

# Aperitifs, young people and minority languages

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**Abstract.** The aperitif is an expanding consumer good associated with modern lifestyles and sociality. This aim of the study was to evaluate whether the region of origin (Carnia) and the use of a minority language (Friulian) might serve as effective levers in the aperitif market. It was found that both the region of origin and the minority language can be effective, and that the language is an important reinforcement of the region of origin. In the case study considered - use of Friulian in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region - the minority language combined with a translation of the text into the majority language generated a competitive advantage, regardless of the consumers' language skills and sense of regional belonging.

**Key words.** Consumer, drinks, minority languages, conjoint analysis, marketing.

**1. Introduction.** The aperitif is one of many trends to have developed over the years. Its success is particularly associated with the lifestyles that characterise modern society and a desire to cultivate relationships with others and/or to devote some time to oneself (Vianello, 2016). According to the same author, the main aperitif trends are:

1. The “refined” aperitif: an exclusive and sophisticated location with high-quality, sophisticated and unusual food, such as sushi.
2. The “Italian-style” aperitif: the traditional products of a region consumed in typical local settings.
3. “Spritz time”: the most classic aperitif, the Spritz, is seen by most as symbol of the social ritual.

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It is important for companies to understand the reasons consumers choose and buy a product. There have been numerous studies on consumer buying behaviour. These have focused particularly on preferences (Yang et al. 2017; Kulshreshtha et al. 2018; Sulistyawati et al. 2020; Wesana et al. 2020; Di Vita et al. 2021), attitudes (Pliner, Hobden 1992; Cox, Evans 2008; Matin et al. 2012), country of origin (COO), and geographical area of origin (Badri et al. 1995; Aichner 2014; Williamson et al. 2016), language of communication (Alonso García et al. 2013), ethnocentrism, national identity and cosmopolitanism (Zeugner-Roth et al. 2015).

The choice of language to be used in encoding messages is crucial for business-to-consumer communication. Being able to make this choice requires knowledge of consumers' language preferences and the history behind these preferences. Several studies have looked at the language of the product's country of origin and found that this influences product evaluation (Chen, Chang 2003). One study shows that the use of English in Mexico to communicate a domestic product decreases trust and generates less-positive attitudes than the use of the national language. On the other hand, when applied to foreign products, the use of English had neither a positive nor negative effect (Alonso García et al. 2013).

In China, other studies have shown that bilingual English and Chinese signage improves consumer attitudes (Liu et al. 2005). In the USA, Gopinath and Glassman (2008) found

that bilingual English and Spanish packaging negatively affects product evaluation compared to English-only packaging.

Mai and Hoffmann (2011) studied the effect of regional dialects on sales services using information processing theory, accent prestige theory and social identity theory. Contrary to the common view, the two authors demonstrated that when salespeople use dialect in a professional manner: buyers do not devalue salespeople who speak in dialect; consumer satisfaction with their contact with the salesperson and the company is improved; and purchase intention is increased. Ultimately, the literature has not only shown that languages influence consumer behaviour and product evaluation, but also that the effects generated differ from case to case, as they depend on the degree of ethnocentrism and bias involved.

This study aimed to evaluate the effects of region of origin and a minority language within the aperitif market. In particular, it aimed to verify whether communicating a region of origin in its minority language is an effective tool for market segmentation and competitive advantage. The region of Carnia and the Friulian language were chosen as a case study. Carnia is an inland area of Friuli characterised by a specific sense of identity among the population.

**2. Materials and methods.** The effectiveness, as part of a market entry strategy, of the aperitif product's region of origin and use of the minority language was measured in

Table 1. Attributes and levels of the aperitifs compared in preference tests.

<i>Attributes</i>	<i>Levels</i>
Taste	Very sweet; Not very sweet
Colour	Very intense red; Not very intense red.
Price	2.00 Euro/glass; 2.50 Euro/glass.
Region	Friuli; Carnia.
Language*	Italian; Friulian.

\* Language used to communicate the product's region of origin. In the case of Friulian, the Italian translation is added in brackets in a smaller font.

terms of preference probability. To this end, preference tests were carried out using the conjoint analysis (CA) method and market simulations (Kulshreshtha et al. 2018). Table 1 lists the test variables, and Table 2 reproduces the preference survey form. This was developed using an orthogonal experimental plan consisting of ten product profiles, two of which are control profiles. SPSS Conjoint 20.0 was used to plan the experiment, estimate the preference functions and generate the market simulations.

The simulation plan (Tab. 3) assumes there to be eight aperitifs already on the market, identical in terms of their region of origin (Friuli) and language (Italian) but different in terms of taste, colour and price, in order to represent all possible combinations of these three attributes. Eight simulations were carried out, two of which were control simulations. In each simulation a new aperitif enters the market and the probability of its being preferred to the eight already present is estimated using the logit model. All the simulations include an aperitif that is the same in terms of

taste and colour (the preferred colour and taste levels found in the tests) but different in terms of region and language. Moreover, all the aperitifs in the simulations are offered twice, once at a low price and once at a high price, in order to intercept the preferences of consumers who use price as an indicator of quality and prefer high prices, as well as those who are price sensitive and prefer low prices. The effectiveness of the Friulian language and Carnian origin is assessed using t-tests ( $p < 0.05$ ) to compare the mean preference probabilities attributed to the relative aperitifs with those attributed to the controls. Finally, t-tests were also used to ascertain whether the results were influenced by respondents' sense of identity and Friulian language skills. In other words, the experiment tested whether communication strategies that use the Friulian language and/or Carnian origin need to account for the ethnic and linguistic differences among the consumers.

A non-probabilistic random sample of 368 university students from the universities of Udine and Trieste

Table 2. Preference survey form.

You are in a bar and want to order an aperitif. Compare the following alternatives and express your preference with a score from 1 to 100 (100 being the highest degree of preference).

<i>Product code</i>	<i>Description of the aperitifs being compared</i>				<i>Preference</i>
675	Very sweet	Not very intense red	L'aperitivo del Friuli ["The Friulian aperitif" in Italian]	2.00 €/glass	
597	Not very sweet	Very intense red	L'aperitivo del Friuli ["The Friulian aperitif" in Italian]	2.50 €/glass	
432	Very sweet	Not very intense red	L'aperitif Cjargnel (L'aperitivo della Carnia) ["The Carnian aperitif" in Friulian and Italian]	2.00 €/glass	
407	Very sweet	Not very intense red	L'aperitif Cjargnel (L'aperitivo della Carnia) ["The Carnian aperitif" in Friulian and Italian]	2.50 €/glass	
892	Very sweet	Very intense red	L'aperitivo della Carnia ["The Carnian aperitif" in Italian]	2.50 €/glass	
161	Not very sweet	Not very intense red	L'aperitif Furlan (L'aperitivo del Friuli) ["The Friulian aperitif" in Friulian and Italian]	2.50 €/glass	
685	Not very sweet	Very intense red	L'aperitif Furlan (L'aperitivo del Friuli) ["The Friulian aperitif" in Friulian and Italian]	2.00 €/glass	
342	Not very sweet	Not very intense red	L'aperitivo della Carnia ["The Carnian aperitif" in Italian]	2.00 €/glass	
311	Not very sweet	Very intense red	L'aperitif Cjargnel (L'aperitivo della Carnia) ["The Carnian aperitif" in Friulian and Italian]	2.00 €/glass	
480	Very sweet	Very intense red	L'aperitif Furlan (L'aperitivo del Friuli) ["The Friulian aperitif" in Friulian and Italian]	2.00 €/glass	

Table 3. Simulation plan.

Competitors	Attributes of the aperitifs						Aperitifs competing for market share in the simulations							
	Aperitifs	Taste	Colour	Region	Language	Price	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
Already on the market	A01	Not very sweet	Not very intense red	Friuli	Italian	2.00	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	A02	Not very sweet	Not very intense red	Friuli	Italian	2.50	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	A03	Not very sweet	Very intense red	Friuli	Italian	2.00	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	A04	Not very sweet	Very intense red	Friuli	Italian	2.50	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	A05	Very sweet	Not very intense red	Friuli	Italian	2.00	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	A06	Very sweet	Not very intense red	Friuli	Italian	2.50	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	A07	Very sweet	Very intense red	Friuli	Italian	2.00	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	A08	Very sweet	Very intense red	Friuli	Italian	2.50	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Entrants	Controls													
	A09	PL*	PL*	Friuli	Italian	2.00	yes							
	A10	PL*	PL*	Friuli	Italian	2.50		yes						
	Sperimentalì								yes					
	A11	PL*	PL*	Carnia	Italian	2.00								
	A12	PL*	PL*	Carnia	Italian	2.50				yes				
	A13	PL*	PL*	Friuli	Friulian	2.00					yes			
	A14	PL*	PL*	Friuli	Friulian	2.50						yes		
New entrants	A15	PL*	PL*	Carnia	Friulian	2.00							yes	
	A16	PL*	PL*	Carnia	Friulian	2.50								yes

\*PL All new-entrant aperitifs have the same level of taste and of colour i.e. those preferred by the consumer sample surveyed.

was surveyed. The survey operations were carried out in spring 2018 on the premises of the two universities using the face-to-face method. The preference survey forms were accompanied by a questionnaire to detect socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, Friulian and Carnian identity) and the degree of understanding of the Friulian language.

**3. Results and discussion.** The sample of university students was 53.7% female and aged between 19 and 28; 230 respondents declared themselves to be Friulian, 21 Carnian, 9 non-Italian and 108 Italian but neither Friulian nor Carnian. Table 4 shows the percentage of test participants who stated that they understood Friulian well (40.5%) or fairly well (31.3%).

Table 5 shows the results of the preference tests, i.e., 1) the importance that the attributes of taste, colour, price, region and language have in determining aperitif preference, and 2) the utility of the individual levels, e.g., not very sweet and very sweet. The utility of the individual levels and the constant are the parameters of the preference functions. For the purposes of the study, it is interesting to note that the region and the language used to communicate it, although less important than the attributes commonly used in choosing an aperitif, made a significant contribution to determining the preferences stated in the tests (15.24% and 11.80%). A second aspect to emerge from the table concerns utility. The standard errors here are high compared to the means, indicating

markedly different reactions to the experimental stimuli among the sample of students surveyed, particularly in terms of language.

Finally, the correlations between the preferences declared in the tests and those estimated using the preference functions are high and significant. Consequently, the individual preference functions generated can be used to carry out the simulations in Table 3.

Table 6 describes the variability of reactions to the Friulian language. In particular, it shows the percentage of respondents who gave higher or lower scores to aperitifs described using the Friulian language than to the others. It is evident that: 1) 19.6% (deviation between -0.9 and +0.9) attributed a difference of less than one preference point out of a hundred i.e. they were indifferent to the language used to communicate the product's territory of origin; 2) 41.8% (11.6 + 9.4 + 20.7) attributed a lower score in the presence of the Friulian language; 3) 38.6% (18.2 + 9.7 + 10.8) gave a higher score for aperitifs communicated using the Friulian language; 4) 19.1% (9.4 + 9.7) of the respondents attributed differences of 6-10 points out of a hundred; and 5) 22.4% (11.6 + 10.8) of the respondents attributed differences of 11-40 points out of a hundred. Ultimately, Table 6 shows that using the minority language of a product's region of origin can be a useful tool for market segmentation and for conferring a more or less significant competitive advantage among a large proportion (38%) of the university students in the sample.

Table 4. Identity and language skills of the consumer sample (n = 368, %).

		<i>Do you understand Friulian?</i>			<i>Total</i>
		<i>Well</i>	<i>Quite well</i>	<i>No</i>	
Identità	Friulian	35.6	22.6	4.3	62.5
	Carnian	2.2	2.1	1.4	5.7
	Other Italians	2.2	6.3	20.9	29.4
	Non-Italians	0.5	0.3	1.6	2.4
Total		40.5	31.3	28.2	100.00

Table 5. Importance of attributes in determining stated preferences for aperitifs and the utility of individual levels (n = 368, means).

<i>Attributes</i>	<i>Importance %</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Levels</i>	<i>Utility</i>	<i>S.E.</i>
Taste	40.85	1.42	Not very sweet	1.14	0.10
			Very sweet	-1.14	0.10
Colour	16.78	0.76	Not very intense red	-1.60	0.10
			Very intense red	1.60	0.10
Region	15.24	0.87	Carnia	-1.52	0.10
			Friuli	1.52	0.10
Language	11.80	0.62	Italian	-0.03	0.10
			Friulian	0.03	0.10
Price	15.33	0.72	2.00	-14.65	0.79
			2.50	-18.31	0.99
Total	100.00		Constant	67.95	0.90

Correlations between observed and estimated preferences: Pearson's R 0.99 (0.000); Kendall's tau 1.00 (0.000); Kendall's tau for the controls 1.00 (0.000).

Table 6. Frequencies according to the increase or decrease in preference points for the product that uses the Friulian language to communicate the region of origin (n = 369; %).

<i>Increase or decrease in preference points in the presence of the Friulian language</i>	<i>Consumers</i>
-40 / -11	11.6
-10 / -6	9.4
-5 / -1	20.7
-0.9 / 0.9	19.6
1 / 5	18.2
6 / 10	9.7
11 / 40	10.8
Totale	100.0

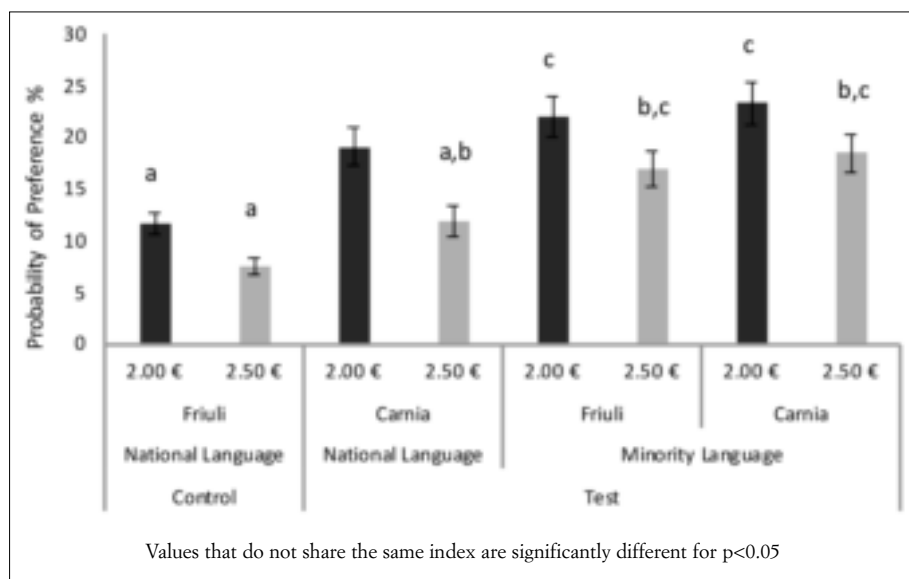


Figure 1. Preference probability upon simulated market entry of aperitifs varying in terms of geographical origin, language of communication and price ( $n = 368$ ).

The results of the simulations are shown in Figure 1. It is observed that: 1) the simulated market entry of the low-priced and high-priced control aperitifs did not obtain a statistically different preference probability ( $p < 0.05$ ); 2) for the entry of the low-priced Carnian aperitif, the preference probability was found to be higher than that of the two controls; 3) for the entry of the high-priced Carnian aperitif, the preference probability was not found to differ from that of the two controls; 4) for the entry of the same aperitif as used in the controls but communicated in Friulian (*L'aperitif furlan*), the preference probability was greater than that of the two controls regardless of price; 5) for the entry of

the Carnian aperitif communicated in Friulian (*L'aperitif cjargnel*), the preference probability was greater than that of the two controls, both the high- and low-priced i.e. use of the minority language rendered the Carnian origin effective even at the higher price; 6) the preference probabilities of the aperitifs that communicated the region of origin in the minority language were found to be equal but twice as high as those of the controls.

The comparisons reported in Tables 7 and 8 were made to ascertain whether the results described were influenced by the respondents' regional identities or Friulian language skills. The outcome confirmed that Carnian aperitifs were more likely



Table 7. Effect of consumers' regional identity on probability of aperitif preference (%).

	<i>Friulian</i>	<i>Carnian</i>	<i>Other Italians</i>	<i>Non-Italians</i>
L'aperitivo del Friuli € 2.00 ["The Friulian aperitif" in Italian]	12 <sub>a</sub>	18 <sub>a</sub>	10 <sub>a</sub>	1 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitivo del Friuli € 2.50 ["The Friulian aperitif" in Italian]	8 <sub>a</sub>	9 <sub>a</sub>	7 <sub>a</sub>	5 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitivo della Carnia € 2.00 ["The Carnian aperitif" in Italian]	15 <sub>a</sub>	66 <sub>b</sub>	19 <sub>a</sub>	1 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitivo della Carnia € 2.50 ["The Carnian aperitif" in Italian]	10 <sub>a</sub>	39 <sub>b</sub>	11 <sub>a</sub>	1 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitíf Furlan € 2.00 ["The Friulian aperitif" in Friulian]	19 <sub>a</sub>	47 <sub>b</sub>	24 <sub>a,b</sub>	5 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitíf Furlan € 2.50 ["The Friulian aperitif" in Friulian]	16 <sub>a</sub>	27 <sub>a</sub>	17 <sub>a</sub>	10 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitíf Cjargnel € 2.00 ["The Carnian aperitif" in Friulian]	18 <sub>a</sub>	61 <sub>b</sub>	27 <sub>a</sub>	12 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitíf Cjargnel € 2.50 ["The Carnian aperitif" in Friulian]	14 <sub>a</sub>	49 <sub>b</sub>	23 <sub>a</sub>	5 <sub>a</sub>

Means in the same row that do not share the same index differ by  $p < 0.05$ .

to be preferred by respondents from Carnia (Tab. 7) and that Friulian language skills had no effect (Tab. 8).

Ultimately, using Friulian combined with an Italian translation to communicate the product's region of origin was effective regardless of the regional identity of the consumers, their ability to understand the language, and the high- or low-price entry strategies.

Therefore, the use of the minority language did not segment the consumers surveyed according to their Friulian language skills or their regional or ethnic identities.

To summarise, it was found that the Carnian product origin segmented the students surveyed and provided a significant competitive ad-

vantage among those who declared themselves to be Carnian and who were more price sensitive. Use of Friulian with an Italian translation segmented the market and generated a more or less significant competitive advantage among over a third of the respondents. Segmentation according to consumers' language preferences was independent of their identity and their ability to understand the minority language.

**4. Conclusions.** Companies in the food sector are becoming increasingly engaged in product innovation aimed at following or anticipating market trends in highly competitive contexts. Under these competitive conditions, they sometimes use the region of

Table 8. Effect of consumers' Friulian language skills on the probability of aperitif preference (%).

	<i>Do you understand Friulian?</i>		
	<i>Well</i>	<i>Quite well</i>	<i>No</i>
L'aperitivo del Friuli € 2.00 ["The Friulian aperitif" in Italian]	15 <sub>a</sub>	10 <sub>a,b</sub>	8 <sub>b</sub>
L'aperitivo del Friuli € 2.50 ["The Friulian aperitif" in Italian]	8 <sub>a</sub>	7 <sub>a</sub>	7 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitivo della Carnia € 2.00 ["The Carnian aperitif" in Italian]	17 <sub>a</sub>	24 <sub>a</sub>	17 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitivo della Carnia € 2.50 ["The Carnian aperitif" in Italian]	9 <sub>a</sub>	16 <sub>a</sub>	11 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitîf Furlan € 2.00 ["The Friulian aperitif" in Friulian]	26 <sub>a</sub>	18 <sub>a</sub>	21 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitîf Furlan € 2.50 ["The Friulian aperitif" in Friulian]	19 <sub>a</sub>	16 <sub>a</sub>	15 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitîf Cjargnel € 2.00 ["The Carnian aperitif" in Friulian]	22 <sub>a</sub>	24 <sub>a</sub>	25 <sub>a</sub>
L'aperitîf Cjargnel € 2.50 ["The Carnian aperitif" in Friulian]	17 <sub>a</sub>	21 <sub>a</sub>	18 <sub>a</sub>

Means in the same row that do not share the same index differ by  $p < 0.05$ .

origin and its language as marketing levers to gain competitive advantages. This study aimed to evaluate whether the Friulian language and the Carnian region of production can serve as effective levers in the aperitif market.

In the aperitif market, it was found that both the region of origin and the minority language can serve as effective levers, and that the language is an important reinforcement of the region of origin. In the case study considered – the use of Friulian in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region – it was also found that the minority language combined with translation of the text

into the majority language generated a competitive advantage regardless of the consumers' language skills and region of origin.

The literature points out that the effects generated by language-centred communication strategies differ from case to case, as they depend on the degree of ethnocentrism and consumer bias involved. On this basis, and in light of the fact that the sample of consumers surveyed is not representative of any population, the results obtained are considered significant but not necessarily repeatable in other contexts.

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