La Bella Figura: The role of a cultural philosophy on Italian consumerism

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**La Bella Figura: The role of a cultural philosophy on Italian consumerism**

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**Purpose**
The current study sought to understand how women living in Italy conceptualize *La Bella Figura* and how it affects their day-to-day lives, attitudes, and consumption behaviors.

**Methods**
- Semi-structured interviews with 30 women (ages 18 to 50 years) living in or near Florence, Italy
- Data were collected between May - June 2018
- Grounded theory approach to data analysis
- Coding process structured by Consumer Culture Theory concept framework
- Constant comparison to identify emergent themes

**Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer Identity</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think there’s this expectation [in Italy] that you should always be looking your absolute best.”</td>
<td>“It’s...hard for people who are really timid and insecure with themselves to come across as [La Bella Figura].”</td>
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<td>“Italians have been so known for their style for so long that... they also associate that with...embodying La Bella Figura.”</td>
<td>“If the inner [confidence] is already there, you just need a few details and you’re La Bella Figura anyway.”</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lifestyle Goals</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Consumerism</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>“I think [La Bella Figura] is part of our culture, somehow, like to have a general healthy image.”</td>
<td>“I think for a lot of people, and I kind of see this in my colleagues, there is this drive to go shopping all the time.”</td>
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<td>“You can walk everywhere, so you get a lot of exercise. There’s a lot of hills to climb, so in general [the Italian lifestyle] offers a possibility for health and wellness.”</td>
<td>“If you want to maintain yourself, you have to spend money, because you have to buy cream, clothes, and makeup. So, it’s expensive.”</td>
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<tr>
<th>Social Norms</th>
<th>Perceptions of Others</th>
<th>Media</th>
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<td>“[La Bella Figura] is the projection that you put out to the public and the input that you receive. It’s sort of the feedback you get from other people and their perceptions of you.”</td>
<td>“Especially with the internet, with social media, you see these people on Instagram, you feel ugly... I think that could be a problem. It doesn’t make you feel good.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“There is not [one] person that is completely free. If you live in a society, then you have some pressure on [what] society expects you to do [and how] you behave.”</td>
<td>“If you’re not perfect, i.e. if you don’t agree with what...society and media impose, that is fine. As long as you are happy with your body.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**
- Emphasize appearance ideals in product/service offerings
- Instilling confidence via product/service offerings
- Strategic links to health and wellness in culturally-relevant product/service marketing
- ‘Making a positive impression’ as a culturally-defined marketing strategy
- Reframe media strategy to centralize ‘real’ consumers

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