



## Communication Strategies Used to Promote a ‘Made In’ and ‘Terroir’ Culture – The Case of France

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	<p>ABSTRACT</p>
<p>2016 Research Leap/Inovatus Services Ltd. All rights reserved.</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.35.3002">10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.35.3002</a> <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.35.3002">http://dx.doi.org/10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.35.3002</a></p>	<p>This study tries to decipher the mechanism and strategies used by official entities to communicate around Made In or ‘Terroir’ in France. We collected data from 13 organisms promoting ‘Terroir’ and ‘made in’ and it was coded through an inductive approach of content analysis. Results show that communication strategies use cognitive and identity-building values through the usage of labels /know-how/flavors (cognitive values) and of history-related links/product authenticity and logo creation (identity-building values). Affective and normative values are not used nor are visual cues to attract consumers’ attention. Communication relies more upon the feeling around some community of consumption.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b> CoO-effect, Made In, Communication</p>	

### 1. Introduction

Consumer surveys indicate that the places from which products originate and have been made is gaining importance in the consumer decision journey. Consumers display increasingly positive attitudes towards locally produced goods. This issue has even become a battleground for politicians running for public office, as seen in the American and French presidential elections. Aside from the economic arguments, however, cultural and identity-related arguments are used to advocate for locally made products, whatever the sector of activity. Professional associations and various producer clusters have, therefore, begun integrating the topic into their communication strategies. This is particularly true in the agro-food business in which the ‘Made In’ argument is often replaced by the ‘Terroir’ one. While the Country of Origin (CoO) effect has been extensively studied since the 1960’s (Maman Larraufie, 2013), most studies have focused upon the consumer and few have dealt with how companies and official bodies communicate the ‘Made In’ or ‘Terroir’ attributes of their products to the various audiences at which they are aimed. Given that communication is about building relationships (Peraya, 1998), it seems essential to master this aspect in order to promote locally produced goods, and, hence, shape a particular country-image. It is the objective of this

present study, therefore, to fill this gap in the literature, through deciphering the mechanisms and strategies behind ‘Made In’ and ‘Terroir’-oriented communication plans.

In order to achieve this objective, the specific case of France has been chosen. France is a country in which the discourses around ‘Made In’ and ‘Terroir’ are particularly numerous, with a debate over the feasibility of French people consuming French products, given the accessibility and price of these. Numerous communication campaigns targeting local audiences have been launched in France by various entities from consumer associations to trade unions, including official entities and brands. These should, therefore, provide comprehensive findings with which to answer the research question. A literature review assisted in investigating the various concepts and theories that could link communication in general with CoO-related issues, and, thereby, shape more precise hypotheses. Following this, to test these hypotheses, qualitative data from 13 organisms in charge of promoting ‘Terroir’ and ‘Made In’ were collected, and the inductive approach of content analysis was used to code the data, as few studies have been conducted on the topic (Lauri & Kyngas, 2005). The final part of the paper concludes with the limits and future developments of the study, along with practical

insights for managers and bodies actively involved in such promotions.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 'Made In' and 'Terroir' Cultures

A culture refers to a set of shared values, ideas and concepts that are endowed with positive or negative connotations (Hofstede, 2001). These, in turn, define what is considered to be acceptable behaviour in a given culture.

The 'Made In' culture is, therefore, liable to mirror the values associated with a product's country of origin, heavily impacted by the so-called country image (Giraldi & Ikeda, 2009; Jung, Lee, Kim, & Yang, 2014). Several values characterize this image: cognitive, affective and normative values. They all produce the CoO effect through halo or experience effects (Min Han, 1989).

Accordingly, an example of cognitive value would be the fact that the CoO of a product is used as an indicator of the product quality (reliability and durability) by non-expert consumers at the product attributes level (Insch & McBride, 2004). An example of affective value would be the product beliefs that are invented by consumers based on the symbolic facets of the CoO as felt by the consumer (Erickson, Johansson, & Chao, 1984). The normative value directly impacts the consumer's willingness to buy (and the actual act of buying): he does not really care about the CoO but feels he has to buy the product as a result of conditioning messages emitted by various entities such as governments (Maman Larraufie, 2013).

The 'terroir' culture is slightly different. First of all, it is difficult to define 'terroir' as it is a specifically French concept (part of the French cultural exception). Products from a given terroir reflect a strong identity dimension, with each terroir aiming at conveying a different image (Bérard & Marchenay, 1995). Local official entities try to shape an identity, which also results in the specific valorization of the products emanating from this identity. A terroir is actually defined through its geography and physical characteristics. It is this natural environment that influences the quality and nature of its products (Bérard & Marchenay, 1995), and which justifies the claim of an official label (AOC/AOP/IGP). In addition, there is also some historic expertise around the production of the goods, that can only be found in that particular region. The 'Terroir' culture can, therefore, be characterised by three different values: identity, attachment to the locus and attachment to time.

### 2.2 Consumer Behaviour Confronting the 'Made In' and Terroir Cultures

No consensus has ever been reached upon the demographics that impact the CoO effect on consumer behaviour (Maman Larraufie, 2013): all of the studies that have attempted to test the impact of age and gender variables tend to contradict one

another. In a study dating back to the 1970s, however, highly educated people were found to favour more foreign products than lowly educated people (Dornoff, Tankersley, & White, 1974). This could, however, be related to the cognitive value of 'Made In' (quality cue). This cognitive value can also be linked to all findings around the impact of the consumer's degree of expertise on the valence and strength of the CoO effect (Maheswaran, 1994), as well as to the degree of involvement during the purchasing process (Prendergast, Tsang, & Chan, 2010).

Consumers' nationalities also moderate the CoO effect on consumer behaviour. This is due to the fact that consumers tend to favour products from a country with a perceived familiar culture rather than a culture that is perceived as radically different. Additionally, different nationalities demonstrate different degrees of ethnocentrism, that is, the tendency of consumers to systematically favour products from their own countries (Kaynak & Kara, 2002; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). This is more related to the affective value of Made In.

It has been widely accepted that consumers buy products in some identity-building journey (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Lantz & Loeb, 1996). When it comes to the CoO effect, therefore, it would make sense to link this to the identity-related dimension of the terroir culture. Consistent images should render the consumer more inclined to buy the product (Shu, Strombeck, & Hsieh, 2013), so communication around this matter is likely to promote the terroir culture.

## 3. Hypotheses Building

In promoting the 'Made In' and 'Terroir' cultures, the responsible entities should, perhaps, consider implementing a pull communication strategy, stressing the common product characteristics that have importance in consumers' eyes (Gobe, 2010). According to the previous sections, consumers are likely to be affected by expectations with regard to the cognitive, affective, normative and identity-building facets of the 'Made In' and 'Terroir' cultures. Hence the following hypothesis:

H1: Communication strategies to promote 'Made In' and 'terroir' cultures emphasise cognitive, affective and normative values, along with the identity-building value of the terroir culture.

The first necessity of a communication strategy is to attract the attention of consumers. Several external factors can be utilised to achieve this such as the intensity of the message, the size of the medium, a contrast between the medium and the environment and some repetition of the message through differing cues and movement (Petrof, 1993). This is not specific to the promotion of 'Made In' and 'Terroir' cultures but is expected to remain important in this case. Hence the following hypothesis:

H2: Communication strategies to promote 'Made In' and 'Terroir' use visual cues to attract consumers' attention to the topic.

Traditionally in marketing it is important to thank consumers in whatever fashion for having shown some interest in one's boutique, shop, product, or communication campaign. The key towards loyalty lies in consumer value (Reichheld, 1996). This is also valid for the 'Made In' and 'Terroir' cultures. Consequently, in order to strengthen consumer loyalty in this area one needs to fulfil the added value promise that is made. This might be achieved by building a community (Maffesoli, 1988), based on a common feeling of belonging; therefore, building a brand community around 'Made In' and 'terroir' could be part of the communication strategy used to promote the 'Made In' and terroir cultures. Such a community would be specialised, not geographically limited and based on a structured set of social relationships between the users of local 'Made In' and 'terroir' products (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Hence the following hypothesis:

H3: Communication strategies to promote 'Made In' and 'Terroir' cultures utilises consumers' feelings of belonging to a community.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Data for Analysis

The objective of the study is to identify communication strategies used to promote 'Made In' and 'Terroir' cultures. A qualitative methodology is used as the study is exploratory by nature. In particular, the aim is not to provide statistics about the typology of strategies that are used, but to closely examine their copy and content.

### 4.2 Sample

To acquire the most representative data possible, a theoretical sampling method was employed using the same categorisation of products that is used during the French Agricultural Contest. This contest is divided in two categories: the General Wine Contest and the General Products Contest. As wine is a specific sector of activity, with a particular history and connections, it was decided to focus on the 'General Products' list, and identify the categories in which some professional and producers' associations exist, with the aim of promoting the products to the relevant stakeholders (from consumers to politicians). In the end, data were collected from 13 organisms responsible for promoting 'Terroir' and 'Made In', representing half of the 24 types of products participating in the General Products Contest (see Table 1 for the sample list). Each product in the list is endowed with some official labelling such as AOP, AOC or IGP.

Table 1 presents the nature of the sample from which data was collected.

**Table 1:** Sample characteristics

CATEGORY	Product	Entity in charge of promoting the product
Wines and spirits	Bordeaux wines	Comité Interprofessionnel des Vins de Bordeaux
	Champagne wines	Comité Interprofessionnel des Vins de Champagne
	Brittany cider	Interprofession Des Appellations Cidricoles
	Bourgogne wines	Bureau Interprofessionnel des Vins de Bourgogne
Cheese and dairy products	Camembert cheese from Normandie	Organisation de Défense du Camembert de Normandie
	Comté cheese	Comité Interprofessionnel du Gruyère de Comté
	Isigny butter and cream	Coopérative et Syndicat Isigny Sainte-Mère
Meat and delicatessen	Bayonne ham	Consortium du Jambon de Bayonne
	South-West foies gras	Association de promotion des « Canard à Foie gras du Sud-Ouest »
Spices	Espelette pepper	Syndicat de promotion du Piment d'Espelette
Shellfish	Oléron Oysters	Groupement Qualité Huitres Marennes Oléron
	Bouchot mussels	Comité de Défense et de Gestion du Label AOP "Moules de bouchot de la Baie du Mont-Saint-Michel"
Fruits and vegetables	Roscoff onions	Syndicat de défense et de promotion de l'Oignon de Roscoff

### 4.3 Data Collection and Coding Process

Data were collected from the websites of the various sampled entities to obtain readily available content, as if the researcher were a normal consumer or member of the audience. It is rich data as it blends old communication tools and new ones – text, pictures and photography, animation, audio and video – and ultimately enables some interaction between the emitter and the recipient of the message (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). It should also display the most recent content as a showcase of what the entities are doing to promote their products. In addition, product packaging, events and offline advertising were also used to collect some data.

The inductive approach of content analysis was used to code the data, as few studies have been conducted on the topic (Lauri & Kyngäs, 2005). Such a method can be used to test theoretical hypotheses in order to gain some better understanding of the data: words and phrases are classified into various categories to identify the communication content. Those that belong to a single category actually share the same meaning (Cavanagh, 1997). In order to achieve this, a systematic process of message content description is performed until a saturation point is reached, leading towards a category grid. Such a grid should match specific criteria in order to be considered valid: mutual exclusion, homogeneity, productivity and objectivity (Berelson, 1952). The open coding process of all communication data is then completed by filling in the grid: each time a category in the grid is found +1 is marked in the grid. In cases where a category does not

appear for a given communication data, a score of 0 is assigned.

The following grid was created and used for open coding in the back-and-forth process previously described (see Table 2)

**Table 2:** Coding Grid

Value	Communication element	Code
Cognitive	Display of the 'Origine France Garantie' label or another non-official origin-related label	COG 1
	AOC / AOP / IGP label	COG 2
	Focus on know-how	COG 3
	Emphasis on taste	COG 4
Affective	French flag or colours	AFF 1
	Region-related information	AFF 2
Normative	CSR-oriented discourse	NOR 1
	Emphasis on producers	NOR 2
Identity	Regional landscape	IDE 1
	Link with history and authenticity	IDE 2
	Specific logo for the product	IDE 3
Visual or hearing devices	Graphical charter for the product	VIS 1
	Information duplicated in various formats	VIS 2
	Experiential marketing, movement	VIS 3
Feeling of community-belonging	Social networks presence	APP 1
	"you" massively used in the communication copy	APP 2
	Events to gather consumers are regularly organized	APP 3
	Existence of an official brotherhood / fraternity	APP 4
	Recipes sharing	APP 5

Table 2 presents the coding grid that emerged with some inductive process.

## 5. Results

The results of the coding enable us to understand the elements upon which the strategies to promote 'Made In' and 'Terroir' cultures are constructed at two different levels. These are the 'Value' level (column one - which values are the most used in the communication strategies), and the 'Element' level (column two - which elements are most used in the communication strategies).

Table 3 presents the results of the coding of the 13 entities in the sample.

Cognitive, identity-related and community-belonging values, therefore, are mostly used in the various communication strategies. The entities responsible for promoting 'Made In' and 'Terroir' cultures thus try to emphasise the qualitative dimension of the product along with its characteristic dimension in line with the identity of the region of origin of the product. In addition, they attempt to build a real community around the products they promote in order to bring together their fans and followers. Affective and normative values are infrequently used, which means that these same entities do not try to convince the consumer to buy a product through an emotional link with the region of origin, nor as part of a civic act. Hypothesis 1 is, therefore, only partially supported.

**Table 3:** Coding result

CODE	ELEMENT	Score /13*	Score %**	Average %	Distribution %***
COG1	Display of the 'Origine France Garantie' label or another non-official origin-related label	5	38%	79%	28%
COG2	AOC / AOP / IGP label	13	100%		
COG3	Focus on know-how	12	92%		
COG4	Emphasis on taste	11	85%		
AFF1	French flag or colours	1	8%	31%	5%
AFF2	Region-related information	7	54%		
NOR1	CSR-oriented discourse	3	23%	46%	8%
NOR2	Emphasis on producers	9	69%		
IDE1	Regional landscape	7	54%	74%	20%
IDE2	Link with history and authenticity	11	85%		
IDE3	Specific logo for the product	11	85%		
VIS1	Graphical charter for the product	8	62%	41%	11%
VIS4	Information duplicated in various formats	4	31%		
VIS5	Experiential marketing, movement	4	31%		
APP1	Social networks presence	9	69%	63%	28%
APP2	"you" massively used in the communication copy	1	8%		
APP3	Events to gather consumers are regularly organized	8	62%		
APP4	Existence of an official brotherhood / fraternity	11	85%		
APP5	Recipes sharing	12	92%		

\* counts the number of times a given element was observed in the communication data / \*\* conversion of the score into a percentage / \*\*\* the proportion of each of the values observed in the communication data

Table 3 presents some results after coding the data with the grid presented as Table 2.

In examining the 'Element' level, it appears that all the entities responsible for promoting 'Made In' and 'Terroir' do display official labels (AOP/AOC/IGP) on their products, making it an imperative communication component. Additionally, seven elements are present at a percentage above 75% in the studied communication data: official labels (AOP/AOC/IGP), a focus on expertise, an emphasis on taste, a link to history and authenticity, a specific logo for the product, the sharing of recipes and the existence of a brotherhood or fraternity. These elements enable the communication strategies to rely upon cognitive and identity-related values, along with a sense of belonging to a community. This is consistent with previous findings (see above). Hypothesis 3 is, therefore, validated.

Lastly, it is important to note that two elements in particular are missing from the observed communication strategies: the presence of the French flag (8%) and the 'us' style of communication (8%). This may be linked to the relatively slight attachment that French people have to their national flag (Caron, 2013). Such a finding would in all probability be different in communication strategies targeting foreign

countries, since the identity would be built around 'France' rather than around specific regions. Moreover, it would also perhaps be different in the setting of another country. For instance, American consumers are partially driven to buy American products by feelings associated with national pride (Brown & Wahlers, 2002). This presents a strong argument for the visual representation of this pride through the display of an American flag. Therefore, no conclusion can really be drawn from this current finding that should be put back into its cultural context.

Visual cues weighed in at only 11% in the communication strategies that were studied. When used, the product itself may be emphasised (8/13), for instance with close-up images. In addition, few entities responsible for promoting the 'Made In' and 'terroir' cultures repeat the same information several times in different formats or use experiential marketing to attract consumers' attention. Hypothesis 2 is, therefore, not validated.

## 6. Discussion and Managerial Recommendations

Only one out of the three hypotheses that derived from the literature was completely validated. This indicates how specific the promotion of a 'culture' might be. While past research shows that cognitive, affective and normative mechanisms do characterise the process of the ways in which the CoO actually impacts attitudes towards the product, purchase intention and actual purchase (Bolliger, 2011a); the promotion of it by the entities responsible does not rely upon the three mechanisms. It may seem surprising but it is actually quite understandable as the entities do usually address one stage of the consumer decision-making process and not several audiences at different stages of it simultaneously. In particular, they make little use of communication at the very moment of purchase (triggering connotation), while it is at this stage that the normative process of the CoO effect is the most prominent (Bolliger, 2011b).

Additionally, it was found that visual cues are little utilised. Again this finding may be surprising, particularly since the communication data were collected online. Online communication is usually more vivid and more dynamic than offline communication, with some interaction between the audience and the brand (Gao, Zhang, Wang, & Ba, 2012; Singh, Furrer, & Ostinelli, 2004). This disconcerting finding may actually come from the nature of the emitting entities as the entities that gather French producers and industrials are usually convenience-based, with little harmony and complex communication-building processes (Maman Larraufie, 2014). This can result in randomly made or domestic communication elements, with little forethought ultimately to a strategic communication plan.

In terms of managerial recommendations, several emerge from the present study. While communication elements relying

upon cognitive value are largely used by the entities responsible for promoting 'Made In' and 'Terroir' cultures, it is surprising to note the 'forest' of labels that they display on packaging and other communication media. It would be more powerful to rely upon a single widely known label. In addition, official labels should be favoured as they tend to reassure final consumers and buyers of authenticity. Moreover, the affective value is little used, which in postmodern sociological times (or even hypermodern) is not only surprising but also results in failing to capture some categories of consumers. Although no consensus has been found regarding the moderating effect of age or cohort on the impact of CoO during the consumer purchase journey (Maman Larraufie, 2013), it was demonstrated some time ago that different communication strategies work better depending on the demographics and psychographics of the audience (Bogart, 1984). For that reason, including some elements of affective value would probably better 'speak' to specific segments of the audience.

The identity value is supplied but again with a very limited number of artefacts, and without telling a story (which could also be done using visual cues). Again, at a time where narration has taken over the space in communication, it may appear outdated to rely upon basic cues. Some 'spectacularisation' of the product could match more current consumers' ethics (Baudrillard, 2004).

## 7. Conclusion and Future Research Developments

Results have shown that the communication strategies for promoting a 'Made in France' culture and a French 'terroir' use cognitive and identity-building values, in particular, through the usage of labels (DOP...) expertise, flavours (cognitive values) and history-related links, product authenticity and logo creation (identity-building values). Affective and normative values are not particularly utilised. In addition, we could not find evidence that communication strategies do use visual cues to attract consumers' attention, while we did find evidence that they rely upon the feelings around some communities of consumption.

However, this study has some limits. First of all, the sample was theoretical by nature, thus not statistically representative of all entities responsible for promoting the 'Made In' and 'Terroir' cultures. It would be valuable to extend the study to more entities, also from different sectors of activity, such as manufactured goods. Additionally, a division between strategies for well-known products (e.g. camembert cheese) and strategies for lesser known products might provide new and interesting findings. Moreover, as previously mentioned, the communication data that have been studied only targeted a French audience. It would be valuable to see whether there are some differences when the communication regarding 'Made In' and 'Terroir' targets foreign audiences. Lastly, this paper presents a specific case (France) in a specific product category

(food). For that reason, its results cannot be generalised beyond countries and product categories that sharing close characteristics: while we can assume that the results would be valid for Italy and food, they may be quite different for the US and cars.

Another interesting future research development would be to challenge the findings with the ways in which consumers actually perceive the communication strategies and what they understand and what they feel and think they must do when exposed to the content and copy of the communication data that were presented in this paper.

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