

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

Consumer Identity	Appearance "I think there's this expectation [in Italy] that you should always be looking your absolute best." "Italians have been so known for their style for so long that... they also associate that with...embodying La Bella Figura."	Confidence "It's... hard for people who are really timid and insecure with themselves to come across as [La] Bella Figura." "If the inner [confidence] is already there, you just need a few details and you're La Bella Figura anyway."
	Lifestyle Goals "I think [La Bella Figura] is part of our culture somehow, like to have a general healthy image." "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."	Consumerism "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." "If you want to maintain yourself, you have to spend money, because you have to buy cream, clothes, and makeup. So, it's expensive."
Social Norms	Perceptions of Others "[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." "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."	Media "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]." "If you're not perfect [or] if you don't agree [with what] ...society and media impose, that is fine. As long as you are happy with your body."

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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