Alcohol as an object of social construction: a mixed-methods approach to joint analysis of the press and the Italian laws

Giovanna Leone[1], Isabella Mingo[1], Mauro Sarrica[1], Barbara Treglia[2]

[1]Departiment of Communication and Social Research, Sapienza University of Rome- Italy
[2]Departiment of Social Sciences, Sapienza University of Rome- Italy

Abstract

The *use and abuse of alcohol by young people* are debated social issues in Italy, particularly as regards the changes in the quantity and the style of consumption observed. The present contribution examines the relationship between political choices and the representations diffused by the media. In detail, this research compares the contents of laws regulating the use and sale of alcohol with the way in which alcohol-related issues are represented by the press.

Drawing on a preliminary analysis of the entire corpus of Italian laws (from 1940 to 2009), three turning points in the regulation of alcoholics in Italy were identified: 1999, 2003, and 2009. The current contribution focused on these three years. The norms issued by the Italian Parliament in 1999, 2003, and 2009 and a representative sample of articles published on "alcohol and young people" by the two most read Italian generalist newspapers (*La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera*) constituted the textual corpus of this investigation. The analysis followed a mixed-methods strategy: the two corpora were submitted to different typologies of content analyses (the lexicometric and qualitative approaches were applied), in order to point out the main contents, the similarity and the differences between the themes, as well as their relative prominence in the media and in the laws.

Keywords: social construction, mixed methods approach.

1. Introduction

Italy is among the lowest countries in the European ranking for annual alcohol consumption per capita, and qualifies, together with Portugal, as the European Union country with the highest number of teetotallers. However, evident signals of change in the models of consumption are traceable, above all in relation to the youngest inhabitants: there are those who look to alcohol abuse in situations of personal isolation and those who seek transgression, bringing about new behaviours more similar to those widespread in northern European and Atlantic countries (Ministero della Salute, 2010; Prina, 2010).

This evolution does not involve only the youth categories: a change is also observable in the way in which alcohol is seen in the broader social context, for example introducing the dimension of quality into drinking, and the normative limits between use and abuse are being defined.

In the present contribution we deal with the dialectic between tradition and innovation, between practices and social norms: through a mixed-methods approach we empirically investigate the way in which alcohol is represented in the laws and the press in Italy.

Through the adoption of the theoretical perspective of social representations (Moscovici & Markova, 1998), awareness, attitudes and individual practices are brought back to the social dimension in which the same practices and behaviours assume meaning and are socially constructed. Differently from myths and archetypes, social representations are characterized by stability and dynamism, emerging thus as forms typical of de-traditionalized societies: "an arena characterized by mobility, [...] diversity between social groups, a high degree of reflexivity, [...] mass and widespread circulation of information via mass media" (Jovchelovitch, 2001, p.171). In these varied contexts, institutional protagonists and social groups propose and actively promote different motions favouring the coexistence of shared and stable meanings, the redefinition of traditional beliefs and the emergence of innovative ideas and practices.

The passage from custom to convention, that is, from a purely habitual way of acting to the "conception of an obligatoriness of determinate ways of acting which have become habitual", is, as Weber asserts, a "very fluid" transition, and equally fluid is the passage from convention to customary right and from this to statutory right (Treves, 2002, p.149).

In this sense, the relationship between legal norm and change is twofold. Laws and policy choices may be seen as moments of recognition, formalization, and legitimization of innovations that are widespread in the population, or may themselves be promoters of change. Materialized in the laws, the normative changes contribute to the modification of social representations, interacting with individual practices and technical innovations (Flick, 2000; Castro & Mouro, 2011).

From these premises, in the present contribution, two aspects are focused on:

1. the laws, materialization, and source of change in the representation of alcohol;

2. the daily newspapers, which mediate and transfer change to different levels from the formal one.

2. Methodology

2.1. Strategy of Analysis

The strategy of analysis uses a mixed-methods strategy, characterized by the use of both qualitative and quantitative procedures of collection and data analysis in the context of a single study (Cresswell, 1999). We followed a sequential explanatory design (Creswell *et al.*, 2003) in three steps. The first step involved the construction of the corpus and a first lexicometric analysis using quantitative techniques. In this phase the TaLTaC2[1] software was used to extract the most relevant forms and their frequencies in the texts. In the second phase, which was also quantitative, a multivariate exploratory technique was applied, supported by the software Spad, to identify the lexicon-textual dimensions that diversify the subcorpora. In the third stage, in order to test a hypothesis that emerged from the previous step, we proceeded to the selection

---

[1]   TaLTaC2 is software for the automatic analysis of the text using the dual approach of text analysis and text mining (www.taltac.it).

of significant fragments. Qualitative analysis was performed on these fragments with the aid of CAQDAS (Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis) software (NVivo)[2] that allows "in vivo" coding to identify other useful categories of analysis.

2.2. The Corpus: Criteria, Procedures for Construction, and Preliminary Analysis

The set of significant texts for the inquiry was constituted by both legal normative texts and articles from daily newspapers. The selection of the texts was completed using a structured process that took as its starting point the preliminary analysis of the national laws and norms that, over the course of time, have dealt with the problem of alcohol.

First we considered a very extended period of about seventy years (1940–2009), in which alcohol moved from being considered a "commodity" to being thought of as a "problem of public order", as a "risk", and, in more recent times, as posing a social as well as a health problem (Cottino, 1991; Prina, 2010).

The entire corpus of the laws and norms[3] was constituted by 60437 occurrences, of which 6564 used different words. We thus chose to reduce the complexity of the data by means of a factorial technique. Correspondence analysis was applied to the matrix lemmas/years. The lemmas included the lemmatized forms with a threshold frequency of < 25, belonging to the grammatical categories considered semantically the most relevant (verbs, nouns, proper names, adjectives). The results highlighted the differences among laws and norms texts and confirmed a changed perspective of the institutions in relation to the problem. Three turning points were thus individuated, considering the texts that obtained the highest contributions on the first two factorial axes (table 1): 1999, 2003, and 2009.

Variable label	Coordinates		Contribution		Squared Cosines	
	Axis 1	Axis 2	Axis 1	Axis 2	Axis 1	Axis 2
1940	-0.09	-0.68	0.0	0.4	0.00	0.02
1956	-0.44	-0.44	0.0	0.1	0.01	0.01
1993	-1.29	-0.08	5.1	0.1	0.37	0.00
1999	-1.21	0.14	67.0	2.5	0.96	0.01
2001	-0.23	-0.18	1.1	1.9	0.06	0.04
2003	0.53	0.64	15.2	60.7	0.41	0.59
2005	-0.09	-0.63	0.0	0.3	0.00	0.03
2008	0.32	-0.38	3.3	12.6	0.23	0.32
2009	0.33	-0.32	8.0	21.6	0.39	0.38

Tab. 1 Norms: coordinates, and contribution axis 1–2 (inertia 67.37%)

---

2   NVivo is a qualitative analysis software package by QSR International (www.qsrinternational.com).

3   The norms included those from the early twentieth century – e.g. Codice penale (coordinato ed aggiornato del Regio Decreto 19 ottobre 1930, n. 1398) Articoli dal 686 al 691; Regio decreto 6 maggio 1940 n. 635; Approvazione del regolamento per l'esecuzione del testo unico 18 giugno 1931, n. 773, delle leggi di pubblica sicurezza. Articolo 188) – to the most recent ones – Legge 15 luglio 2009 n. 94 Disposizioni in materia di sicurezza pubblica.

Consequently, norms and press articles were selected from these three years (table 3) and submitted to further analysis. The subcorpus of press is constituted by a sample of articles taken from two major daily papers with national distribution – *Il Corriere della sera* and *La Repubblica*. The articles were collected from the online archives of the two newspapers, using the keywords "alcol giovani" ("alcohol young people") (table 1).

Starting from these archives we proceeded to a proportional stratified sampling,4 performing the extraction systematically and guaranteeing for each stratum the number showed in the subsequent schema.

Subcorpus Alcol	1999		2003		2009		Total	
	Tot.	Sample	Tot.	Sample	Tot.	Sample	Tot.	Sample
Corriere	57	20	113	39	196	68	366	127
Repubblica	35	12	79	28	238	83	352	123
	92	**32**	**192**	**67**	**434**	**151**	**718**	**250**

Tab. 2 Articles by newspapers and time

2.3. The Norm–Press Corpus

These preliminary procedures constituted the premises for the joint examination of the norms and press articles. A corpus including the two respective subcorpora was compiled and its lexicometric characteristics are presented in table 3. The corpus was structured in texts that differ on the basis of the year (the three years under consideration) and the source (the legal norms and the two newspapers).

Corpus Norms+Press	Subcorpus Norms	Subcorpus Press
N=185032	N=43676	N=141356
V=23834	V=5548	V=21460
(V/N)*100=12.881	(V/N)*100=12.703	(V/N)*100=15.181
$(V_1/V)*100=50.948$	$(V_1/V)*100=45.908$	$(V_1/V)*100=53.574$
N/V=7.763	N/V=7.872	N/V=6.587
V/sqr(N)=55.408	V/sqr(N)=26.547	V/sqr(N)=57.078
Legend: N=Tokens, V=Types, V_1=Hapax legomenon		

Tab. 3 Lexicometric measurements of the corpus and of the subcorpora

From the lexical point of view, after the application of the procedure of normalization of the text, we proceeded to grammatical tagging and then to the lemmatization of the graphic forms with the aim of reducing the variability of the corpus. The individuation of grammatical category was useful for semantic purposes as well, in order to concentrate on the graphic form most "dense" in meaning (adjectives, verbs, nouns) on which the following procedures are focused (Bolasco, 1999).

---

4   This study is part of a larger research project that has also considered the issue of drugs. Therefore, sampling was necessary to reduce the time of collection and data analysis.

3. Results

3.1. Positive or Negative? The Tones of the Subcorpora Compared

The first comparison between the two subcorpora used the linguistic resources of TaLTaC2. We considered the classification of positive and negative adjectives. The negativity index for adjectives – that is, the ratio between negative and positive occurrences – is equal to 0.58 for the entire corpus. The values are significantly different between the subcorpus of the legal norms and that of the press. Taking an index equal to at least 0.4 as a threshold for negative connotation (Bolasco & Della Ratta, 2004), the corpus of the norms may be considered to be negative only in 2009 (fig. 1). The press (*La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della sera*) in the three years considered used a decidedly negative tone instead.
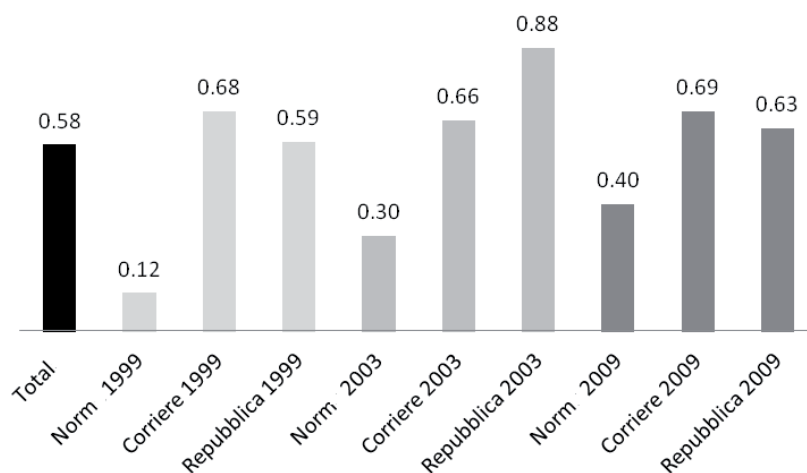

Fig. 1 Index of negativity of adjectives in the corpus and in the fragments

3.2. Legal Norms and Press: Analogies and Differences

The correspondence analysis carried out on the lemmas/texts matrix, and more precisely on the 1042 lemmas with frequency > 10 (for a total of 37531 occurrences) and on the 9 texts (3 for the norms and 6 for newspapers), summarizes the dispersion of the data in a low-dimensional representation, and highlights the analogies and differences between the representations of the phenomenon in time and across the sources.

The analysis led to the identification of four dimensions that explain 83.9% of the total inertia. The texts of the legal norms contribute the most to the first three axes, while the newspaper texts contribute the most to the fourth axis (table 4).

	Rel. Weight	Dist. or	Coordinates				Contributions				Squared cosines			
			Axis1	Axis2	Axis3	Axis4	Axis1	Axis2	Axis3	Axis4	Axis1	Axis2	Axis3	Axis4
1999_C	9.58	0.76	-0.45	0.09	-0.02	0.52	3.76	0.25	0.02	35.10	0.27	0.01	0.00	0.35
1999_N	8.35	3.93	0.78	-1.82	-0.17	-0.02	9.70	80.26	1.46	0.06	0.15	0.84	0.01	0.00
1999_R	4.07	1.37	-0.39	0.03	0.01	0.39	1.20	0.01	0.00	8.65	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.11
2003_C	12.87	0.57	-0.38	0.02	0.00	0.27	3.59	0.01	0.00	13.05	0.26	0.00	0.00	0.13
2009_N	6.77	4.19	1.52	0.83	-1.08	0.01	30.22	13.64	49.35	0.00	0.55	0.17	0.28	0.00
2009_R	6.86	0.77	-0.40	0.04	-0.01	0.15	2.13	0.04	0.00	2.05	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.03
2009_C	20.20	0.40	-0.42	0.10	0.01	-0.30	6.92	0.63	0.00	25.73	0.44	0.03	0.00	0.23
2009_N	10.29	2.74	1.35	0.40	0.88	0.01	35.81	4.71	49.15	0.01	0.66	0.06	0.28	0.00
2009_R	21.02	0.37	-0.41	0.08	-0.01	-0.23	6.67	0.44	0.01	15.35	0.44	0.02	0.00	0.14
Legend: N=norm; C=*Il Corriere della sera*; R=*La Repubblica*														

Tab. 4 Factorial axes

- The first axis (39.8% of inertia) further synthesizes the polarities norms/press and in particular the differences between the lexicons used by the norms (positive semi-axis) compared with those of the press (negative semi-axis).

- The second factorial axis (26.2% of inertia) expresses the antithesis between the social problem and the condemnatory position polarities. The difference in the lexicons used by the norms of 1999 (negative semi-axis) from those of 2003 and 2009 (positive semi-axis) emerges on this dimension. In particular, the lemmas with higher absolute contribution to the negative semi-axis are: service, task, organization, accreditation, region, intervention, evaluation, activity, programming, structure, therapeutic, treatment, rehabilitation, and addiction. This lexicon indicates that the norms of 1999 are oriented to the resolution of a social problem, for which intervention and structural plans are prepared. On the opposite pole, the lemmas that contribute more to the positive semi-axis are: sanction, payment, pecuniary, control, penal code, circulation, violation, crime, prefect, and euro. These terms indicate that a condemnatory position towards alcohol abuse and related actions prevails in 2003 and 2009.

- The third factorial axis (12.3% of inertia) synthesizes different representations of crimes connected with alcohol abuse. The crimes are polarized by the two extremes administrative charge and criminal charge. There emerges the difference between the lexicons of the legal norms of 2003 and those of 2009. The year 2003 is associated with terms such as vehicle, payment, sanction, circulation, violation, charge, and ascertainment. The year 2009 is associated with penal code, reclusion, expulsion, execution, law-breaking, crime, state prosecutor, and police commissioner;

- Finally, the fourth factorial axis (5.6% of inertia) brings out the differences between the texts of the press, which differ more according to the year than according to the publishing outlet.
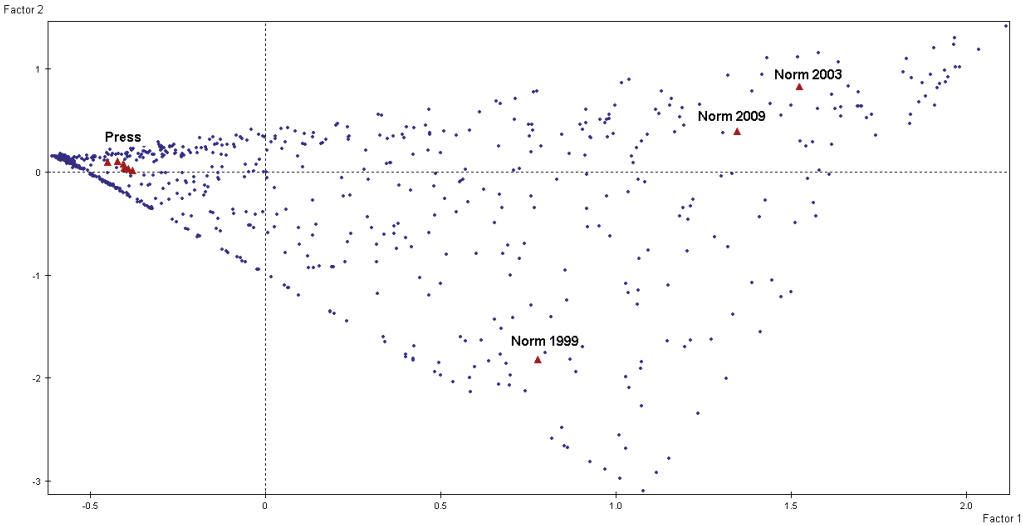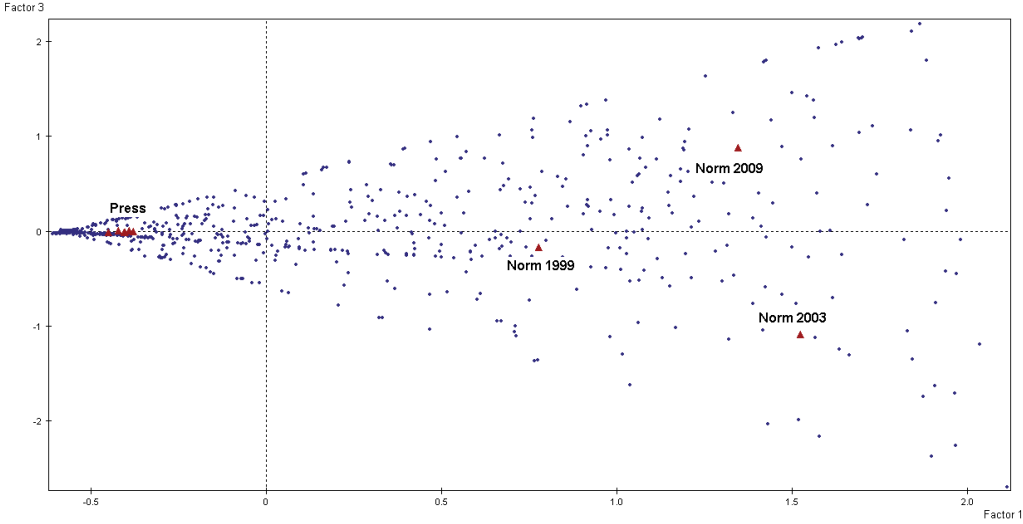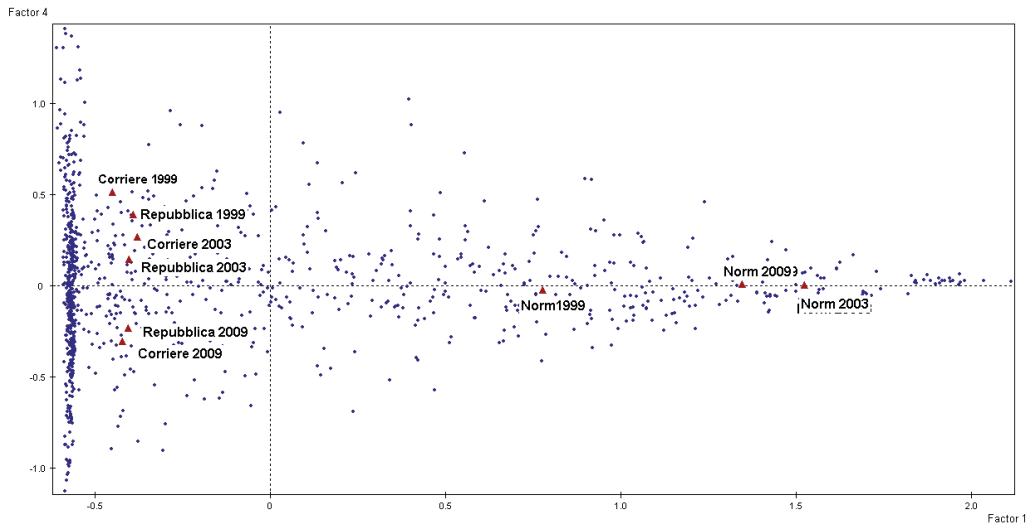
Fig. 2 Axis 1 and Axis 2

Fig. 3 Axis 1 and Axis 3

Fig. 4 Axis 1 and Axis 4

3.3. Norms and Press: An In-Depth Examination of the Contents of the Press

The lexicometric analyses presented so far indicate a substantial distinction between the lexicon of the legislator and the lexicon of the press. However, this difference in lexicons may be considered just an index of the different functions carried out by the two types of source and not a difference in contents. In particular, the lexicon of the press may indicate the mediation and transfer of contents from the formal level to the level of common sense.

To explore this hypothesis, the corpora of *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera* were submitted to content analysis. Following a mixed-methods approach, the content analysis was in sequence with the results of the lexicometric phase, and was developed with the purposes of complementarity (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). The analysis was performed in three steps:

1. the characteristic graphic forms (restricted to content words) of the newspapers – identified through an analysis of *specificities* (Bolasco, 1999) – were used to identify and extract the paragraphs to be submitted to qualitative analysis from the press corpora;

2. the contents were first coded according to a preliminary grid of analysis, inspired by historical analysis of the legal norms (cf. above) and by the indications provided by the lexicometric analysis; wherever the preliminary grid did not fit, the data contents were coded in vivo as free nodes (new categories external to the grid);

3. a final grid was developed integrating the preliminary grid with in-vivo coding. This grid was applied again to all the extracts in order to provide an interpretable map of the main contents underlying the characteristic vocabulary used by the press.

The content analysis concentrated on the emotional tone of the extract, on the typology of the news according to the individual or social level dealt with, on the modality of the handling of the issue implicitly or explicitly proposed, and on the protagonist of the extract (table 5).

In interpreting the data, a few caveats should be borne in mind. The content analysis was conducted according to an exploratory perspective: also, themes that were presented implicitly in the extracts, and not only their explicit contents, were coded. The frequencies are not weighted by the extension of the subcorpora; they may relate to paragraphs of different length, or they may be affected by different styles of journalism (e.g. more concrete or more full of implicit references). Frequency data should thus be considered as indicators of a lower/higher presence of categories in the press. Comparisons are also made on the basis of qualitative interpretation of the extracts.

Categories		Sample extracts
Tone	Alarm	*Now even children drink and alcohol abuse starts from a tender age.* *The Italian state does absolutely nothing to counteract it and the law that forbids the taking of alcohol by minors of 16 is not enforced by anyone. (Cor. '03)*
	Neutral–Ambivalent	*They arrived with their colourful trucks loaded with alcohol, vinyl records, yo-yo, hoodies and new drugs. (Rep. '99)*
	Reassuring–Positive	*In Italy, then, people drink less but better, there is an attention to brand and a return to wine and food combinations: alcohol, and in particular wine, accompanies good food. This is the picture that emerges from a Nielsen study of alcohol consumption in our country. (Rep. '09)*
Level	News item–Private	*She was twenty-eight, pretty, poor, separated, with two wonderful children, Anna (6) and Olga (3). But the monotonous life of the provinces was able to attract her for little more than a year; then Angela started to drown her dissatisfaction in alcohol. (Cor. '99)*
	Political–Economic	*Sixty billion Euros a year spent to repair the health damages of unhealthy, daft lifestyles. Food too rich in animal fats, sedentary life, smoking, alcohol, dangerous driving. (Cor. '03)*
	Customs	*My father used to say: at night there are criminals around. When he was a child electricity didn't exist, the dark night was the criminal's accomplice. Today, the night is the accomplice of SUV's at a hundred kilometres an hour, driven by gym-fit drunks (Rep. '09)*
Handling	Prevention	*If recovered addicts and recovered alcoholics were able to overcome this crust of social shame, bringing to the schools their own experience and their own regretful happiness at having taken back their lives, many young people would avoid looking over the edge of the chasm and falling in. (Cor. '03)*
	Recognition	*Then, from the undistinguished crowd of people I saw the individuals and the show became sadly astonishing: dull eyes, lost in emptiness, hallucinated faces, contorted by alcohol and by whatever else, twisted bodies on the ground and on sofas. I am not speaking of a limited number of people but of almost all the youngsters that were present. In those gestures it was not possible to read enjoyment, carelessness nor sane transgression: only unease, a deep uneasiness, they were crying desperation. (Rep '03)*
	Confrontation	*Who ever has at home a boy that has problem with alcohol can come to ask for suggestions to services, in order to know how to act (Cor. '09)*

Categories		Sample extracts
Represented person	Offender	*In this case too, non-EU immigrants, under the effect of alcohol, started bothering girls. (Cor. '03)*
	Victim	*She was a girl of 16, stuffed with alcohol to the point of daze, practically unconscious, she already had those two on her: older by a couple of years, smiling and friendly until some moments earlier, but now possessed, determined to take advantage of that defenceless body. (Cor. '09)*
	Consumer	*The wine bar for young people will open in the 17th century Gran Guardia palace, the wine shop is aimed at socialising young people to the "good drinking": with 15 Euro, 5 tastes (Cor. '03)*
Voice	Professionals and experts	*To the alcoholic operative unit, which today has 729 users, 120 more come knocking every year. And another 50 are left in the waiting list. The problem – Doctor Rossin further explains – is that it is difficult to consider something as a drug that, especially in our country, represents a thousand-year old cultural tradition. (Cor. '03)*
	Associations	*If recovered addicts and recovered alcoholics were able to overcome this crust of social shame, bringing to the schools their own experience and their own regretful happiness at having taken back their lives, many young people would avoid looking over the edge of the chasm and falling in. (Cor. '03)*
	Forces of order	*According to the commander, the enemy of today has a precise name: alcohol. (Rep. '09)*
	Stakeholders and politicians	*And for this reason, warns the deputy mayor De Corato, from next week we will involve all of the officers on night duty in the protection of the areas where young people gather. A protection against the Saturday afternoon booze-up. (Cor. '09)*

Tab. 5 Grid used for the analysis of the contents of the press and related examples

The main results show the increasing alarm and apprehension that characterize newspapers (table 6). This is evident in particular among the extracts from *Il Corriere della Sera* in the passage from 1999 to 2003, and in those from *La Repubblica* of 2009.

> *... the European Observatory on Drugs, which operates from Lisbon, registers in its last report an increase in drinking to get drunk among young people (in Italy, 43 percent of 15- and 16-year-old young men and women state that they have gotten drunk at least a few times) and, still in the same age range, a constant rate of cannabis intake (while ecstasy use is going down) and of solvent sniffing. (Cor. '03)*

	Cor99	Cor03	Cor09	Rep99	Rep03	Rep09
Tone						
Alarm	25	101	179	19	51	136
Neutral	6	7	25	3	6	18
Reassuring-Positive	4	38	9	0	3	21
Level						
News	6	17	17	12	8	22
Political-Economic	3	17	19	0	8	25
Social	17	78	144	12	40	120

Tab. 6 Analysis of content, matrix of tone, and level by newspaper and year*
*The frequencies show the number of extracts codified in each intersection.

Sociological-like analysis also gains interest during time: an evident tendency above all in 2009 towards generalizations concerning the risky behaviour among "today's youth" becoming a paradigmatic example of a news item.

> *During the night, instead, above all in the weekends this drinking culture prevails. Of course, problems aren't lacking either by day in a city with 140,000 vehicles and 190,000 inhabitants, newborns and centenarians included. But alcohol is the mixture that makes the whole thing explode by night. (Rep. '09)*

The content analysis then shows significant interconnections between the ways the media and the laws handled "the alcohol issue". In particular, two distinct phases can be observed (table 7). The 2003 data extracted from the sample show a substantial prevalence of contents proposing the need to prevent, recognize, and confront the issue and the risk of addiction among youth at a social level. In this case it seems that, at a distance of 4 years, the press, particularly *Il Corriere della Sera*, acknowledges and translates into a more accessible lexicon the directions indicated by legislators through the laws issued in 1999 on the recovery from and the handling of addictions.

> *A part of the young people arrived from the counselling centre, thanks to obstinate parents and some educators, were sent to the cures of the SERT (territorial service) – says Prof. Marino – 200 files were opened, and about 40 deals with difficult situations, with abuse of drugs and alcoholics. (Cor. '03)*

Two contents that were absent from the press in 1999 were instead the prevalent themes in 2009: regulation of sales and the *suppressive–prohibitionist* choices. Special importance is accorded to mayors' ordinances aimed at impinging directly on individual consumption behaviour, redefining the spaces for legal or illegal behaviour. Other managing strategies are opposed to restrictions, especially by *La Repubblica*, such as preventing and recognizing the risk. In this case, we might hypothesize that the role played by the press, more than a mediation of the laws, was an attempt to reinterpret and renegotiate the meanings of individual behaviours within new and more complex social representations.

> *The first fines imposed by the anti-alcohol ordinance have been given to two 14-year-old girls from Brescia who yesterday, at 4.00 pm, were drinking together with a group of friends of the same age in the park of Vetra. One of the two girls, reached by traffic police, was holding in her hand a bottle of vodka bought at a supermarket. [...]*
>
> *Now their parents, separated, will have to pay a 450-euro fine each, as the ordinance prescribes, and the local police are evaluating whether or not to report them for abandonment of minors. (Rep. '09)*

	Cor99	Cor03	Cor09	Rep99	Rep03	Rep09
Handling						
Recognition	4	36	13	4	8	20
Confrontation	0	11	11	2	5	7
Regulation	3	9	35	0	4	28
Prohibition-Suppression	1	19	100	0	12	79

Tab. 7 Analyis of contents, matrix of modality of handling by newspaper and year*
*The frequencies show the number of extracts codified in each intersection.

Finally, it is possible to notice a significant divergence between the ways of handling predominantly associated with or proposed by politicians and those proposed by experts and professionals in the field. Whereas the former are almost exclusively linked to the topic of prohibiting and suppressing deviance, experts and professionals from different backgrounds (from doctors to DJs) support actions aimed at preventing, sensitizing public awareness, recognising risk, and therapeutic treatment (table 8).

	Professionals and Experts	Stakeholders Polilticians
Handling		
Prevention	34	34
Recognition	64	12
Confrontation	20	4
Regulation	4	50

Tab. 8 Analysis of contents, matrix of modality of handling by protagonists*
*The frequencies indicate the number of extracts of text codified in each intersection.

4. Concluding remarks

Our contribution aimed at examining the relationship between the political choices and the representations diffused by the media about alcohol use and abuse among young Italians, following a mixed-methods approach. From the methodological point of view, the different procedures adopted allowed almost two of five purposes of mixed studies (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989): a) complementarity, by means of clarification of the results of a method with those obtained with the other method; and b) development, using the results of one method for informing the other method.

We adopted a socio-constructivist perspective and dealt with legal norms issued by the Italian parliament in 1999, 2003, and 2009 and a representative sample of articles published on "alcohol and young people" by the two most-read Italian generalist newspapers (*La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera*).

Norms and media communication represent, in fact, two of the main perspectives moulding the social discourse on the topic of alcohol use and abuse among young people: their scant overlapping, evident in our data, highlights their divergent roles in the generation of a shared social landscape giving meaning to individual behaviours and habits.

More specifically, it is striking to note – as shown by the lexicometric analysis – that the legal norms' language seems to shift, from 1999 to 2003 and 2009, from a more positive attempt to set up facilities in order to contact and handle people suffering from an alcohol problem to a decision of condemnation of their behaviour as a crime. Also, a qualitative content analysis of articles published by the most-read Italian generalist newspapers shows some similar shifts, though at the different levels typical of this kind of source, aimed at translating the reified contents of laws into a commonsense discourse.

The general tone of articles, for both newspapers, signals an increase in alarm from 1999 to 2003 and 2009. Similarly, media communication seems to shift from emphasizing, in the

1999 articles, the importance of helping alcoholics to deal with their problem and reinsertion into society, to describing, in the 2009 articles, sanctions and prohibitions of their deviant behaviour. Interestingly, alcohol abuse is seen, in the 2009 articles, as an important example of the new habits of young Italians of nowadays: a signal perhaps of a partial change in the social representation of a sort of behaviour that refers to one of the more consolidated aspects of Italian material culture, traditionally known for its high profile in the production and consumption of high-quality wines and alcohol.

Finally, a considerable difference emerges, in this qualitative exploration of newspaper articles, between the social discourse proposed by policy makers, mostly focused on sanction and repression, and the social discourse of heads of medical and social facilities for addicts, mostly stressing the need for prevention and rehabilitation. To sum up, our comparison of legal–normative and media language about the social discourse on youth and alcohol use and abuse shows how the meaning attributed to this topic is inherently mixed, shifting from time to time from the need to care for addicted people in order to rehabilitate them to the need to protect society from their dangerous habits, which can easily turn from self-destructive behaviours into criminal ones.

References

Bolasco S. (1999). *L'analisi multidimensionale dei dati*. Carocci.

Bolasco S. and Della Ratta Rinaldi F. (2004). Experiments on semantic categorisation of texts: analysis of positive and negative dimension. In Purnelle, G., Fairon C. and Dister, A. editors, *JADT2004 Le Poids des mots*, UCL Presses Universitaires de Louvain, vol 1, p. 202-210.

Castro P. and Mouro C. (2011). Psycho-social processes in dealing with legal innovation in the community: insights from biodiversity conservation. *American journal of community psychology*, vol.(47): 362-73

Cottino A. (1991). *L'ingannevole sponda. L'alcol tra tradizione e trasgressione*. Nuova Italia Scientifica.

Creswell J.W. (1999). Mixed method research: Introduction and application. In Cijek T. editors. *Handbook of educational policy*, Academic Press, pp. 455–472.

Creswell J. W., Plano Clark V.L., Gutmann, M.L. and Hanson W.E. (2003). Advanced mixed methods research designs. In Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. editors. *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research,* Sage, pp. 209–240.

Flick U. (2000). Qualitative Inquiries into Social Representations of Health, *Journal of Health Psychology*, vol.(5): 315-324.

Greene J.C., Caracelli,V.J. and Graham,W.F. (1989). Toward a conceptual framework for mixed-method evaluation designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, vol.(11): 255-274.

Johnson R.B., Onwuegbuzie A.J., and Turner L.A. (2007). Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, vol.(1): 112-133.

Jovchelovitch S. (2001). Social Representations, Public Life, and Social Constructionism. In Deaux, K. and Philogène, G. editors, *Representations of the Social*, Blackwell pp. 165-182.

Ministero della Salute. (2010). *Relazione del Ministero della Salute al Parlamento sugli interventi realizzati ai sensi della legge 30.3.2001 n. 125 "Legge quadro in materia di alcol e problemi alcocorrelati"*, Roma.

Moscovici S. and Marková I. (1998). Presenting social representations: a conversation, *Psychology and Culture*, vol.(4): 371-410.

Prina F., (2010). Le norme sulle bevande alcoliche e la loro applicazione: un bilancio nella prospettiva socio-giuridica. In Prina, F. and Tempesta, E. editors, *I giovani e l'alcol: consumi, abusi, politiche. Una rassegna critica multidisciplinare*, *Salute e Società*, vol.(3): annex.

Treves R., (2002). *Sociologia del diritto. Origini, ricerche, problemi*. Piccola biblioteca Einaudi.