an introduction: it, as mentioned, is linked to the mini spot and illustrates the role of the footballer: he is no longer a sport man but an activist against food waste. Jerold Mayo is filmed as he is arranging his football gloves in the locker room with air, ready for the next match. Suddenly he turns his back and shows the back of his sports uniform where his surname, "Mayo", is printed with his typical number '51". His surname creates a word pun: he, in fact, is no longer a footballer but a "waste warrior" by Hellmann's, a MAYOnnaise brand: the new slogan becomes "Mayo X Mayo ": this time the champion does not take sides in the Patriots team but in favor of the brand one. He is ready to act. But, before he goes, he remembers to bring mayonnaise, an essential tool to solve the problem. The scene takes place inside a dressing room and warm colors prevail, such as brown and yellow that express positivity and energy. They are used strategically as they anticipate that change is about to take place. The color yellow in psychology, in fact, is associated with those who face challenges with joy, with a positive attitude and are not afraid of changes. Although the room is illuminated by artificial light, another type of white natural light takes over the scene and hits the jar of mayonnaise in the final seconds (0.04), as if to indicate that that object can be the solution, the "quid " 'which is missing to solve the social problem that is presenting: food waste. White lights, in general, are often used in advertising to symbolize a "new beginning", rebirth or to place faith in what is "hit ".

Furthermore, the colors of Jerod Mayo's t-shirt are not random: of course, yellow and blue reflect the colors of the brand logo but, at the same time, they have strategic significance. Yellow, as mentioned, indicates

energy and communicates lightness. Scientific studies show that it acts positively on people's mind by instilling happiness, therefore in this case it helps to generate a positive attitude on consumer. Instead, blue is in some ways an "opposite " color in the sense that it communicates calm and serenity. Personally, I would define it " complementary " in the sense that it favors meditation and therefore reflection on the subject of food waste and helps to remove the tensions accumulated during the day.

The second sequence, which extends up to 11 sec, is set in an American-style kitchen, with a central island. In the center of the frame there is a garbage can. From the right a boy enters who, walking calmly, holds a bag in his hand and reaches out to the basket, as if to throw it away.

Sunlight hardly illuminates the room, so cold tones prevail. The choice of colors is not accidental since they underline the fact that the framed environment is a calm, familiar and ordinary place. In fact, the boy is carrying out a more than normal and routine action: throwing food into the household.

This atmosphere is interrupted when Mayo breaks into the scene, more precisely in the moment in which the boy is opening the lid of the bin with his foot and is reaching out to throw out the food. The poor boy is the first victim as he is overwhelmed by the footballer who knocks him down (as if to make a touchdown) and yells at him, as if to block him by saying "Don't toss that! ", A colloquial and not at all formal expression. The two fall to the ground. Mayo stands up first and resolutely suggests that he use what he is throwing in a creative way.

It is important to note the shot. These latter seconds feature a shot representing the footballer from the waist up. He is filmed from below, therefore from the perspective of the boy who, conceptualizing and representing the audience, is stretched out and destroyed because he has performed a careless action.

The third sequence, on the other hand, is longer and lasts 7 seconds: it is set in a kitchen, also in this case, it has an American style, which is framed in full. It is day, probably it is 5 pm. since the sun coming in from the outside is very shy. In fact, cold tones prevail in the scene to indicate that the environment taken is an ordinary environment, in which calm and routine activities reign. The woman is a mother, considering the fact that in the background there is a child who is doing his homework leaning on the table.

She is wearing crutches because she is injured and she is cooking dinner, probably. She turns to reach the rubbish bin, again located in the foreground, slightly moved to the left and is about to throw away, with a happy and completely natural air, the leftovers from food preparation.

These cues and this scenario also want to underline how throwing away food is a normal action, which an individual performs without thinking about it and, above all, without feeling guilty. Indeed, he does it smiling and with a calm air. The presence of the child is also strategic: in general, when dangerous activities are carried out, people tend not to show them to children as, being very sensitive, they could replicate them. For example, horror movies are not shown to children because they could replicate dangerous actions. In this case

the mother quietly carries out the harmful and dangerous action for the planet in front of the child, without thinking that he, in the future, will be able to repeat it.

But, this tranquility is interrupted by the famous sportsman who, with his manner and his actions, emphasizes that it is not normal for that action and attitude to be normal. In fact, at the exact moment in which she is about to throw away what she has in her hand, she is overwhelmed by Jerod Mayo who knocks her out (as if to make a touchdown) coming from the right and yells at her `` Not on my watch ": he absolutely does not want to witness such an act. The two fall to the ground, along with some objects, given the noise caused. The child is framed and, with his mouth open, he stops coloring and writing as he is incredulous at the vision of the champion in his kitchen and at his violent but at the same time funny gesture. Mayo stands up first and, looking at the woman, with open arms, almost impatient and incredulous, suggests an alternative method to use the food she was throwing away. Then he exits the room, going to the right. The consumer, this time, looks at the scene, for the entire duration of the commercial, from the front.

The fourth sequence instead, which lasts from 0.20 to 0.24 sec, is set, again, in a kitchen but this time the perspective is different. The camera seems to be inside the refrigerator, so the consumer looks at the actors from this perspective, as if it were a piece of food waiting to be taken. The scene is lit almost exclusively by the artificial light of the appliance; the kitchen in the background is almost in the dark and here the cold tones prevail. In fact, the sequence shows a grandmother who is rummaging in the refrigerator looking for something edible, despite it being full of things: Hellmann's mayonnaise appears on the left while in the center there is a container with leftovers. The position of the mayonnaise is strategic. According to the "F-pattern " model, it is more convenient to put the most relevant information on the top-left part of the screen (tv screen, computer screen ...) as consumers tend to scan data and images from left to right: consequently the first thing a consumer sees is the mayonnaise which, in addition, is also more illuminated and surrounded by white light, which symbolizes the concept of " rebirth " (of the food to be reinvented). In this context, the concept of " fridge blindess " is best represented: people think they have nothing to eat when in reality their fridges or shelves are full of edible things.

The woman, in fact, sets the container aside on the right with an impatient and disappointed air. During this gesture, a voice is heard in the background: it is Mayo who arrives and overwhelms the poor grandmother, as if to do touchdown and yell at her. The two fall to the ground. The champion doesn't give Grandma any tips or advice on how to recycle food, probably because he just wants her to understand that she should get back to her old habits. In fact, past generations tended to be more scrupulous in handling food as they had an expereinced period of discharge.

The scene ends with the vision of the grandfather in the background who, impassive, continues to read the newspaper. This creates a fun effect. And, in reality, conceptualizing the consumer target, he represents the indifference towards the fight against food waste.

The fifth sequence, on the other hand, is very short and at the same time it is dynamic. Indeed, it shows a boy running in the hallway of his house and overcoming several obstacles while holding a pack of green vegetables in his hand. The light, probably from the early hours of the day given its high intensity, illuminates the characters of this scene. In the background there is a very rhythmic music that accompanies the escape of the boy who reaches the hall of the house which is, instead, illuminated by the bulbs of some lamps. He runs away from Mayo who yells at him " Don't throw away that spinach! " in an aggressive tone. To catch the boy, Mayo throws himself and breaks a glass window, which causes a loud noise that interrupts the rhythmic background music. Then he knocks him to the ground, falling on his shoulders. The music stops and on the floor, framed in the foreground, the footballer changes tone of voice and whispers in his ear the perfect recipe for cooking those spinach he was throwing away. The boy looks at him in amazement, with eyes half closed given the fright of the impact.

The penultimate sequence is the longest and most complex: it represents a party and there is pop music in the background. The scene opens with a focus on food: a beautiful banquet is initially framed, full of well-arranged, well-prepared and colorful dishes. In general, bright colors prevail in the scene: they, in fact, indicate the vitality of the convivial and festive moment. In the background there are some people, maybe party's guests that do not touch food. It is eaten with the eyes by the spectator.

Gradually from food we move on to the actor, Pete Davidson the very famous American comedian, who has a high positive popularity in America and who is the only one grabbing a nachos. He is filmed munching and enjoying crunchy food, part of which ends up on the floor.

Suddenly he hears the sound of footsteps, turns to the left and sees Mayo taking a run. Pete blocks him in time by shouting "Whoa, whoa, whoa", in a more than friendly and confidential way, as he realizes that he wants to lash out at him. At this moment, the shot takes up the whole room and a woman appears next to the actor and the footballer, probably Pete's mother. He informs the waste warrior that his mother, Amy Davidson, already tackles food waste, so he needn't worry and can leave them alone.

So Mayo, reassured, goes away. Pete comments on his fitness, convinced that he has avoided the danger. But Mayo goes back and knocks Pete down, apologizing and saying it's his job and he needs to do it! In this case, Pete represents the target of consumers: he, like all of us, is convinced that the problem is not so serious and that saying in words that one is committed is the solution. But Mayo, again, confirms that action is needed and he is willing to use hard ways to fight and to succeed in his mission.

Pete responds from the ground with a grunt "Very hittable!" and he proves once again he can laugh at himself ... and he can make people smile, too.

The fact that the footballer in the commercial suggests, every time he touchdowns, a different recipe ("Make a frittata!", "You can make grilled cheese with that bread " ...) anticipates in the brand's *discourse* a phenomenon that in the web scenario is establishing especially in recent years: the tutorial.

Especially since 2020, the year of the pandemic in which people were forced to stay at home and they ''tried their hand'' at activities in the kitchen, the *discourse* on food has been further enriched and has included new formats such as mini reels posted on Instagram, videos on TikTok in which young influencers amaze the public with their recipes, TV programs or even TV channels (Food Network, channel 33 in Italy). The surprising thing is that the speakers are not only experts in the sector as chefs but also simple users who personalize traditional dishes or give voice to their creativity, illustrating the steps necessary to create the perfect dish both aesthetically and both from the point of view of taste.

In fact, what Mayo wants to communicate in the commercial, and therefore what the brand vehicolates, is a *guide* for the consumer that should direct him towards more rational choices, taking into consideration *first of all* that the tool that enables them to make beautiful (and therefore tasty) dishes and to create the perfect recipe, is mayonnaise, *their product*. Then the focus moves on food waste, which is a consequent benefit.

The tutorial format is also repeated by the Too Good To Go page where, as we shall see, greater emphasis is placed on leftover, a generally forgotten and devalued product that acquires meaning and a new life.

The last sequence does not contain any other victims: the Hellmann's logo and the claim (''Make taste not waste") are shown on the background of the living room of the previous scene. In closing, Jerod Mayo throws himself on the floor and, this time, pushes the words `` not waste " to the right, as if to eliminate it and completely defeat the terrible problem while screaming, as if he were in the stadium.

The fact that "taste" is mentioned *before* "waste" is not casual: the mayonnaise is the perfect tool that transforms ugly and unusual leftovers in something beautiful and edible, thus enabling the transition from imperfect to perfect. And then, as a consequence, waste is avoided.

In order to give a better comprehension of the spot, I have decided to use also other models that would help to analyze the actions that take place in the story. The first one is the Enunciation model while after I used the Actantial one.

Each text is the product of an enunciative process, called *debrayage*. From the semiotic perspective, the dynamics of enunciation concerns "the way in which a subject, starting from the expressive potential set up within an abstract and collective linguistic system, concretely produces an utterance (in Italian ''enunciato'')" (Peverini 2012)¹³⁷.

In particular, it is necessary to emphasize the difference between the empirical subjects that are outside the text which are the *emittente* and the *destinatario*. In advertising, however, the *emittente* and the *destinatario* are inscribed in the form of simulacra that represent the *enunciatore* and *enunciatario* or the interlocutors of the communication process. They represent the role of the company or the profile of its target within a campaign and this process is known in semiotics as *embrayage*.

The enunciative mechanism has a very specific structure. Volli (2003) distinguishes very specific roles: an empirical *emittente* E1, which generally identifies with the company, represents itself in the form of a delegated figure E2, or the brand, and attempts to portray to its *destinatario* or viewer (D1) in the form of an ideal target. This happens through the presence in the text of the brand through a (E3) character who is ready to support the (D3) buyer in the act of purchase. (Peverini 2012).

I rebuilt this model for Hellmann's commercial as follows:



Figure 28 : Enunciation mechanism customized to Hellmsnn's case

Source: Volli (2003)

- E1: The company : Unilever
- E2: The brand, which is the representation of the company: Hellmann's
- E3: Jerold Mayo, the waste warrior
- D3: Final Buyer
- D2: Generation Z and their parents
- D1: People that value aesthetic appearance

¹³⁷ Source: Peverini P. (2012) 'Imedia: strumenti di analisi semiotica'' Carrocci Editore

In Hellmann's brand commercial the enunciation model can be declined in the following way: the empirical author, that is the *emittente*, so the one that wants to send the message (E1) is the company Unilever which is the owner of the delegated issuer (E2), that is the brand Hellmann's that, as said, is one of the most active organizations in the fight against food waste as it implements several initiatives.

These two components are embodied in the footballer Jerod Mayo (E3), which is a waste warrior and the head of the movement #MakeTasteNotWaste that, of course, can help the consumer to transform unvaluable waste into a real resource. Indeed, he, with its strong and funny manners, has the role of opening the consumer's eyes and inducing him to reflect.

The brand and its 2022 initiative want to reach an addressee or *destinatario* (D1), which includes people with wasteful habits that prefer beautiful produces and discard those that do not comply with the standards, identified within an ideal target (D2) which coincides with Gen Z and their families.

In addition, the brand can reaffirm its presence in that role relationship scheme throughout a character E3, in this case it is represented by Jerod Mayo, which has the role of opening the consumer's eyes and inducing him to reflect thus establishing a new mindset that can lead the final buyer to fight food waste both in the act of purchase both in the post consumption activities.

In reality, the Volli model is a synthesis of the model proposed by Bettetini.



Figure 29: Enunciation mechanism customized to Hellmanns's case

Source: Bettetini (1984)

In order to explain the model in a practical and linear way, since at first glance it seems convoluted and complicated, I decided to update it to the Hellmann's case: the SET, *transmitting empirical subject*, is represented by the company that promotes the advertising message. The SEO, that is the *enunciated subject*, is what the advertising talks about: in this case it refers to the fight against food waste that should inspire people to reuse, reduce and recycle food they already have and they consider unvaluable. The *model enunciator subject* (SEM) consists in the idea that the consumer elaborates about the brand after seeing the advertising: it is the idea that an individual has about the brand activity. He could appreciate it or not: given the approach that the brand has decided to take and also considering the resonance of the campaign, in this case the SEM is surely positive.

The LM is the model reader (*modello letttore*) it is a kind of imaginary reader to whom the advertising text is addressed and who is capable of interpreting the meaning of the message because he has a coherent sociocultural background. In this case, the model reader is surely a person that gives great importance in his lifestyle to the aestehic. This figure is different from the SER, which is instead the *empirical recipient subject*, that is the final target of the spot. This includes all those people, both adults both Gen Z, who do not implement any type of sustainable behavior but they are sensitive toward sustainable issues and they understand that their wasteful and careless actions could have an impact on the planet and on their future.

The *subject enunciator*, the SO, is identified as it appears in the advertising text, and it is Mayo the footballer who addresses the public (SER). In the end, the *enunciating subject* (SA) is represented by the final consumer portrayed in the advertisement and in the case of Hellmann it coincides with all those actors such as the guys, the grandma, Pete Davinson... so all those people that have a careless behavior that should be improved.

3.4 THE SEMIO- NARRATIVE LEVEL3.4.1 THE CANONICAL NARRATIVE SCHEMA

Undoubtedly, Hellmann's commercial tells a story, albeit a short one, in which characters and objects play narrative roles.

Greimas (Greimas, 1974 and 1984; Greimas, Courtés, 2007) describes narrativity as an organized path by means of a canonical scheme subdivided into 4 phases, in which the narrative roles, defined as actants, are clearly distinguished, and trough the Actantial model.

The four moments are:

- MANIPULATION : this is the stage in which ''a sender convinces a recipient to act in a certain way or to desist from a behavior, adopting persuasive strategies''¹³⁸ (Peverini 2017)

¹³⁸ Source: Peverini P. (2012) 'Imedia: strumenti di analisi semiotica'' Carrocci Editore

- COMPETENCE: in this stage instead the subject, or the hero of the story, is called to acquire a series of skills necessary to carry out his task. The subject must develop skills not only from a practical but also an emotional point of view
- PERFORMANCE : in this moment the realization of the narrative program of the subject takes place and therefore he completes the task that defines his role at the moment of the story.
- SANCTION: in the final part, the activity performed by the subject is judged by the sender, and the evaluation can be positive or negative.

Applying the Canonical model to the commercial chosen, it is clear that in the manipulation phase the brand Hellmann's, throughout a set of funny actions performed by Jerold Mayo, persuades the wasteful consumer to "give a chance" to the food that is being discarded by showing them that it is possible to transform those food they usually tend to discard into something beautiful and complaint with aesthetic standards. In fact, as seen above, people tend to throw away food they have stored in the fridge or that do not have a perfect shape because they believes it is not edible anymore or because they do not know what to do with it or, again, because they believes that the food that has been in the fridge for a while, is dangerous for their health.

The sender encourage people (families, so both Gen Z, both their parents that value importance and believe that "beauty" is synonymous of "tasty") to take action and to change their attitude and behavior toward food.

The next step of the canonical model is the ''competence'' one and it is very crucial as it implies a change in consumer mindset: in fact, he understands that he needs to acquire a new perspective on the relationship with food and thus with the waste. He decides to abandon the convenience lifestyle which implies that the consumer tends to throw away the food he does not consume as he does not have the time and creativity or the skills to be able to reinvent it. The consumer has shifted his mindset, considering all the harmful consequences of his careless actions, and is moving toward more conscious (and creative) options that involve the reuse or recycle of food leftovers.

Then there is the performance step: Hellmann's in fact offers the concrete possibility to make something that satisfy them (transform the imperfect into perfect) change behavior. It provides its best seller product, the mayonnaise, which is the helper in this situation: this tool helps him to transform ugly and boring leftovers into something extremely beautiful, and thus tasty. This will, in the end, bring him also to avoid waste. And the brand gives a proof for it, as it, throughout Mayo gives the consumer some recipes whose main ingredient are leftovers (he says ''Make a frittata'', ''you can make grilled cheese''...)

In the end there is the sanction step which, instead is more 'consumer focused' meaning that it is about the viewer and the positive or negative feelings that he/she perceives after seeing the commercial.

3.4.2 ACTANTIAL MODEL

As anticipated, the canonical model is strictly linked with the Actantial one in which the relationships that bind the different narrative roles (actants) are articulated. The actantial model (Greimas, 1973) has a focus on the characters of the spot in fact it is used to examine and describe their different roles, functions and actions.

The Actantial model consists of 6 roles, which are denoted as:

- **Subject**: this is the role that the receiver assumes after having passed the initial phase of manipulation. The subject is the ''hero'' that fights for something.
- **Object**: this is what has value for the subject and it could be abstract, such as a value or an ideal, or concrete, such as an object or a product.
- **Opponent:** this is anything that voluntarily or not hinders the subject on the realization of his goal.
- Helper: this role identifies with anything that supports the subject in the realization of his goal.
- Sender: the sender is the one who induces or obliges the receiver to agree to take action, judging the result. This identifies with the narrative role of the one who indices the receiver to take action, and it is generally represented by the brand.
- **Receiver**: this is the one who receives the task of completing an action. If the receiver decides to perform, he becomes the subject.



Image 30 : Greimas's Actantial Model customized to Hellmsnn's case

Source: Greimas (1973)

Within Hellman's advertising, the roles are clear: the sender, that is the brand Hellmann's wants to sensitize and empower the consumer, that is the receiver, throughout a creative and soft approach to take action. The brand joins the #MakeTasteNotWaste movement which, at the same way, wants to involve the consumer to join and to take action.

Indeed, the receiver has very clear traits: his lifestyle is characterized by attitudes that are not attentive to food waste and that value beautiful produces, considered synonymous of quality. Therefore he does not give value to those foods that do not comply aesthetic standards because they have been in the fridge for a while or they are left over a dinner party. In particular for the receiver, including both young people both their families, getting rid of leftovers is a routinary activity, which he does without thinking twice.

The subject, instead, is the *waste warrior* that fights food waste with funny manners, by jumping on people as if to make touchdown. In this case, he identifies with the ex footballer Jerod Mayo, whose name creates a word pun with the product name.

The product itself also has an important and central narrative role. In fact it identifies with the helper as it supports Mayo in the realization of his goal: making taste, before and thus avoiding not waste. Just think at all the banquet that appears in the last sequence, of course prepared using mayonnaise: it is perfect, it seems almost fake... and nobody of the people represented touches it or eat, because it is 'eaten with the eyes' (except from Pete Davidson who grabs *just one* tacos)

An then, *consequently*, the mayonnaise can help to avoid waste...but first of all, it is the tool that 'makes taste'.

In fact, the consumer perceives as a victory the fact that he can make beautiful food out of leftovers (thanks to the mayonnaise) rather than avoiding waste per se.

While empowering the consumer, there is a treat, identified with the ''opponent'' role, that is the not voluntary careless behavior that lead the consume to throw away what they consider ugly and not conform to the standards, and thus are influenced by *foodporn*. In their routine, in fact, people, on the basis of the images they see online or on television, devalue leftovers because they are imperfect and thus they believe they are not edible and so they tend automatically to discard food because they are biased or because they do not think it is a big deal to throw away these leftovers.

3.2.1 TOO GOOD TO GO CASE

So, previously I have analysed 2 clear examples, which are very different among each other, and they represet one of the categories identified thanks to the brandscape model

But I believe that it is proper also to mention Too Good To Go, the most virtuous and activist brand in Italy in the field of food waste. As previously said, the service company was born in Denmark but has expanded throughout Europe; in the case study I will consider "Too Good To Go ITALIA ".

In our country, Too Good To Go is one of the most downloaded apps in recent years that deals with combating food waste. The start-up was born from a basic idea: doing good for the planet. In fact, it does not offer a physical product, but a *service*. In fact, the platform connects retailers such as supermarkets, restaurants or caffes with consumers who decide to save unsold food, still "too good " to be thrown away and to save money, buying " Magic boxes ".

After three and a half years in business¹³⁹, Too Good To Go prevented 29 million meals from ending up in the trash, equivalent to 66,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions. In February 2019, they reached the milestone of 10 million meals recovered, an already impressive figure, but in October 2019, they doubled this figure to 20 million, thus demonstrating how quickly the company is growing. But that's not all...

These data are encouraging since they suggest that the consumer is also having a shift in his mindset and in his lifestyle: in fact he, who is generally fearful of using products that do not comply with the standards as he claims that they can be dangerous for the his health and that of his family, is beginning to understand that he approaches life and the relationship with food too superficially, in light of the phenomenon of sustainability.

The brand has well understood that the consumer is not yet mature to be able to act and to fight waste alone, therefore he needs facilitations and incentives: he sees food waste as an economic damage, rather than as an environmental problem. Therefore, to entice the consumer to join the movement and buy the inventories, it offers him a low (very low) price. Thus, the consumer has an approach to the app from the side of convenience. But, whatever is the initial reason, the important thing is that it has been produced awareness around the topic of food waste and so it has became part of people and government's agendas and lifestyle.

So Too Good To Go has doubly achieved its goal: to generate consumer awareness and reaction and to profit from its business.

In particular, the online activity on social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, contributes to the achievement of the first objective: the brand in fact shares informative, simple and eye-catching contents

¹³⁹ Source: Zero Waste Europe(2020) ''The history of TGTG''

that contribute to spreading advice, information or data about the food phenomenon. TGTG target consumer on these channels is a young one. In fact, they have very specific characteristics on which the brand leverages:

- They are a price sensitive target since, for the most part, they do not receive a fixed salary or income, so they are always looking for the cheapest things to buy. In this sense, TGTG was born as the app that offers Boxes of products at very low price.
- This target includes those that pollute the most and that, at the same time, does not realize its impact.
- Younger consumers show greater interest in brands that show commitment to addressing social issues and support movements such as Me Too, Time's Up, and Black Lives Matter or ''Fridays for Future'' that has a focus on climate change.
- This target includes consumers who are "more activists" than others in the sense that they show more interest in taking action to solve a social problem that threatens their future.

Therefore, TGTG makes a targeted choice and therefore needs to revisit (slightly) its tone of voice: the didactic and professional approach acquires a ''softer " nuance: the contents always have the same objective (to generate a sense of responsibility in the consumer and a sense of guilt) but in order to attract the attention of a niche audience, it is necessary to use more colorful fonts or create some content more suited to the platforms used.

For example, the Instagram algorithm tends to prefer the video content sharing: therefore TGTG has had to adapt to this in its social activity. On its official page profile there are several video content published: however, they do not include commercials like Hellmann's but short reels or video tutorial (in fact, with didactic and educational purposes) whose approach, however, is always the same: the videos illustrate how to recycle the leftovers of the Easter egg, or of a dinner spent with friends...

Attention, the actors are never Hollywood stars or famous people, as happens on the American scenario. In the video tutorials the ingredients that ``move by themselves " are shown through animations or only the hands of the cook are shown, therefore the identity of the chef is not known because, basically, it is not on what the consumer focus must be direct to: what the consumer must look at is the transformation and recycling of the product itself. This contributes to the consumer's focus on the product or raw material that must acquire value.

The only characters that appear are micro influencers, which are young people who have become popular through social media who have characteristics very similar to those of the identified target, and this helps to generate a sense of authenticity: they are young, with few skills in the kitchen and with a lot of desire to fight the social problem of food waste

For example, there is a reel that presents the initiative " conscious label": in this video, a young tiktoker illustrates how many Italians are still not informed about labeling and do not know the fundamental distinction between *"to be consumed preferably within"* and "expiration date": this causes *'9 million tons of food wasted*

in Europe", as he states in the video and decides to "*clarify*". So she, with a simple and direct language, explains to the spectators the difference between one concept and the other and guides them towards a more aware consumer experience, inducing to question the consumer values that have always been adopted.

In fact, Too Good To Go aims to clarify many other aspects that make the consumer blind before, after and during consumption.

The core of its activity is to give value and products, especially fresh perishable like fruit and vegetables, which are discarded by large-scale distribution and by the consumer as they do not comply with standards.

In particular, in this regard, I have chosen to analyze the post that in my opinion is the most powerful in achieving this goal and is an expression of the social movement which Too Good To Go is at the head: it represents the mentioned dichotomy between "real" and "artificial".

Too Good To Go puts the consumer in front of a powerful caption and powerful images at the same time.



Source: TGTG's Instagram post

It is represented above and was published on Instagram on March 15, 2022.

It shows two contents arranged symmetrically and, at first glance, if I had to give a title to this post, I think it would be 'Beauty and the Beast'. In fact, the post, characterized by the classic square format, is divided into two parts by a central thin line. The first thing that catches the eye of the consumer are the images, of course and then he scans the text.

Therefore ``on one side " (''da una parte'') is represented `` *The beauty* " a beautiful fruit, a pear in this case, which presents the classic shades from bright green to yellow and is illuminated by a light coming from the right which helps to accentuate its perfect curves and its symmetrical shape. The produce is so perfect that it seems fake, unrealistic.

Advertisers transform an ordinary object into signifiers for abstract concepts: in this printed advertising the sign, that is what the consumer sees, is the "beautiful pear". It connects the material signifier, that is the image of the fruit with a perfect and brilliant shape, with a particular meaning, thus the consumer creates in his mind a set of associations that refers to the concept of aesthetic perfection and good people. As a matter of facts, people tend to assign to the object a beauty premium basing on its appearance. This effect (and on the contrary the "ugliness penalty one"), as it has been proven in a study conducted by Mookerjee et al. (2021)¹⁴⁰, provides that the categories of attribute affected are: tastiness and healthiness. This means that consumers believe that beautiful products have a higher quality, are more HEALTHY and make them appear more beautiful. This view takes up the famous Feuerbach quote `` we are what we eat" which alluded to the fact that an individual's eating habits can be reflected in his person and, precisely, in his outward appearance.

"*On the other side*",(''dall'altra'') is represented by "*The beast* ", that is a very ugly and deformed pear. It has dents, probably due to the fact that the fruit is too ripe or has fallen off the shelf on which it was placed, which give it dark shades, ranging from brown to black and which leave no space for the typical bright green color. The chiaroscuro that is formed from these "spots " accentuates even more the asymmetry of the fruit which, in some areas is more rounded and in others more angular. The fruit seems almost dangerous to human health since it has parts that look like rotten and it seems ''ill''.

In this case, the sign identifies is the 'ugly pear". It links the material signifier, that is the image of the mishaped and deturped fruit with a particular meaning, so the consumer creates a set of association in his mind that refers to the concept of imperfection and danger. In this case, the ''uglyness penalty effect'' prevails.

Below each image there is a caption.÷

¹⁴⁰ Mookerjee S. et al. (2021); From waste to taste: how 'ugly' labels can increate purchase of unattractive produces; Journal of marketing

The consumer will tend to read from left to right, so he first scans the one under the "perfect fruit" which says:

"A super digestible fruit and a fantastic resource for replenishing the fluids and energy expended during sports"

The text highlights (and remembers to the public) the functional characteristics of the product: it is useful for integrating some substances such as mineral salts and vitamins that are necessary after having made significant physical efforts. It is a natural supplement that benefits the health of the individual. Not only is it beautiful to look at, but it also has properties and characteristics that can benefit the body and replace chemical substances (such as protein drinks): food is seen as medicine. In particular, especially in the period of pandemic where people pay more and more attention to immune defenses, emphasizing these aspects is important and can accelerate consumption.

After, the eye gaze falls on the other caption. It takes the consumer a few seconds to understand that the content is the same. Even the "ugly pear" is *"a super digestible fruit and a fantastic resource for replenishing the fluids and energy expended during sports*".

This parallelism is a brilliant technique for inducing reflection. In its simplicity and essentiality, the message of this print advertising is clear: what changes is simply the aesthetics and it is precisely what the consumer bases his judgment on.

And this evidence contributes to generating a significant sense of guilt that induces him to reverence the meaning attributed to each of the two signs. At first glance, in fact, the consumer creates a negative judgment on the ugly pear, he links it to a negative concept (as said ''imperfection and danger''), and moreover considers it dangerous for human health and would tend to throw it away. But it is simply real...and nutritious as the other version! However, when the consumer is confronted with the evidence of the text, he understands that he has stopped at appearances and that there is an error in his interiority.

GRAPHICAL SCHEMA

Below I report a diagram that I have developed to make the understanding of the procedure I followed more immediate, starting from the analysis of the food and food waste category, up to the illustration of the methodology used and the illustration of the output.





CHAPTER 4 : CONCLUSIONS

1. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis proposes a focus on the binomial of food waste-brand activism: in light of the fact that the new imperative for entrepreneurs that seek to build iconic brands and to emerge from the cluttered media world is to activate, to take a stand and to mobilize debates around political or social causes, I have decided to understand how companies face and fight one of the biggest socio-economic problem that the world is facing but whose seriousness is not yet understood too much: food waste. The aim of this work is to develop a systematic understanding of how companies can sensitize consumers and induce them to act in a sustainable way reducing food waste through their discourses.

This phenomenon is very particular and controversial and it is still a taboo, so it is hardly discussed since it is linked to a series of behaviors and habits worthy of blame on the part of society and the consumer: talking about food waste and its consequences would mean putting the consumer to think and making him question all his actions and behaviors: it would mean making him feel wrong.

But there is more.

Talking about food waste would mean for companies and institutions to shed light on topics considered dangerous and thorny and on the dark side of consumption and, indirectly, this would entice them to downsize and rationalize the purchases of products ... and this would not benefit profits of companies!

So, there are not many example of communication or advertising in the past years. This is why for the development of the thesis it was not appropriate to use a traditional approach based on the analysis of current brand communication.

However, talking about the issue has become more urgent than ever and companies are moving in this direction and want to communicate that the phenomenon seems so distant and yet it concerns people firsthand. But they need to know exactly which is the right approach to use, in order to avoid failure.

The tool I used that would help to understand how to fight the problem properly is the *brandscape* model. This approach from L. Oswald is mainly used to talk about niche phenomenon or new ones and it offers an understating of how brands should position. This tool would help companies to proactively research the culture of consumers, align this culture with their brand legacy and promise, and use this information to develop new campaigns and a relevant communication strategy.

It is made up of several step: first of all I collected series of "texts" that included not only advertising campaigns but also initiatives and partnerships undertaken by the most prominent brands or actors in which very specific features have emerged. Subsequently I identified the codes in the context of food waste: the dominant code was the ''foodporn'' one: food discourses extremely accentuates the visual aesthetic aspect of food, that is eaten with the eyes and not with the mouth. In fact, there is the tendency to interchange the dimensions of " beautiful " and " good " very easily and anything that does not adhere to social rules becomes waste. This of course brings to a decay of values connected to food and superficiality and carelessness prevail in human behaviour.

Surely this trend meets one of consumer desires ... however it does not look and does not consider the environment!

Instead the emerging code is "The real taste".

The 'the real taste' brings the idea that food, regardless of its shape, color or the number of days it is stored in the fridge, can still be used and can be as good as the 'aestetically pleseant' version. The pivotal idea challenges the assumptions of the dominant code and provides that the theme of sustainability is catching on and a more mindful and conscious consumption is spreading among consumers.

Subsequently I have identified the tension that emerges in society and that would be useful for companies to understand the reason why an individual should adopt an intended behaviour, rather than maintaining the actual one, to satisfy his needs-destires. The one I have outlined is "real-artifact".

From this analysis it has emerged that the communication of the phenomenon, therefore, is divided into two, as it is treated in different ways.

The first one includes advertising campaigns and all those initiatives that use an informative, descriptive and objective approach thus the phenomenon of of waste is treated in a more objective and detached way. Food waste communication is based on the true and raw exposure of factual elements that have the aim of inform and sensitize the viewer, making him feel guilty for engaging in harmful actions against the environment. Those who transmit the information are mainly Government organizations or fledgling service companies, which use data facts and figures that convey authenticity. In addition, they use a simple but eye catching language which, perhaps with the use of particular and real images or aggressive taglines, are able to enter the consumer mind and induce reflection.

In the latter branch, instead, it prevails an aesthetic and narrative approach. Food waste communication, aimed at generating a positive feelings, is based on the illustration of artificial and perfect produces that could facilitate the consumer in the fight of food waste. The problem is faced in a trasversal way: what really matters is the product/service advertised. Here certain tones prevail and they seem to almost spectacularize the phenomenon of food waste: the information is mixed with entertainment.

Indeed, I have also identified an Hybrid category, which embodies characteristics both from the first one (like the professional, neutral and didactic tone of voice or the use of personified objects as main characters), but also from the second one (use of curated, beautiful and aestehic images)Subsequently, I conducted a semiotic analysis for 3 texts identified during the data collection that I decided to select because I think they are the best expression of the social moment that the brand / organization in question wants to carry out. The first two cases are a print ads that is a clear example of the first category identified and thus it expose factual elements and have the aim of inform and sensitize the viewer about the harmful consequences of his choices on the environment through real images. For this case I had to isolate the most crucial signs and identify their structure in order to understand what the meaning conveyed to the consumer was.

Instead the second case is a spot from Hellmann's mayonnaise brand which is a clear example of second category identified with the brandscape model. For this, I conducted scomposition in sequence of the spot `` Make Taste Not Waste '' launched in 2022 and I also decided to use also other models the Enunciation model and the Actanital one.

In the end, I have conducted a semiotic analysis also for the hybrid case : Too Good To Go Instagram post.

2. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This research provides valid guidelines in managerial field. It would help the brand managers to effectively create brand activism campaigns on the topic of food waste: they should understand that taking a stand isn't just encouraged but expected and despite it could be risky for companies to expose on an issue like that of food waste and to show all its consequences, it is not possible to remain indifferent.

Also because a growing slice of the population is embracing sustainable ideals linked to the "3R" concept, so companies would find fertile ground as those people would feel represented by the company as they shares its same values, hence the desire to adopt a sustainable lifestyle may increase but also the willingness to purchase its product may rise.

The *brandscape* model would help companies to identify a set of defined characteristics that their discourses should include in order to ensure that the target gets the personalized information and understands the nature of the problem. From this analysis, marketing professionals could understand how to implement a campaign against food waste that takes into account the identification of a target and highlights the prioritization of specific behavior to take up for specific groups of individuals in order to customize messages that appeal to them. In particular, since food waste is a delicate and controversial topic, it is important that companies know which tools to use, and know how to combine their messages with their activity, in order to avoid boycott actions by consumers or skepticism that is the disbelief of stated claims which would result in an aggravation of wasteful behavior.
In addition, companies must consider that, for the purposes of reputation, analyzing and choosing the type of content of their communication or the approach to be used is fundamental, as it ends up influencing not only the purchasing behavior of consumers or their post consumption habits but also what they think of the brand itself. Therefore, if a more serious and data-oriented approach is used to generate awareness on the consequences of food waste in places where the average consumer would have a negligent attitude towards consumption and prefers quantity to quality, then he will get bored by communication, he would reject it and would tend not only to underestimate the problem, but also to express a negative opinion on the organization, perhaps thinking that it is " too serious " and therefore far from the demands of the market.

In particular, given that it has become essential to intervene to solve the problem of food waste and prevent its implications from ruining the planet or compromising the well-being for future generations, it would be appropriate to increase communication or initiatives in order to raise awareness (using an approach rather than another) and induce the consumer to act. Since the audience to educate is very broad (it includes not only young people belonging to Gen Z, but also their parents and adults in general, who likewise do not value waste) it would be advisable for these initiatives to be as varied as possible, to make sure that the whole segment of the population is involved: for example using only Instagram posts, as in the case of Too Good To Go, is not efficient because only the youngest people would be reached.

Therefore managers should think about introducing innovative formats or omnichannel approaches such as the creation of events advertised through medias in which information content, interaction, public relations meet in order create a high-quality experience in which people can become aware of the consequences of food waste and can understand how to behave.

3. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCHES

The present study is not without limitations.

First of all, the campaigns were only analyzed from a semiotic point of view, as they were not suitable for content analysis due to the lack of comments. This confirms, indeed, the fact that the topic is a taboo therefore the consumer tends to avoid the conversations that can be generated on food waste as it is difficult to talk about it since it touches the deepest corners of the human personality.

The "*gastromania*", which as mentioned in chapter 2 represents the modern obsession linked to food and nutrition, ends when we talk about those morally wrong behaviors which, however, are normal and routinary for the human being.

However, semiotic analysis was found to be fundamental in order to understand the meaning hidden in the text and the meanings behind each sign used, both in the print and in the video format.

A limitation concerns the reference target: the initiatives listed do not have a specific target but generally refer to the consumer who has a careless attitude. It would be more effective to have a segmentation of the target and therefore it would be more appropriate to address certain communication messages to a group of individuals with common interests and behaviors. The fragmentation of the market would allow companies to get to know their target better and therefore this leads to the establishment of relationships with customers and to keep their attention high and to elicit their emotions ...

In conjunction, managers should try to identify the concerns of the member of each target group that prevent from wasting food: in this sense, they could focus their communication and awareness activities on a particular driver for avoiding waste to which consumers are most sensitive. For example, if the target audience is a more adult one, perhaps advertisers could think of focusing their works, whether they are print or video, on the environmental consequences of food waste to which these individuals are most sensitive: wasting food equals, for example, to consume resources such as air, water, land... is tantamount to threatening the future of the younger generations, and so of their children.

From this perspective, they may have one more reason (or perhaps simply one reason) to start reducing waste.

SUMMARY

Brand activism

This thesis proposes a focus on the binomial of food waste-brand activism: in light of the fact that the new imperative for entrepreneurs that seek to build iconic brands and to emerge from the cluttered media world is to activate, to take a stand and to mobilize debates around political or social causes. I have decided to understand how companies fight one of the biggest socio-economic problem that the world is facing but whose seriousness is not yet understood too much: food waste.

The marketing literature has always been focused on the relationship between companies and the external environment they are immersed in: in particular, companies' aim and duty is to configure themselves and to take into account changes in the public's tastes and preferences.

But, which are actually consumers desires and needs? They want to shop for meanings.

Nowadays individuals do not consider a product and consequently a brand for its extrinsic qualities (weight, volume, performance) but they choose one over another in relation to a series of values and meanings that they are able to convey and of the impact that they can have on the society. This implies that companies must have an ''eye on the world'' because customers today want to know what their purpose is.

Companies must become ''activists'' and this means that they must take an emphatic nonneutral stance on a controversial matter which regards all members of the society. In effect, according to Oswald's notion of '*'brandscape''*, companies must struggle and thus must change according to the evolution of their respective industries, meaning that they must proactively research the culture of consumers, align this culture with their brand legacy and promise, and use this information to develop new products and a relevant communication strategy.

Kotler and Sarkar (2017) classified brand activism as an emerging field which naturally evolved from the concepts of CRM and CSR which seemed to be not satisfactory to meet the high demands and desires of the younger generations towards a brand. The CSR it as an obligation for companies to take certain factors into consideration during the course of their business such as the impact of a its activities upon its human, social and ecological environment. It is surely important to set goals and objectives that focus on the well-being of the environment and society, but this phenomenon cannot be considered in isolation: in fact, CSR is just a *small part* of company's purpose. CSR is more ''internally focused'': the company self-regulates its practices with ethical and sustainable principles so that its actions are aligned with the principles it claims to believe in. Instead, when dealing with brand activism, there is an ''external focus'' meaning that companies, in relation to an issue (environmental, social etc) takes a position and not only expresses it openly, but actively *acts*, so that it can have an impact on the world.

Reflecting on its nature, Manfredi-Sánche believed brand activism borrows its fundamentals from social movements campaigns, copying their aesthetics of authenticity. In fact, just like social movements, brand activism represents the real and genuine stance of a company that, by taking an ideological (social or environmental) choice, wants to reform society. To make the transition from words to actions it is necessary to go through 5 phases that follow one another in a cyclical way. Everything starts with the definition of a *mission* based on the common good and therefore a company seeks to bring benefits on a question that is controversial and that affects everyone. Then, CEOs must assess a clear *vision* that must be able to express the strategic direction of the organization and must be able to inspire people to join the movement, using a compelling *message* that has the three Aristotelian elements of persuasion. Hence, the receivers who have embraced the cause are ready to go to practice and a joint action is coordinated to create an impact.

Regardless of the topic a brand decides to fight for, what is important to highlight is *authenticity* in brand activism as there might be a sense among consumers that companies only take a stand because of commercial interests. Being authentic for a brand means being demonstrably willing and able to deliver on its sociopolitical claims and this can be achieved through the alignment of three key characteristics: brand core purpose and values, messaging type and content circulated through brand vehicles and corporate practices. This means that when messaging, for example, operates independently of corporate practice, purpose, and values, authenticity of brand activism is compromised.

But being an activist is not such easy: the first downside regards the fact that taking a stand on a delicate and divisive issue can lead to piss off a bunch of customers and consequently bottom line takes a hit: negative attributions can impede business returns and brand equity. Moreover the assumption of risks and responsibilities in taking a stand conceptualizes this practice as free speech boundary work, that is, negotiating whether social norms defining which opinions and ideas are acceptable to express publicly, should be created, tightened, maintained, loosened, or suppressed.

While several brands worry about making political or social statements fearing those backlashes, others have found several benefits to using brand activism.

The first benefit that emerges from taking a stand consists in setting the brand apart from the pool of competition: this implies that customers perceive an organization's offering as being superior when compared to other similar ones. By getting to know about the prosocial position of the brand, there are more chances that the company will be included within the consideration set of consumers, thus the awareness about a brand (or about a social problem) increases. And so does the purchase intention. In particular, when people associate buying from a brand with supporting their values and social/political causes, it creates an emotional tie that goes beyond product quality or price and that leads to costumer loyalty.

This behavior leads to new forms of promotion in which consumers themselves generate discussions about products and services that they like and use: in fact if consumer share the same ideals of the brand, they are more willing to refer its initiatives to their family and friends that share their same values and thus this will boost a real societal change and also generate positive WOM.

Moreover, brand activism is seen as an opportunity to support the employer branding by increasing attractiveness and retention and unite the staff to pursue a shared purpose: thanks to the value shared, it establishes the organization as a desirable workplace.

Despite the fact that it appears clear that the majority of consumers say they are in favor of brands taking a stance, consumers reaction to new role of brands can differ from person to person, but, in general terms it is possible to say that consumer could receive positive or negative feelings. If the consumer perceives the sincerity and coherence of the brand this means that its gestures and actions would be perceived as authentic and thus the consumer develops a positive attitude toward the activist position; otherwise, whether he understands that brands detach their activist messaging from their purpose, values, and practice, he would perceive it as inauthentic and thus there is an immediate distancing between the two. This last phenomenon is known as woke washing.

Culture of food and culture of waste

Food is a symbol expressing sociocultural identity and a system of communication and it is able to vehicolate values and meaning, thus is something to which the consumer is extremely attached and to which he assigns value.

Hence, in addition to its purely nutritional, sensorial, playful, historical and cultural dimensions, food has its specifically *semiotic* dimension: it shapes a culture, space, image and other systems of meaning, just as language does. According to Marrone, food-language, from a semiotic point of view, is declined in two different dimensions:

 Parlare del cibo: This one aims to attribute a meaning to it, linking it to moments in the history of the culture of people or an individual. Nowadays everyone, not only experts, talk about food in television broadcasts, in conversations, in cookbooks, in specialized magazines, at the cinema, in advertisements, but also in blogs, in social media that have established themselves with the spread of the Internet: this topic whatever its form, has become a (*gastro*) mania.

In particular, through new and old media, food has invaded every dimension of our existence, individual and collective, and its meaning has inevitably changed. The idea of gastronomy has given way to that of *gastromania* and indicates, as Marrone establishes, the modern obsession linked to food and nutrition. If gastronomy and "gourmet" were an elite phenomenon, elegant and sophisticated, dedicated to the few individuals who could afford to eat in the wealthiest restaurants, today it is on everyone's lips. *We* feed on food discourses.

Il cibo che parla: This dimension provides that food itself constitutes a specific form of language.
In fact, just as no one speaks only to convey a message or dresses only to protect the body, in the same way no one eats only to nourish himself or to enjoy the flavors. Citing Feuerbach, if 'man is what he eats'', it is not only because the substances he incorporates constitute his physicality, but also because the food he prepares and ingests represents him, but it gives him sense, thus contributing to build his individual or collective identity.

Consequently, the fact that people talk a lot about it implies that a meaning is attributed to food and this influences taste, culinary practices and therefore the way consumers act.

But, what are the different meanings that, over time, revolve around the language of food?

First of all, since the ancient times food acts as a companion that makes people feel happy, welcomed and part of a group: it is synonymous of *conviviality* and *socialization*. Just think that in the Ancient Roman Culture, common people but also the most famous writers of the time spoke of "*convivium*", term that indicated the banquet and, etymologically, derived from the term '*'convivere''*, which means " to live and to stay together": still today, sharing food and eating together fosters dialogue, reflection and can be the entry point into a community, it makes people feel as an integral part of the same culture, and puts them in communication.

Food is also seen as an *intimate act* and a *gesture of love and care*: it takes on a semiotic connotation and becomes the tool that allows the good father of a family to provide for the needs and well-being of his children and his wife on a daily basis. Family unit is essential for the materialization of this vision: in fact, people rarely meet during the day, due to raving lifestyle rhythms. They get together and share the moments of their routine only around a delicious banquet. Here, some foods could have the function of *glue*, in the sense that they recall traditions and can bring to mind forgotten episodes of life that unite different family members; for example, eating a slice of apple pie is able to evoke memories of the grandmother who used to prepare it for all the nephews, reviving a moment of childhood with great intensity.

Moreover, food is a symbol of *cultural identity* as it represents the connection or the bridge towards one's own land, one's loved ones, one's places, but also towards oneself: this is why each individual, in a completely natural way, tends to immediately associate the Italians with pasta, the Chinese with rice, the Germans with beer and wurstel, the French with baguettes and escargots.

Each culture has its own code of rules that privileges certain foods and prohibits others and all this is influenced by the geographical, environmental and economic components that characterize the culture and traditions of a people. But food also represents a means of (*cultural*) *exchange*, and thus it is the first form of contact between two civilizations, or two social groups, or two individuals: it is known that when someone visits a new country and wants to know the new local culture, the first thing to do is to go to the local market. But there is more. Not only the food itself has a value: also its *preparation* does. The transformation makes food different and changes it not only from a physical and nutritional point of view but also from a semiotic perspective and therefore contributes to its enrichment in value.

According to Levi-Strauss view, cooking symbolically marks the "transition between nature and culture" and therefore "between nature and society".

I wanted also to make a brief parenthesis in the socio-semiotic discourse on taste to introduce one of Marrone's reflections that would be useful to introduce another topic: the difference between *merenda* and *merendina*. It introduces a trend characterized by the *detachment from tradition* and would seem to *contradict the values* cited that have always been associated with food.

In the passage from one term to the other, there is more than a simple grammatical variation: it is in fact a passage from the vision of the home food tradition to the industrial globalization and post industrial, from nature to culture, from family to the street.

In particular, the *merenda* is basically defined as an event: it is not a material object, but a moment, a series of stereotyped actions that have a temporal articulation (between lunch and dinner and sometimes in the middle of the morning, or in any case between one meal and another), a spatial dimension (to be consumed in the home or during a trip or outing with the family), an actorial dimension (consumed mainly by children) and an affective dimension (rigorously prepared by grandmothers or mothers in the home environment).

The *merendina*, is the "modern transposition" of merenda since it is a symbol of breaking with the past, it is a pop icon of industrialization, it is an object rather than an event that is bought on impulse at the supermarket. It lacks a temporal context (it is no longer associated only with a single moment of the day), a spatial reference (it is not consumed only in specific places such as the house or the garden) and a value dimension (It is no longer just a reward to be deserved but it takes on other meanings). In fact the *merendina* is a moment that can always arrive, sometimes extending to the whole day and therefore it can be eaten anywhere, for any reason or without a specific reason. The pleasure of the *merendina* lies above all in its packaging to be enjoyed with the related opening rituals: *the consumer eats with his eyes*.

Advertising at the end of the 20th century helped *merendina* to shape its myth and therefore introducing a variation of the food values, which reinvented the traditional snack.

This change in values associated with food that is triggered by society is accompanied by another criticality: there is never a correspondence between what people cook and the gustatory moment.

Michael Pollan in his work "Cotto" from 2013, states that the "cooking paradox" has established: *the more* people talk about culinary art in the media, *the less* they are at the stove; *the more* people spend their time in front of the screen watching others cooking, *the less* they stay in the kitchen cooking and serving. In agreement, Marrone argues that ''if there are so many recipe books, it is because few know how to cook well; if we discuss so much about taste, it is because it is usually difficult to find someone who knows how to eat".

In fact, what has changed is the very concept of cooking: up to 50 years ago the cuisine was the product of a skillful transformation of raw materials or scratch and their creative mixing, which also incorporated significant fragments of history, society, culture, politics, ethnic identity.

Today food is emptied of meaning and loses its value with heavy consequences on culture and society, given their bond. People do not have time to spend in the kitchen because of their routines and they refer to food in a rather superficial way.

Today 'cooking' means even just heating a pre-cooked dish in the microwave or taking pre-washed or chopped vegetables out of the freezer and put them in the oven. With the food industry offering ready-made meals, with delivery apps well established in the area and serving meals at all hours of the day, cooking has become almost superfluous.

The digital world contributes to this decrease in the value associated with food: in line with the cited *gastromania*, the digital world is also characterized by an explosion of food in all its forms (digital, of course): by now all the Facebook or Instagram homes are clogged with photos of pies, desserts, refined dishes prepared at home according to the advice of the numerous (perhaps too many) bloggers, or by the most well-known chefs of the town with the strangest combinations of ingredients, tutorials that can be watched at any time, and which outline in a few steps the process of saver recipes.

When food stops getting emotional and conveying pure and authentic values, it is because it becomes mere exteriority, something "beautiful to see". And this is what food today represents: it is eaten with the eyes and not with the mouth, it is photographed rather than eaten and it is shared online rather than with the other members of the table.

In this regard, gastronomy is combined with *pornography*: the phenomenon of *food porn* originates.

It is not the food itself that attracts the eye and the attention of the consumer but its Caravaggesque color combinations, the perfect composition and disposition of elements, its internal shades, the saturated and uniform colors.

Gastromania, *food porn* and the general spectacularization of food have progressively eroded the importance of conviviality at the table even where it played a fundamental role, such as in Italian culture.

But, what is the other side of the phenomenon that encompasses the fact that now food is perceived in a distorted way?

Waste

The fact that the consumer does not places anymore a strong value on food, as specified, justifies the fact that he has developed a wasteful lifestyle throughout food management processes or in pre-post consumption routines. The act of waste is executed without deliberate consideration, and result from automatic processes.

According to the Food Waste Report (2021), "food waste" is defined as any food (intended for human consumption) and the associated inedible parts of it (components associated with a food that are not intended to be consumed by humans), removed from the human food supply chain in the following sectors: retail, food service, households. It should be noted that consumer and household level have the biggest resonance.

Instead "*food losses*" are all the crop and livestock human-edible commodity quantities that, directly or indirectly, completely exit the production/supply chain by being discarded, incinerated or otherwise, and do not re-enter in any other utilization, up to, and excluding, the retail level.

People throw away large quantities of food not on purpose, but automatically and without thinking about it within many different but interconnected practices in the pre and post-consumption stages such as shopping routines, storing, cooking, and eating. And this is *much more dangerous*.

In fact, in this way people, especially the youngest target, do not perceive waste as a danger and they are not aware of its impact on their future. In fact, food waste is a threat for the environment as it causes the exploitation of natural resources such as water, air, land. This generates more serious problems that threat the health not only of people but of the whole planet and causes climate changes and water pollution. Just to bring an example, about 1.4 billion hectares of land are used to produce foods that *will never be consumed* and a huge quantity of the world's fresh water is used to grow produces that will be later thrown away. To make an estimation, researchers count that a volume of water roughly *three times the volume of Lake Geneva* is used just to produce food that is not eaten.

Yet it also has moral implications since 3 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet: if one quarter of the food currently lost or wasted could be saved, it would be enough to feed 870 million hungry people.

Furthermore, wasting food is equivalent to wasting money that is used not only by consumers to purchase products that will end up in garbage, but also by other members of the supply chain to grow, transport and package it. Basically, the culture of waste is generated by the fact that food is an item to which little economic value is given: it is a "commodity" that costs too little. If it is cheap it is not a problem to throw it away, or, even better, *throwing food away can be less costly than intervening to prevent food waste*.

Despite the historical origins of food waste can be tackled back to the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the problem has accentuated with the end of the second World War when a renewed vivacity came to the world and waste was one of the protagonist of the period as 2 main changes happened.

First of all, this historical period was characterized by a high level of production, a tendency to decline in prices and an ever higher percentage of income destined for food, motivated by the fact that, after the war and the period of poverty, people sought abundance of what had been lacking in previous years. In fact, people abandoned the fear, the experience and the memory of the famine and they changed their attitudes towards consumption: everyone, especially those belonging to the poorer working classes, began to consume food in large quantities. This has progressively and consequently favored a greater tendency towards food waste. Thus, people could reasonably afford a variety of goods also because of an increase of the per capita income: from a socio-economic perspective this phenomenon is known as *'consumerism'*.

Then, the other relevant change regarded the position of women within the household: after the end of the conflict during which they were busy working in the textile industries or in activities as first aid, women understood that they could be useful for the society, not only as housewives or cookers. This change transformed woman's time and in general also the vision of life: she no longer had time to devote to the care of the house and the kitchen.

The changed lifestyle, more oriented toward '*convenience*'', induced people to develop a new mindset toward all kind of goods, especially food: as there were abondance of goods that could be rapidly substituted each other, people tend to prefer solutions that could be heated and prepared very quickly and easily and they seldom care about how many food and food-related wastes were produced. People became superficial and they did not intend to eat the leftovers stored in fridges for future meals, neither reuse them in alternative ways, as their grandparents did; moreover, they did not trust to eat food near the date indicated on the pack (while in reality they could be perfectly edible) as they let themselves guide too much by the presumption of deterioration and they did not have the knowledge to make the difference between '' 'best-before'' and the ''expiration date'', thus ending up wasting uselessly. Food waste seems to be *an unwanted consequence of consumption* prediction errors or of inadequate practices in consumer food-related activities such as planning, shopping, storing, preparing and cooking.

The 21st century not only welcomes all this approach to food waste and its harmful consequences but it also brings a glimmer of positivity: new awareness and new trends towards more mindful consumption have accelerated, in light also of the war period, and changes in attitudes and actions are expected. The concept of sustainability has supremacy and must necessarily combine with all aspects of life: in particular, convenience is surely what consumer looks for in the food environment, but this necessarily has to be combined with the preferences toward a more natural, nutritious, or customizable products. New solutions should help people keep pace with busy schedules without sacrificing their health goals or curiosity for new ingredients, flavors, and that have a look and a positive impact on the planet.

Three different agents (local and national organizations, consumer themselves and companies) are trying to move in this direction and so they are taking up initiatives with the aim of educating and informing the consumer toward food waste and its harmful economic, environmental and social consequences.

But it is not easy because the topic is still a taboo, so it is hardly to discuss and it has a controversial nature since it is linked to a series of behaviors and habits worthy of blame on the part of society and the consumer: talking about food waste and its consequences would mean putting the consumer to think and making him question all his actions and behaviors: it would mean making him feel wrong or making him angry.

But there is more.

Communication about food waste would mean for companies and institutions to shed light on topics considered dangerous and thorny and also on the dark side of consumption and, indirectly, this would entice them to downsize and rationalize the purchases of products ... and this would not benefit profits of companies!

However, talking about the issue has become more urgent than ever given the dimensions of the social, environmental and ethical problems it generates and which threaten the possibility for future generations of being able to take advantage of natural resources.

The phenomenon seems so distant and yet it concerns us firsthand.

Research process

The aim of this work is to develop a systematic understanding of how companies can sensitize consumers and induce them to act in a sustainable way reducing food waste through their discourses.

In order to answer to the research question, elaborated on the basis of the identification of a gap in the literature, it was not appropriate to use a traditional approach based on the analysis of current brand communication, precisely because, as mentioned, the topic is still partly a taboo. When organizations or companies talk about food waste, they tend to prefer information tools that increase its awareness. However, it would be interesting to find out what the role of emotions is in this context, in light of the fact that in general positive emotions can lead consumer to behave in a certain way. *Will this also be true for sustainable behavior?*

Therefore, to understand how companies should address this issue, and therefore whether they should prefer discourses based on the spread of information and facts or an approach which relies on feeling and mood generated by spectacularization, I decided to apply L. Oswald's *brandscape* model which is used to talk about niche phenomenon or new ones and it offers an understating of how brands should position. It frames the reach

and depth of the brand context and engages consumers in the world of the brand. In fact, it is built through a cyclical process of giving and taking between brand heritage, consumer culture and competitive environment.

First of all, I conducted a data collection and therefore I grouped a series of "texts" that included not only advertising campaigns but also initiatives and partnerships undertaken by the most prominent brands or actors. The dataset includes about 26 campaigns and initiatives launched around the world in which very specific features have emerged.

In fact, I was able to identify two distinctive categories as it has emerged that the phenomenon of food waste is divided into two, as it is treated in different ways.

Not only the actors that illustrate the problem change, but also the tone of voice used, the subjects represented and the format.

The communication of the phenomenon, therefore, is divided into two: on the one hand prevails an information, objective and descriptive approach (in italiano *'approccio informative, descrittivo, oggettivizante''*) and thus communication that is based on the true and raw exposure of factual elements and of real images of real produces that have the aim of inform and sensitize the viewer, making him feel guilty for engaging in harmful actions against the environment and for basing his judgments merely on aesthetic factors.

This type of communication was born with the idea that media have the responsibility to serve the public and give them concrete and authentic information, thus numbers are the best vehicle in this sense. Therefore, those who transmit the information, generally for this type the actors are Government organizations or fledgling service companies, which use data facts and figures that convey authenticity. In addition, they use a simple but eye catching language which, perhaps with the use of particular images or aggressive taglines, are able to enter the consumer mind and induce reflection.

The other category, on the other hand, identifies a lighter type of communication that use a narrative and aesthetic approach aimed at generating a positive feeling. In the initiatives and campaigns launched in this area certain tones prevail and they seem to almost spectacularize the phenomenon of food waste.

By structuring the issue of food waste as a plotted story or framing it in an entertaining way, the main characters deliberately invites the audience to respond to the problem in the same way that it responds to entertainment programming: lightly and without thinking too much. Food waste theme is faced in a transversal wasy as the main focus is on the product or service that the company wants to deliver, which are depicted in a perfect and artificial way, and that are the magic tools that helps the consumer to overcome his tension and thus that help to satisfy a need or a desire... and, ultimately, as a solver of food waste.

In fact, they enable the consumer to transform imperfect produces in perfect versions that could be "eaten with eyes".

A consequent goal of this type of communication is to ensure that the consumer sees food waste as a simple issue to deal with, which can be solved with the advertised products, without wasting great energy.

In this way the consumer does not have a too heavy approach to the problem but positive feelings will make him more willing to integrate sustainable behaviors in his routine, almost as if it were a game, almost as if there was a reward waiting for them. The fight against food waste is presented as a 'child's play', rather than a commitment or an obligation.

Subsequently I identified the codes in the context of food waste: the dominant code was the ''foodporn'' one: food discourses extremely accentuates the visual aesthetic aspect of food, that is eaten with the eyes and not with the mouth. In fact, there is the tendency to interchange the dimensions of " beautiful " and " good " very easily and anything that does not adhere to social rules becomes waste.

This of course brings to a decay of values connected to food and superficiality and carelessness prevail in human behaviour: a process of de-substantialization that has led to the constitution of an 'imaginal world', governed by a "way of being and thinking pervaded by the image, the imaginary, the symbolic and the immaterial".

Surely this trend meets one of consumer desires ... however it does not look and does not consider the environment!

Instead the emerging code is "The real taste".

The 'the real taste'' brings the idea that food, regardless of its shape, color or the number of days it is stored in the fridge, can still be used and can be as good as the 'aestetically pleseant'' version. The pivotal idea challenges the assumptions of the dominant code and provides that the theme of sustainability is catching on and a more mindful and conscious consumption is spreading among consumers: they, in lught also of what happens with movement of #RealBeauty from Dove, are staring to understand that the ''what is shown and thus appereance'' is not always about ''beauty''

Subsewuanlty aia have identified the tenstion that emerges in society and that would be useful for companies to understand the reason why an individual should adopt an intended behaviour, rather than maintaining the actual one, to satisfy his needs-destires. The one I have outlined is "real-artifact".

Finally, I conducted a semiotic analysis for 3 texts identified during the data collection that I decided to select because I think they are the best expression of the social moment that the brand / organization in question wants to carry out.

The first one includes an advertising campaign that uses an informative, descriptive and objective approach to communicate food waste (in italiano '*approccio informative, descrittivo, oggettivizante''*): *it is* a print

campaign called "Trash" realized from Boroume, a Greek non-profit organization committed to reducing food waste and the distribution of surplus food for charity. The images show a series of ugly vegetables that have shapes or traits that personify them therefore making similar to human faces. Those subjects are "verbally abused" by the taglines as they are considered non-conforming to aesthetic standards and appears to be not healthy or safe to eat: this caption opens the consumer mind and induces him to reflect that he relies his judgments only on the appearance. The campaign was posted online and reaches young people and adults as it has launched a digital campaign for any digital media that is connected to a user, gives him the ability to interact throughout any technological device. For the analysis I had to isolate the most crucial signs and identify their structure in order to understand what the meaning conveyed to the consumer was.

Instead, the second case, which instead uses the approach of the second category identified, was the commercial `` Make Taste Not Waste " by Hellmann's mayonnaise brand, launched in February 2022 during the Superbowl match and for its analysis I had to make a scomposition in sequence of the spot. To better understand this spot I also decided to use also other models the Enunciation model and the Actanital one.

Last but not least, I have decided to analyse from a semiotic point of view also an Hybrid case from Too Good To Go with one of its Instagram postst which, at the same time, shows facts about food waste using an EDUCATIONAL tone of voice and captions written with a simple but eye-catching language with aesthetic images and frames.

Conclusions

The work will provide valid guidelines for brand managers to effectively create brand activism campaigns on the topic of food waste. Thanks to the *brandscape* model, it is possible to identify a set of defined characteristics that company's discourses should include in order to ensure that the target gets the information and understands the nature of the problem. Since food waste is a delicate and controversial topic, it is important that companies know which tools to use, and know how to combine their messages with their activity, in order to avoid boycott actions by consumers or skepticism that is the disbelief of stated claims which would result in an aggravation of wasteful behavior. Choosing the right approach, will increase consumer trust it ends up influencing not only the purchasing behavior of consumers or their post consumption habits but also what they think of the brand itself.

It would be appropriate to increase communication or initiatives in order to raise awareness (using an approach rather than another) and induce the consumer to act. Since the audience to educate is very broad (it includes not only young people belonging to Gen Z, but also their parents and adults in general, who likewise do not value waste) it would be advisable for companies to take up *several initiatives* to be as varied as possible, maybe though an omnichannel approach, to make sure that the whole segment of the population is involved.

The present study is not without limitations: the first one regards the fact that the campaigns were only analyzed from a semiotic point of view, as they were not suitable for content analysis due to the lack of comments. This confirms, indeed, the fact that the topic is a taboo therefore the consumer tends to avoid the conversations that can be generated on food waste as it is difficult to talk about it since it touches the deepest corners of the human personality.

Another limitation concerns the reference target: the initiatives listed do not have a specific target but generally refer to the consumer who has a careless attitude; it would be more effective to have a segmentation of the target and therefore it would be more appropriate to address certain communication messages to a group of individuals with common interests and behaviors. In conjunction, managers should try to identify the concerns of the member of each target group that prevent from wasting food: in this sense, they could focus their communication and awareness activities on a particular driver for avoiding waste to which consumers are most sensitive.

APPENDIX



Image 1



Image 3





Image 4







Image 7

























Image 11



Image 12



Image 13





OLD ME **NEW ME** Gettare via il pane ormai secco che è rimasto in casa troppo a lungo.



Utilizzare il pane ormai secco per realizzare delle fantastiche polpette di pane per cena.

Image 16



Image 17

DALL'ALTRA



ll frutto per eccellenza. Non solo ricco di proprietà, ma anche perfetto per essere consumato sia nella sua semplicità che in tantissime ricette.

di cui non ricordavi più l'esistenza

- Prendi il pane in cassetta rinsecchito^γe bagnalo con un po' del latte che preferisci per ammorbidirlo.
- Una volta che si è completamente assorbito, sbriciola il pane e aggiungi 2 cucchiai di zucchero, 1 uovo e un pochino di burro fuso per far sì che il composto sia ben legato.
- Unisci ora qualche cucchiaio della marmellata che ti è rimasta in casa e incorpora il tutto in modo da ottenere un impasto omogeneo.
- Spostalo in uno stampo imburrato e inforna a 180° per circa 35 minuti.







Sogno una vita in vacanza! Cerco qualcuno che voglia un'abbronzatura da paura e che non abbia timore di andare oltre l'estetica /



Image 19









Image 23







NUCEOUS

a later part of





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