North and South: Advertising Prosperity in the Italian Economic Boom Years

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Abstract

Purpose – In mid-to late-1950s Italy, thanks to the economic boom, a collective improvement in lifestyle finally seemed to be deemed possible. Advertising, parading a new and modern world before the eyes of the public, conveyed not only the consumer goods themselves but also the convictions of the producers, who were buying visibility in an attempt to generate adequate revenue for their economic efforts. The country, however, had to shoulder the considerable economic gap between the prosperous North and the relatively undeveloped Southern regions. A comparison between two newspapers for two sample years can provide an understanding of producers’ different approaches to these differences.

Design/methodology/approach - A comparative analysis of all the advertisements published during the first semester of 1958 and 1959 in two regional newspapers - Il Resto del Carlino (Bologna) and La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno (Bari) – reveals, in terms of number, size and distribution, interesting indicators of some of the economic dynamics affecting the two areas.

Findings - The economic boom, as well as specific development plans for the areas in question, seemed to be closing the economic gap, but some indicators, also emerging from advertisements, hint at the persistence of weaknesses.

Research limitation/implications – Due to the difficulties in revealing the underlying decisional processes made within the companies as they were trying to promote their products, the research approaches the topic by considering some of the effects of investment in print advertising.

Keywords – Italian economic boom years, XX century, Print advertisements, regional divide in Italy, Consumption

Paper Type – Research paper

Introduction

The 1950s in Italy were years of great change. Ideas, images and behavioural patterns, inspired by new-found wealth and consumption, led the country from a mainly rural state built on sacrifice and saving, to a modern urban one which brought with it new social, gender and generational roles (Annicinquanta, 2005). After the long years of suffering and privation brought by the war and continuing into the following decade, a collective improvement in lifestyle finally seemed possible towards the second half of the Fifties, thanks to the start of the economic boom. Between 1951 and 1958, private consumption rose in Italy by about 33%; in the meantime, investment in advertising soared to 150%, only to increase by a further 60% over the following ten years (Arvidsson, 2003, p. 36). The eyes of national newspaper readers were assailed by a host of advertising images presenting a modern and dynamic new world and parading a gamut of products that asked for nothing more than to become part of their everyday life, improving it as never before.

Advertising can be considered as a useful viewpoint from which to determine the lifestyles conveyed through consumer goods and the consumer goods which received most support from their own producers. The country, however, was divided between North and South. Italy had to cope with a severe economic gap (Annali dell’economia italiana 1953-1958, 1982; Annali dell’economia italiana 1959-1964, 1982), which had worsened during the fascist years, at the expense of the Southern regions in particular, even if the economic boom, as well as specific development plans for those areas, were apparently closing the divide (Felice, 2011, p. 934). How were advertisers and producers approaching this situation? A comparative analysis using print advertisements appearing in Bologna’s local newspaper the Resto del Carlino and Bari’s Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno for a sample period of two significant years (1958 and 1959) has been considered as an aid to understanding the direction in which producers and advertisers were trying to direct the consumer citizen, modifying their tastes and
aspirations. It is also a possible way to test the soundness of the claim that economic convergence was taking place at this time.

Both regional administrative capitals with an agricultural hinterland and their own regionally-circulated newspaper, Bologna and Bari were quite similar in terms of size and dynamism. In Bologna, unemployment had reached 30% during the immediate aftermath of the war (1946-48); 44% of the city had been destroyed (Gavioli, 2006; Baldissara, 1994) and it was the construction industry, called upon to rebuild the city, that provided initial relief to the critical economic situation. The wide-ranging network of medium and small-medium enterprises, commercial activities linked to primary and secondary sectors and a well organised transport network were also revived in a short time (Gobbo and Varni, 1987, pp. 57-58, Zamagni, 1986). Between 1951 and 1961 the Emilia Romagna region saw economic growth rise by 8% and the population in Bologna increased by 30.5%, against an average of 27.3% in the five main Italian cities (Rome, Milan, Naples, Turin, Genoa), growing to 444,872 from 340,526 inhabitants (ISTAT, 1962). For both Bari and Bologna, population growth was mainly due to local migration, originating mainly in their own province or region. Between 1956 and 1961 only 12% of immigrants arriving in Bologna came from Southern Italy (Parisini, 2012, p. 30, Bellettini, 1984).

After Naples, Bari, in the southern Italian region of Apulia, was, the most economically lively city. Linked to the trade routes of the Mediterranean area, it hosted the Fiera del Levante, an important expo event set up to foster ties between Eastern and Western Europe and the countries of the Mediterranean basin (Petignani, 1982). Bari was also the target of positive economic influences of state intervention through the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno (a development programme for Southern Italy which began in 1952) that, albeit artificially, was stimulating wages and consumption through investment into infrastructure (Rasi, 1982, pp. 78-79). Between 1936 and 1951 Bari had grown percentage-wise more than Milan, Bologna or Naples. In the decade 1951-1961 the growth rate was 16% and the city would have grown more if migration from its surrounding countryside and directed towards the Northern regions had been less conspicuous (Persichella, 1997, pp. 267-268). The city could count upon two large factories: an oil refinery, ANIC, which opened in 1938, and Acciaierie e ferriere pugliesi, producing steel pipes. In the area, the public effort was fostering mechanical engineering and a good number of medium and small-medium enterprises were flourishing. The 14,000 students attending the local university in 1951 rose to 16,000 in 1961. During these years Bari was rhetorically considered as “a Milanese town in the South”.

However, optimism aside, Bari had to face an undoubtedly unbalanced situation. For example, a comparison between the two provinces from the perspective of consumption shows one of many marked divides: on the 31 December 1958 the province of Bologna counted 820,713 inhabitants; 88,756 telephones; 164,040 radios; 24,083 TV sets and 43,159 cars. The province of Bari counted instead 1,276,524 people; 27,096 telephones, 153,776 radios, 17,769 TV sets and 28,921 cars (Benedetti and Cicognani, 1982, pp. 279-280).

Two Worlds apart. North and South seen through Advertisement

As noted by Guido Crainz among others (Crainz, 1996; Cardini, 2006), 1958 can be considered as the turning point, the moment of transition towards the Italian economic boom and all those transformations which involved almost every aspect of the nation’s life. Starting from this assumption, therefore, the data for the present work focus precisely on 1958 and 1959: the collection of data covers both years for the Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno and the first six months of both years for the Resto del Carlino. Hence, a comparison between the two newspapers grounded on data can be pursued for the first semester of 1958 and 1959.

For each ad, the name of the product and/or its brand, the day of publishing, size in centimetres and local or national relevance have been recorded. The ads have also been divided into 17 analytical categories [1]:

1) Food and drink – edible products and activities related to the commercialisation of food and drink;
2) Personal hygiene and beauty – cosmetics and products for personal hygiene and related businesses, such as hairdressers and perfume shops;
3) Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals – over-the-counter medicines and other healthcare products, and ads promoting doctors, private clinics and spa resorts;
4) Clothing and footwear – clothing, footwear, textiles and related shops;
5) Household cleaning and chemicals – household detergents, floor and shoe polish, insect repellent, wall paint;
6) Home and furnishings – furniture and household gadgets, fuel for domestic use and textiles, towels, bed-linen and so on;
7) Electrical appliances – household appliances, cookers and hobs and related shops;
8) Watches and jewellery;
9) Toys and childcare;
10) Entertainment and leisure – public premises, such as restaurants, bars and dancing halls, and tourist locations, State-managed lotteries and betting, newspapers, books, vinyl records, encyclopaedias and also RAI (Radio and television broadcasting company) ads;
11) Transportation – means of transport and related products, such as tyres, spare parts, fuel, and businesses related to vehicles;
12) Production – products and services for productive businesses;
13) Business and Finance – banks, shareholders meetings, financial products;
14) Job offers;
15) Education and training;
16) Miscellaneous goods and services;
17) Politics.

The research started from the hypotheses that, taking for granted a significant difference between the two areas, there should be significant differences in the type, quantity and dimension of ads carried by the two newspapers.

Table I - Total number of advertisements published during the first semester of 1958 and 1959 in Il Resto del Carlino and La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and drink</td>
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<td>338</td>
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<td>Personal hygiene and beauty</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>229</td>
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<td>Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals</td>
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<td>1401</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>567</td>
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<td>Clothing and footwear</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>339</td>
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<td>Household cleaning and chemicals</td>
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<td>108</td>
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<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home and furnishings</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical appliances</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches and jewellery</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys and childcare</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment and leisure</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>224</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>216</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>267</td>
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<td>Business and Finance</td>
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<td>Education and training</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous goods and services</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>102</td>
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<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Data do not take into account advertising published in the announcements pages unless graphically marked in order to make them more visible.

Three graphs, relating to all categories and gathering the results concerning the relevant characteristics, such as the total number of ads and their size, can supply us with a rough confirmation of our first assumption. As we will see, advertisements for the Southern area will offer an interesting view of a situation where economic crisis persists despite an illusionary sense of dynamism.
Figures 1-3: Total number, surface (in cm²) and average surface area of advertisements published during the first semester of both years. For each category, the first group of columns refers to the Resto del Carlino, the second to the Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno. Some categories with fewer ads are not visible in the graph.

The first graph offers a general overview of the number of ads during the first semesters of 1958 and 1959. The first two columns for each category refer to the Resto del Carlino, the second ones to the Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno.

Even at a quick glance, two aspects emerge. The first is that, in general, the first group of columns shows higher figures than the second one. The other is that some categories, such as Food and drink, Electrical appliances and Healthcare and pharmaceuticals, are more populated than others.

Clothing and footwear and Hygiene and beauty are largely characterised by several small ads with local relevance and, for the latter category, the growth recorded in April 1958 is mainly due to a massive campaign made by Durban’s toothpaste, with at least two ads each day.

But the number of ads is not enough to understand a trend in marketing and communication strategies. In order to try to evaluate the volume of investment made in promoting the products, some hints can be gleaned by examining the space bought for each advertisement. The second graph shows the predominance of three main categories: Food and drink, Electrical appliances and Transportation,
which takes third place for the total surface area covered and overtakes Healthcare and pharmaceuticals.

The towering columns appearing in the Clothing and footwear category of the Carlino are due to the opening of a department store in Bologna, campaigning heavily from March 1958 onward.

The third graph, presenting the average surface area, is particularly interesting: the three main categories are Transportation, Food and drink and Household cleaning and chemicals, which rely on a low number of high-impact ads. Electrical appliances drops to fourth place but with a significant peak for the Gazzetta in 1959. Healthcare and pharmaceuticals nearly disappears, due to its use of very small ads, following the tradition of this kind of promotion up to that time.

From this initial overview we can say that, taking into consideration the number of ads, Il Resto del Carlino could count on a wider consumer base for its advertising space. This situation is also reflected by the total surface area sold by this newspaper, which always prevails over its southern counterpart. However, when comparing the average advertising surface area, the Gazzetta holds its own, since it was the target of national campaigns launched by large companies in search of visibility and in pursuit of new customers.

An in-depth analysis of the different categories can offer some more interesting highlights that will lend weight to our first impressions.

**Food and Drink**

The Food and drink category seems to have the most conspicuous budgets, with several very large ads. If we consider the commercials of the TV advertising programme Carosello (Dorfles, 1998; Giusti, 1995; Ambrosini et al., 1996) pertaining to the first four years of broadcasting (1957-1960), we can see a marked predominance of food and drinks products as well (see table II). On the other hand, the percentage of wages destined for food and drink consumption was higher than the international standard and, while manufacturing industries had witnessed growth of 41%, food and drinks industries reached the 59% (Pescosolido, 1982, pp. 102-103).

On the whole, packaged food had to be detached from war-time memories and reintroduced into the modern world through the concepts of wealth, family care and abundance. Yet at the beginning of 1958, the problem of how to save money yet get sufficient nourishment with cheap food was still present (Liguori, 2003, pp. 161-162; Sorcinelli, 1999) and, during the 1960s, a 15% gap in calories still persisted between North and South (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 218).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1957</th>
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<td>Food and drink</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal hygiene and beauty</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household cleaning and chemicals</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical appliances</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home and furnishings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing and footwear</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches and jewellery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous goods and services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment and leisure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes and sources: The advertising programme Carosello, started on February 3rd 1957 and lasted until 1977, broadcasted 4 mini-shows every evening, 5 from 1960 onward. Each series had at least 10 different episodes that had to be broadcasted only once. Until 1959, Carosello was the only TV advertising programme. Data are an elaboration from Giusti, 1995.
Of course the climate has a considerable influence on such ads. In winter, the Carlino suggested warm and healthy foods: during the first semester of both years Sicilian oranges, soup cubes, coffee and cappuccino were advertised only in the northern newspaper. Liebig did not advertise its stock cubes in the Gazzetta during these two years, Knorr introduced theirs in the Autumn of 1958 and Star did not start until the Autumn of the following year. Instead, alcoholic drinks and traditional cakes for Christmas and Easter were promoted through national campaigns, appearing in both newspapers on the same day or with a delay of only a few days, sowing the seeds of a nationalisation of tastes, transforming a number of local products into typical “Italian” ones (Camporesi, 1989).

Industrial products, such as margarine and stock cubes, had to face and overcome severe weaknesses: motivational research had already highlighted how the use of instant coffee might deliver the dreaded impression of domestic carelessness. Hence, climatic reasons were, probably, not the only ones behind the slower appearance of stock cube ads in the Southern newspaper; in general, housewives had to be reassured that ready-made food would not diminish the appearance of their competence (Sivulka, 1998, pp. 267-268). Cirio canned fruit salad, for example, appealed to housewives’ renowned ability to economise while managing to show off; but a desire for modernity was usually the best justification and the one that was exploited the most. Three different brands - Manzotin, Montana and Simmenthal - with 3.3% on our 1958 sample of food and drink ads, struggled in the name of modernity in the canned meat market, but it was Cirio, with 42 ads (4%) for its canned vegetables and jams who fought the hardest. Large, graphically appealing ads praised the modern man, his manifold activities and his wealthier family capable, at this point, of going on holiday and in need of easy-to-prepare food.

In Scarpellini’s opinion, low-cost, widely-used products are under-represented in the ads of the period (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 206) but, at least for this category, the data suggests otherwise: in 1958, even if liqueurs, spirits and alcoholic beverages – mostly the expensive ones – account for 28% of the total 1042 ads appearing during the first semester (129 in the Gazzetta and 163 in the Carlino), 4.7% are represented by stock cubes and nearly 6% by powders for making water tastier, this last one a product which had been widely promoted since the XIX century. In order to introduce new habits and a different approach to industrial products, heavy campaigning was inevitable for low cost products as well. Even if the following year alcoholic drinks saw a tremendous rise, reaching 33.1% of the total (319 ads out of 962), everyday products were also well promoted. Chamomile tea, for example, with 46 ads by Bonomelli and 33 by Montania, represented 8.2% of food and drink ads in the semester. Portioned processed cheese reached 6.4% of total ads and Motta, with large conspicuous ads, tried to gain mothers’ trust for its industrially-made ice-creams.
Images 1-2: Cirio presented its canned fruit as an elegant way for serving dessert and fruit while economising (1958); Motta ice-creams were so healthy that even doctors would recommend them (1959).

Personal Hygiene and Beauty
In those years the luxury of cosmetics too started its democratising trend and products for personal hygiene and beauty, an essential complement to sociability and urban living, registered widespread expansion (Scarpellini, 2008, pp. 161-162).

By counting up the ads published in both newspapers for 1958 we find 630 small/medium-sized ads promoting everything from lotions for electric shavers to lipsticks, beauty creams, perfumes and hair dye, but Durban’s toothpaste overtook them all, with 136 ads, 20.9% of the entire category. In 1959 Durban’s no longer campaigned and the total number of ads for this category plummeted to 455. Perhaps TV commercials, where the product had appeared since 1957 (when the advertising programme Carosello began) were proving more effective.

Comparing the two newspapers, besides Durban’s and its national campaign, and apart from a lotion for electric shavers appearing only in Il Resto del Carlino - mainly during the first two months of 1958 – La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno featured slightly more ads pertaining to this category. The trend persisted, but with a reduced gap, the following year as well.

Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals
Far less innovative than other categories, ads for pharmaceutical products already crammed the pages of newspapers at the end of the XIX century. As noted by Silvio Lanaro, poor people could combat the
hardships of their lives with laxatives, corn relief, refreshing infusions and so on (Lanaro, 1992, p. 255). Time brought along more efficient medicines, but the truth was that, all too often, people still had to resolve minor health problems on their own. The main difference between the two newspapers is not found in the kind of ads, which are very similar, but in their number. This category can be divided into two subcategories: over-the-counter medicines and medical services. For the first category, medicines are nearly the same, appearing on the same day, a clear indicator that these campaigns were conceived for national distribution and organised in advance in order to secure the desired space on the desired days. There are just a few minor discrepancies related to climate differences, which induced some brands promoting remedies against coughs and flu to stop earlier in the Gazzetta than in the Carlino.

Instead, the real difference is found in medical services. In the Bolognese newspaper there are some small ads (ten at most on Sundays, less on other days) by specialist doctors. In the Gazzetta, on the other hand, there are columns of ads in the announcements pages, besides a dozen or so private clinics and doctors promoting themselves more frequently with larger ads and on pages other than the one usually devoted to medical ads. The graphs take into consideration only those few larger ads that appear in the newspapers outside the specific area dedicated to medical services. Otherwise the number of ads published by the Gazzetta would have greatly outnumbered those of the Carlino, since on Sundays there were more than 40 ads only in the specific section for medical services.

As we will see in the conclusions, this is a clear consequence of the poor condition of public medical services in the area, where the Polyclinic was still under construction. Meanwhile, in Bologna, there were already three large hospitals and 2,000 million lire earmarked for the reconstruction of the main hospital (Mochi, 1992, p. 332).

Clothing and footwear
As before said, the number of ads is limited and they are mainly of a local kind. The most significant role for this category is played by the new artificial and synthetic fibres (Garofoli, 1991), supported by heavy campaigning both in newspapers and on TV. Waterproof, elastic, light and multi-purpose, these fibres were a real innovation. Italy, in 1958, was producing 4.5% of the world production of synthetic fibres of non-cellulose origin and 6.5% of those of cellulose origin, such as rayon (Pescosolido, 1982b, p. 115), hence these industrial colossus were in a position to adequately promote their products and thus overcome any psychological resistance on the part of consumers.

The Carlino prevails for the number of ads in March and April due to the opening of a department store, part of the retail chain Coin, founded in 1956 (Papadia, 2005, p. 73-74). It published 14 large ads in March 1958 and continued with several smaller ones promoting ready-made clothing. Incidentally, ready-made clothing had become the trademark item for department stores and sales were growing at a faster rate than private consumption, even if the national production was slow in catching up with European numbers: in 1959 only a few million items were produced compared to the 20 million items manufactured in France and the 35 million made in Germany (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 218). Women too had started to adjust and had accepted the idea of wearing the same clothes as other women, even if, at the same time, sewing machine brands were advertising the opportunity to create one’s own style.

From a comparative point of view, an interesting aspect is the presence of several ads promoting furs. These also appeared in the Gazzetta and, in March and April, although the ads for furs in the northern Carlino had stopped, they continued in the southern newspaper, even proposing fashion shows in the hotels in town, challenging the mild weather with the power of status symbols.

Entertainment and leisure
During the boom years in Italy the powerful call to dance led to the sprouting up of dance halls everywhere: working classes still preferred traditional dances, such as waltzes, mazurkas and the tango, while the upper classes frequented the more refined “Dancings”, and moved to the sound of exotic Afro-Cuban or Brazilian rhythms, including the rumba, merengue, samba, mambo or cha-cha-cha (Pela and Sorcinelli, 1999). Not surprisingly, then, we find ads promoting some of these premises and the weekly performing band or singer. At the same time, a couple of Bolognese shops promoted music records in general, and both years, one of these record shops sought to attract more customers with sweepstakes. Restaurants cut out a little space too, often matching their main activity with the organisation of gala dances or live music.

Italian life-style improvements were also opening up holiday opportunities, and both newspapers hosted several ads promoting sea-side or mountain resorts: the Alps and Switzerland were trying to
attract tourists from all over the peninsula while sea-side hotels or localities aimed at travellers from a 200 km range.

On the whole, this category follows the usual pattern, with a predominance in the Il Resto del Carlino, but the publishing sector, particularly conspicuous, marked a reverse trend: in 1958 the southern newspaper counted fewer ads than the northern one but, the following year, the situation overturned: books and encyclopaedias were often promoted on a national basis, but during 1959 the Gazzetta promoted more magazines, some of which of local relevance.

Household cleaning and chemicals

New kitchens, with their light colours, showed dirt more easily but detergents, arriving mainly from the U.S., came to the rescue of the increased cleaning requirements. Depending on different needs, detergents were replacing unhealthy, uncomfortable or inefficient products such as lime, soda, bleach, the tiresome red wax or mere water. Detergents were not just simple cleaning aids; they were a new way to wash up dishes, a new approach to housework and were overcoming the old peasant and petty bourgeoisie “civilisation”, based on the self-sustaining household economy. It was no longer the old home-made soap: the wonderful foam with such degreasing effects had to be bought. But, apart from the consumerist pressure of raising standards, these products were actually flanking electric appliances in freeing women from household drudgery. Neocera floor wax spray announced a drastic change in perspective: “Have fun waxing!”.

Images 3-4: Neocera and its sweet promise to sweep drudgery away from women’s worlds (1958) while Ducotone paint was proposing new ways to spend all that new free time (1959).

On the whole, during 1958, apart from some shoe polish, insect repellent and wall paint, advertising for detergents was predominant (63 ads over 122) and 4 out of 5 brands enticed customers with contests and prizes, even wedding rings. TOT campaigned only in the Gazzetta and Silval only in the Carlino, while the other brands had planned national campaigns. In 1959, on the other hand, detergents were neglected, promoted in just 27 ads of the total 163; shoe polish, with 50 ads, and wall paint, with 37, prevailed. In particular, Ducotone wall paint (by Montecatini) was aimed at women, portraying them with a modern graphic design while engaged in redecorating the home. Time saved thanks to the new detergents enabled them to do more housework (Cowan, 1976).

Home and furnishings

For this category too, synthetic and artificial textiles or products were the main innovation. In our sample the only highlight is a supermarket for furniture which opened in Bologna in 1958, a real innovation in the field and a novelty in Italy in terms of both sales organisation and production, since these kinds of products were still largely manufactured by local craftsmen (Scarpellini, 2001). La Rinascente in Milan had already introduced free coach rides to their premises in 1951 (Papadia, 2005, p. 84) and the Bolognese furniture store readily adopted such a solution, gathering visitors and possible customers from the suburban areas and luring them with the possibility of a grand day out visiting Bologna after just a couple of hours spent at the supermarket.
For this category, the number of ads in the Carlino was twice or even three times those in the Gazzetta and in 1959 the gap widened even more (the total number of ads in the Gazzetta had declined from 153 to 140, meanwhile in the Carlino it had risen from 236 to 317). On the other hand, if we consider the surface area occupied by the ads, we can see that while during the first year the proportions are similar, in 1959 the average surface area is larger for the fewer ads featuring in the Gazzetta. This result is largely due to Gorgone, a factory from Naples which had opened a show-room in Bari, and which heavily promoted its rational and modern pieces of furniture in 1959. Modernity also made its mark in the number of ads referring to bridal trousseaus, significantly declining in number and surface occupied during the second year, and almost disappearing in the Carlino, already having been in a minority position during the previous year.

**Electrical appliances**

In this category we can find another relevant segment of advertising investment: in 1959, electrical appliances used up 10% of all advertising investments (Faravelli Giacobone et al., 1989, p. 45). During the first semester of 1958 nearly nine hundred ads were distributed between the two newspapers (57% in the Carlino), the following year, despite a small contraction in the total amount of ads (851 instead of 883), the total surface covered by these ads had risen by 22%.

Several important brands opted for national campaigns and large, often full- or at least half-page ads. Fridges were still being heavily pushed by producers and received a warm welcome by consumers. But in the meantime, companies were also trying to promote washing machines, even if during 1958 they were still proposing older twin-tub models (Asquer, 2007), and, most of all, TV sets. Usually, urbanized poorer people appreciated TV most, since, having few occasions for cheap social entertainment, they considered television programs as an incredible opportunity: theatre, concerts, dramas, quiz, variety shows, every evening a different form of entertainment. Better-off people, however, bought TV sets as an unavoidable up-to-date status symbol while continuing to go to real theatres or concert halls (Liguori, 1996, p. 682).

Electrical appliances can be divided into two groups: the time-saving ones and those meant for spending time. Since so many women were housewives and women's time was still considered as less valuable than men's, during the first years of the real spread of these appliances in Italy, the time-saving ones, such as washing machines and dish washers, did not meet with immediate success. In 1958, 11.4% of Italian families were proud owners of a fridge. In 1964 the number had already risen to 45%, higher than in Belgium, Holland and the United Kingdom. Yet washing machine sales, even if rising from 2.9% to 16% were far behind the other countries of the European Economic Community, with the nearest, Denmark, at 34%. Dishwashers were still at 1.6% in 1964. In 1960 there were 60 Italian industries producing fridges but in just a few years they were to fall to only 22 (Castellano, 1965).

At the beginning of 1958 several companies chose to advertise only in the Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno. Maybe there was the same marketing strategy adopted by motorbike producers, as we will shortly see, trying to stimulate the southern market, or an awareness of its general attitude, more inclined to imitate upper class models. The dishwasher, tentatively trying to emerge, had a wider distribution in Southern Italy than in the remainder of the Peninsula in the 1960s, precisely because, for a very long time, it appeared more as a status symbol than as a useful machine. Incidentally, in the 1980s dishwashers still covered only 13% of the internal market (Fonio, 1989, p. 186).

**Watches and jewellery**

The wristwatch started spreading in popularity during the Sixties: in 1960 only 54% of Italians owned one (63% among the male population and 47% among women); and, of them, 40% had had theirs for less than five years. The percentage was higher among young people, while it was at a mere 28% among people aged over 54 (Crainz, 1996, pp. 141-142). This is not a particularly well-populated category but it is one of the few with a significant predominance of the southern newspaper: during the first semester of 1958 it counted 33 ads in the Gazzetta and 24 in the Carlino; the following year the total number decreased to 15 and 8 respectively. In January and February there were few ads; a brief period of interruption after the Christmas rush for presents and before Easter or the graduation ceremonies which starting at the end of May (even if pens were a more common present). In any case, it is worth noting that in the Gazzetta there were also some ads during the first months of the year and in April 1958 the two newspapers scored nine ads each for expensive watches. Longines advertised a gold watch at L. 85,000, and Doxa graphic, a less well-known company, at L. 58,000. In 1957 a
medium size fridge could cost around L. 115,000 and the average annual income in Italy was L. 229,862, two thirds of the average European income. Calabria, a Southern Italian region, stopped at one third of the European ones and the average annual income in Southern Italy overall was L. 139,218 (Simoncini, 1982, pp. 348-349 and 355). Economists, incidentally, see a distortion in the Italian spending pattern, which favoured conspicuous consumption at the expense of primary needs such as decent housing and good nutrition (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 188), but luxury as social display is more powerful in hierarchical societies, whereas in more egalitarian ones the luxury of comfort is appreciated more (Capuzzo, 2006, p. 56).

**Transportation**

During the first months of 1958 there were more ads in the Gazzetta than in the Carlino, but they were mainly of a local nature and, for example, CEAT and Michelin tyres, Zenit fuel and ISO light transportation vehicles were promoted only in the latter. The situation of the Southern road network did not favour motor vehicles: in 1953 only 21.24% of Italian roads ran there (Paolini, 2007, p. 44). In the Gazzetta, ads dedicated to emigrants prevailed, even if some of these were to appear later in the Carlino as well. Emigration towards foreign countries was a very intensive phenomenon during the years of the economic boom as well. In 1964 the region with the highest number of emigrants was Apulia, with 42,300 people leaving, 1.2% of the whole resident population (Simoncini, 1982b, p. 379). Alitalia and cruise ship companies issued ads for North and South America, highlighting the friendly help that emigrants would find on board to deal with the necessary paperwork.

Images 5-6: Despite the economic boom that was transforming holidays into something affordable for a growing number of people (Agip, 1959), between 1960 and 1962 nearly 380,000 Italians still had to emigrate each year (Alitalia, 1959).

With the passing of months, the number of ads for motorbikes greatly increased in the Gazzetta. Although scooters were to change young people’s social lives, contributing to the identity of an entire generation (Ardvidsson, 2006, p. 209), manufacturers and marketers were still unable to exploit them and had to advertise more where the market was less crowded, the climate milder but economic resources lower too, because people with fewer resources were more likely to buy a motorcycle than a car. The marketing strategies for increasing sales in the Southern regions of Italy proved successful. At the end of 1960 the total number of motorbikes and three-wheelers up to 50 cc. recorded at the licence registry for the province of Bologna was 59,078, compared to 16,868 for the province of Bari. At the end of the following year, there were 60,640 (with 2,729 new vehicles) for Bologna, and 16,960 (with 1,576 new vehicles) for Bari (from “Immatricolazioni motocicli, ciclomotori, motocarri – anni 1960-1963”). The gap was still wide but the proportion of the new vehicles in the total amount was positively increasing.

On the whole, in 1960, motorbike ownership was twice that of cars (the changeover was to occur in 1964) and during the first years of the Sixties, 34% of agricultural workers owned a motorbike against a 12% circa of white collars (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 148).

In general, it is interesting to note the increasing number of ads and their dimension, positioning this category just after Food and drink and Electrical appliances. On the other hand, transportation was the key to the future. Mobility, private and public, had been the real watershed between tradition
and modernity, old and new, unemployment and employment (Menduni, 1999). In the early 1950s the car and its emancipating power was the most desirable object for 63% of Italian women and, in 1963, a general survey collected by the magazine “Quattroruote”, rated it as even more desirable than a house (21.2% vs. 20.79%) (Paolini, 2007, p. 64 and 77). Circulating cars went from 510,189 in 1952 to 1,392,525 in 1958, 28 people, instead of 11 in every 1,000, had one (Pescosolido, 1982, p. 75). An incredible new world to become acquainted with was opening up before the eyes of millions of Italians, and producers of vehicles and everything related to them were eager to take this opportunity, putting themselves forward as protectors and guides. Agip, with new national campaigns every year, characterised by dozens of different images, was promoting not only its fuel and a better corporate image, but a whole lifestyle, bringing modernity to everyday life and to the national economy as well. Agip petrol stations, envisioned by Enrico Mattei as larger and more attractive than those of its major competitors Shell and Esso, with friendly attendants, motels, restaurants and cafeterias (Magini, 1976, pp. 144-145), were promoted along with its impressive oil refineries, ready to boost the economy of underdeveloped areas such as Gela, in Sicily. In particular, Agip anticipated the great increase in vehicle ownership in the Southern regions and, in order to combat the better localisation of Esso and Shell pumps in the main city centres and in the richer Northern Italy, intensified its building efforts in Central and Southern areas. Thus, in 1964, even if it owned only 13% of the service stations nationally, Agip was able to sell 25% of the fuel (Magini, 1976, p. 146).

**Production, Business and Finance and Job offers**

Despite the massive discrepancy in the number of ads published, the category of Production is not as unbalanced as it might seem. In 1958, the difference is mainly due to a campaign carried out by the company managing the advertisements in the Carlino, Società Pubblicità Editoriale, which advertised on average 20 times per month (116 ads out of 379 during the semester). Starting from March, the company working for the Gazzetta also began to campaign but stopped at 25 ads (out of 196) and in 1959 it issued just one ad in contrast to the 47 of its competitor. The crowding of self-promoting ads and the significant number of Trade Fairs promoting their events slightly reduce the actual relevance of this category. However, in March 1958, even if we exclude the twenty ads by Società Pubblicità Editoriale from the total in the Carlino, the remaining 37 ads were twice as many as those published in the Gazzetta, where the average advertising surface area is mainly sustained by the predominance of national campaigns with large ads, such as those published by Olivetti - for its typewriters and calculating machines - or Montecatini - with pesticides and fertilizers for agricultural purposes.

This can be considered as a first indicator of weakness of the productive market in the South and the Business and Finance category adds other significant hints. Even if the Gazzetta is more crowded than the Carlino, ads were mainly from three sources: the regional electricity companies, Banco di Napoli - a strong southern bank and, incidentally, also the owner of the Gazzetta - with its mortgage bonds, and some companies granting loans to employees. On the other hand, in the Carlino, in particular during the second year, there was a conspicuous number of banks competing to attract customers, and a variety of ads from some of the most important Italian companies, such as FIAT, IRI, ENI, Snia, and ANIC, with announcements for dividend and coupon payments, shareholder meetings, boards of directors and reports of their annual financial statements. These announcements are required by law to be published in the main national newspapers, but the Gazzetta had very few of them and not even the one about the ISVEIMER bonds, from the Institute for Economic Development of Southern Italy. The distribution on a local basis cannot justify the difference: the Carlino was not distributed on a national basis either; hence the explanation is to be found elsewhere. Maybe the companies, knowing the areas where their bonds had been placed the most, avoided buying advertising space in the others, or greatly reduced them. For example, in 1958 FIAT bought seven slots for its financial announcements in the Carlino and just two in the Gazzetta. The area of Bari had, possibly, different investment patterns, preferring other solutions, such as real estate and treasury bonds (Bianchi, 1997, p. 260), duly promoted on a national basis and even alluring savers with prizes; but it can also be another sign of economic stagnation, associated as it is with the presence in the newspaper of just one bank, the owner of the newspaper and directly depending on the Treasury, in comparison to the many promoting themselves in the Carlino.

A further indicator of the weakness of the southern economic fabric can be found in the Job offers category. In the end, companies investing in the promotion of electrical appliances or motor vehicles, in furs or expensive watches relied on the circulation of money pumped into the Southern market by the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno, but the job market revealed the fragility of this system. Not only was the
number of ads, as for nearly all the other categories, far higher in the Carlino, in the Gazzetta there was a prevalence for the search for agents and licensors for products manufactured in the Northern regions while in the Carlino there were several offers for “real” jobs, looking for chemists, skilled workers, engineers and clerks, in particular in 1959. Bologna is not very far from the industrial triangle and in its own area the mechanical and fashion industries were blooming. Bari, however, was experiencing an illusionary welfare.

Conclusions

In the two years examined, the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno was artificially creating a new and conspicuous consumer power for Southern Italy which mainly rested on resources coming not from an internal economic development but from the distribution of public funds; a series of interventions aiming more at creating political consensus than at any real macroeconomic strategy. As a matter of fact, before the elections of May 1958, the Democrazia Cristiana party campaigned heavily only in the pages of the Gazzetta, proposing its political programme based on progress (but without adventurism), economic protection for the elderly and working opportunities for young people.

Wages created in the South between 1951 and 1959 decreased from 81.2% to 79.9% while goods imported from other regions increased from 18.8% to 20.1%, with an annual growth of consumption higher than that of wages (Rasi, 1982, pp. 78-79). Hence, a significant part of the public resources arriving South to support wages were going back to the Northern and Central regions to buy their products (Barbagallo, 1990, pp. 587-588). In the end, it was a growth fostered by external resources and devoured by consumption, leaving no local resources for local productive investments. Southern Italy was not receiving the kind of help that would have permitted it to close the gap with the rest of the nation, even if, for a couple of decades, it seemed otherwise (Felice, 2011). The massive regional economic policy, focused on top-down industrial plants and mass migration, greatly improved some economic indicators. Migration had an impact by reducing underemployment, so frequent in particular in agriculture, a sector that in 1951 still employed 64.7% of the labour force in Apulia (Felice, 2007), and by helping to improve the productivity of those remaining. At the same time, the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno, concentrating its efforts on heavy industries with capital-intensive activities, boosted industrial productivity but did not prompt distributed activities. When heavy industry was hit by the crises of the 1970s, very little was left: the impressive regional policy had not created the conditions for autonomous development (Trigilia, 1992). The convergence begun in the post-war years stopped in the 1970s before beginning a new decline (Felice, 2011, p. 934). Even if Apulia had become one of the few Southern regions capable of showing faint signs of growth, it still lacked the trigger of self-sustaining dynamics and too many problems had been left unresolved (Felice, 2007, p. 165). A strong construction industry, private services with low productivity (as in retail) and widespread public-sector employment are not a sound basis for autonomous development (Trigilia, 1994, p. 178). In 1951 in Bari, 9% of the working population was active in agriculture, 19% were public-sector employees, 23% worked in commercial activities and just 33% were industrial workers (Bianchi, 1997, p.253). In Bologna, on the other hand, the share of people active in the industrial sector was 41.2% in 1951 and 44.8% ten years later (Bellettini, 1984, p. 86) and from 1960 to 1963 the city ascended from the twelfth to the seventh place per capita income on a national basis (Parisini, 2012, p. 71).

At the same time, the global Italian demand was also being supported by this flow of money southward, resources that were going to be spent on products made in northern Italy. Consumption also registered another distortion: quick growth in some private sectors, such as transportation and electrical appliances, and very slow progress in the public sector, such as in education and medical services, causing the pages of the Gazzetta to bloom with ads for private clinics and doctors. Between 1953 and 1958, private intervention in the construction of school buildings produced nearly 3000 new schools while the public sector realized only 2065 (75% of whom were elementary schools) (Mochi, 1982, p. 326). In 1958 a car or a TV was owned by at least 50% of Italian families, but the number of beds in hospitals, as well as spaces and personnel designated for education, also due to a higher growth of population than before, were still grossly insufficient (Mochi, 1982, p. 331). From 1959 onwards, the number of beds available in hospitals increased, in particular in the Southern regions and thanks mainly to private clinics, but it was still not enough. When Finsider was going to build the iron-works in Taranto (its first section opened in 1961), problems relating to the health situation arose. The city had 29 private clinics and not a single public hospital and more or less one third of the people applying for the job had to be rejected because their health was insufficient (Simoncini, 1982, p. 386).
Thus, using advertising as a way to interpret this historical period, we can see how the economic operators unconsciously had a clearer view of the situation and of the existing gap between North and South than politicians did. If the latter had had this lucidity, interventions carried out through the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno would have focused more on the creation of infrastructure and less on random distribution of resources, more on fostering labour-intensive processes and less on the construction of capital-intensive industries isolated by the local productive context. Despite the impression that the North-South economic divide was on the verge of closing up, advertising in the two newspapers was unwillingly highlighting some of the fragilities of the system.

Notes
[1] The two newspapers had a slightly different page size; in order to compare advertising surfaces, data pertaining to the Gazzetta have been normalised.

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