

## Effective communication of vertical integration as a stimulus for the consumption of local primary products (think-local)

### Summary

Cooperativism and vertical integration (oversight and traceability of the entire production process, from the primary sector to the final consumer) is a valuable option for companies in the primary sector for coping with the fragile nature of the agricultural sector, by enabling them to position themselves in different markets and to enhance their competitiveness.

BonÀrea Agrupa, the business group of the company Corporació Alimentària de Guissona (CAGSA), works in and monitors the entire food chain "from field to plate".

This Operational Group focuses on conveying the values of an ethical and responsible vertical integration which fosters the consumption of local products and adds value to the source of the product and primary production to the end consumer. With this objective, a study is made of consumer behaviour, based on a multidisciplinary approach focusing on both individual and unconscious cognitive bases, in order to encourage short-term conative changes, especially in the population aged under 30 years old (generation Z and millennials).

### Objectives

The main objective is to change the image of the BonÀrea brand and to transmit the values of vertical integration to the consumer. Other aims are to:

- Determine the perception of the brand and the BonÀrea shopping areas and the values it conveys.
- Identify opportunities for improvement in BonÀrea shopping areas.
- Study in depth how to improve the shopping experience in BonÀrea stores, and how to effectively convey the values associated with vertical integration.
- Study the effectiveness of industrial tourism as a system for improving the brand's image and conveying the company's values.
- Undertake improvement measures in pilot establishments and in industrial tourism activities, and assess the response from consumers.

### Description of the actions carried out in the project

The following specific actions were taken to achieve these goals:

- Action 1. Determination of the perception and image of the BonÀrea brand through discussion groups and personal interviews with the application of neuroscience measures.
- Action 2. Determination of the perception and image of the BonÀrea brand through personal interviews with the application of neuroscience measures and intervention studies.
- Action 3. In-depth analysis of how to improve shopping experience in BonÀrea stores through ethnographic study.
- Action 4. Assessment of the consumer response after undertaking actions for improvement in pilot establishments and in industrial tourism activities. Design, assessment and validation by explicit and implicit measures.

- Action 5. Dissemination of the results.

## Final results and practical recommendations

Along the project, several improvement proposals have been identified in order to effectively convey the values of vertical integration through physical establishments and online purchasing. These proposals are presented below:

A – Suggestions for the improvement of BonÀrea physical establishments:

- Use of colours that remind customers of nature, such as brown, green, beige...
- Placing plants at shops to emphasize the ties with nature.
- Make establishments resemble a village shop by using materials such as wicker or wood for floors, shelves, cashiers, sideboards...
- Adding stones, bricks, wood, etc. to the walls so that they look more rustic.
- Use of low environmental impact packages and thus reducing the use of plastic, particularly, at packaging fruits and vegetables (for example cotton trays and carton meshes).
- Use of blackboards to write offers and prices in chalk.
- Painting walls to make them more welcoming and using them to communicate information about our policy of “without intermediaries” with clear messages. Use of logotype or slogan “without intermediaries” and use of photos of the countryside and farmers.
- Placing posters that show the origin of each product. Telling graphical histories with the images of products, farmers and farmhouses on the walls of the shops and on the outside of the lorries (real histories). Highlighting on the shelves that the product is entirely done by BonArea from start to finish.
- Placing of a poster displaying a map that shows the villages and locations from where the products come.
- Designing brown-coloured or beige-coloured work uniforms which remind the ties with nature and rural environment.
- Modification of the typography used for labels so that they look more handwritten.
- Recover the name “Cooperativa de Guissona” to convey the values of the company more effectively.
- Modification of the light facility of the establishments so that light becomes warmer and less direct.
- Convey the values that appear in the BonÀrea corporate video: using sentences from the video throughout the shops and displaying the video on screens.
- Advertise in general and in the social media in coordinated action.
- Placing boards with messages such as: “did you know that... / BonÀrea works without intermediaries / we make our own products / which are from Catalonia?”, “did you know that... / these boxes are made with less carton / they save more time?”
- Putting notes on the floor about the values associated with vertical integration.
- Disposing a specific zone for products made without intermediaries (more ecological products)
- Distinguish the own-made products with a logo or seal (on them or on the shelves) that makes clear that it is made without intermediaries.

- Regarding the white boxes that BonÀrea uses for transporting and exposing its products at shops, a distinctive sign could be designed in order to stress their sustainability, and, to improve their image, the colour and the materials could be changed, as well as of reducing their presence in shops.

B – Suggestions for the improvement of BonÀrea online shopping web:

- Highlight more the latest products and updates (this is an aspect very appreciated by the millennial generation)
- Reduce the amount of product categories that are displayed on the home page (there is no consistent proportion between the food category and the others)
- Although the simplicity of the web helps conveying the message “without intermediaries”, participants also propose the use of colours that remind nature and images of the countryside and farmers related to the location from which products come
- Create a category for products without intermediaries and/or local products
- Highlight products made without intermediaries and/or local products with a logotype especially made for that purpose. For example, a distinctive sign which indicates the product origin
- Participants suggest using clearer messages especially addressed to them, as they stated:
  - *“Presenting images on the banners that show the ties to the countryside and the farms with a sentence that draws the attention of the customers”*
  - *“Highlighting that prices are more affordable due to the fact that they don’t have intermediaries, even with a pop up message”*

## Conclusions

The main conclusions of the project are presented below:

- The main values associated to BonÀrea are the price-performance ratio, the confidence and the trading of locally made products.
- A notable positive change has been noticed in the perception of the BonÀrea brand and shops along the project of improvement that has been done.
- Younger consumers (millennials) are the ones that are more aware of sustainability, animal welfare and social responsibility. Therefore, it is necessary that the company strategies addressed to this target are aligned to these values.
- The combination of the classical techniques of consumer behaviour studies and the use of neuroscience measures has allowed inquire and identify more effectively how to improve the global shopping experience.
- The main improvement actions addressed to make the BonÀrea shopping spaces aligned to the values the company pretends to convey, especially the ones associated to vertical integration, have to be directed to provide a context of purchasing closer to the rural environment and the nature, while giving value to the history and the people behind their products.
- Improvement actions identified and implemented in a pilot level allowed to effectively convey the values associated to vertical integration (without intermediaries).

**Leader of the Operational Group**

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CONTACT E-MAIL: [irta@irta.cat](mailto:irta@irta.cat)**Subject area(s) of application** Supply chain, marketing and consumption**Geographical area(s) of application**

PROVINCE(S): All

REGION(S): All

**Project website and dissemination**<https://www.irta.cat/ca/projecte/think-local-comunicacio-efectiva-de-la-integracio-vertical-com-estimul-al-consum-de-productes-primaris-locales/><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hmA-iXYisc>**More information on the project**

PROJECT DATES	TOTAL BUDGET
Start date: July 2019	Total budget: €212,000.00
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