

NOTICE:

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of reproductions of copyrighted material. One specified condition is that the reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses a reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

RESTRICTIONS:

This student work may be read, quoted from, cited, and reproduced for purposes of research. It may not be published in full except by permission by the author.

F. Wilbur Gingrich Library
Special Collections Department
Albright College

Release of Senior Thesis

I hereby deliver, give, and transfer property, rights, interest in and legal rights thereto which I had, have, or may have concerning the Senior Honors Thesis described below to the Special Collections Department of the F. Wilbur Gingrich Library at Albright College as an unrestricted gift. While copyright privileges will remain with me, the author, all privileges to reproduce, disseminate, or otherwise preserve the Senior Honors Thesis are given to the Special Collections Department of the Gingrich Library. I place no restrictions on this gift and hereby indicate this by signing below.

Title: How Culture and Lifestyle Affect Fashion: Italian vs. American

Signature of Author: Ashlyn Alessi Date: 11/29/15

Printed Name of Author: Ashlyn Alessi

Street Address: 445 Dosen Road

City, State, Zip Code: Middletown, NY 10940

Albright College
Gingrich Library

How Culture and Lifestyle Affect Fashion: Italian vs. American

Ashlyn Alessi

Candidate for the degree

Bachelor of Arts

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

College Honors

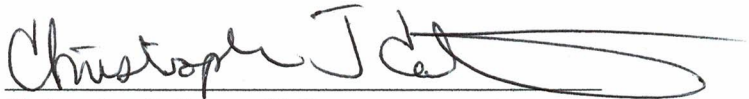
Departmental Distinction in the Fashion Department



Doreen Burdalski, M.B.A.



Denise Greenwood, M.A.



Christopher J. Catone, Ph.D.

Connie Heller-Horacek, M.F.A.

Albright College Gingrich Library

How Culture and Lifestyle Affect Fashion: Italian vs. American

Ashlyn Alessi

Candidate for the degree

Bachelor of Arts

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

College Honors

Departmental Distinction in the Fashion Department

Doreen Burdalski, M.B.A.

Denise Greenwood, M.A.

Christopher J. Catone, Ph.D.

Connie Heller-Horacek, M.F.A.

Albright College Gingrich Library

I. Intro

If you compare the women's streetwear trends of Italian and American women between the ages of 18-22, it's obvious that there is a huge variance when it comes to their sense of fashion. This is because cultural aesthetics and lifestyle choices have a strong influence on the different fashions, making each country's style unique to its particular area.

It is important for everyone who works in the fashion industry to be able to recognize and foresee social and cultural movements in order to understand the fashion environment and to be able to operate in the direction in which the fashion industry will move next, confirms Diana Murek, an author who specializes in cultural influences on trend forecasting. Being able to anticipate what will happen in the near future is what puts a fashion designer, a retailer or a fashion buyer in the position to make better decisions about their work. Fashion reaches beyond clothing and into the way we choose to live our lives. Lifestyle is how we communicate, how we travel, how we decorate our homes, how we eat and how we dress (Murek).

II. Culture Defined

In addition to lifestyle, a country's cultural values also play a huge role in how people from that region dress. Harvard University maintains that, "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action" (Kroeber). In simpler terms, it is basically shared knowledge created by a set of people (in this case, either Americans or Italians) for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them.

III. Streetwear Defined

An expert in the industry, Aaron Dolores, defines streetwear as a fashion movement primarily for young adults between the ages of 18-22 who use fashion to express their interests, cultural identity and common settings. It's dynamic, changeable, and exciting, yet hard to exactly define due to its versatility in style, meaning, and artistic merit. The term streetwear is mainly used in relation to youth who roam the streets using them as their urban catwalk. A lot of the time, the phrases embossed on jackets and t-shirts allow this generation to express their views without ever having to open their mouths. Streetwear can be seen as one of the most effective forms of self-expression (Dolores).

IV. Why it's Important to Understand Cultural Influences on Trend Forecasting

For everyone who works in the fashion business it is important to be able to recognize and to foresee these social and cultural movements. This is the only way to understand the fashion environment and anticipate the direction in which the fashion industry is moving, according to Diane Murek, an author of *Into the Fashion* website. Being able to anticipate what will happen in the near future is what puts a fashion designer, a retailer, or a fashion buyer in the position to make better decisions when stocking their inventories for customers. Fashion is not at all an isolated industry - it reaches beyond clothing and into the way we choose to live our lives (Murek).

Into the Fashion maintains that lifestyle trends are strongly influenced by social-cultural changes which include technology, artistic movements, and modernization. Trend analysis looks at the interaction between the shifts in fashion, culture, and the consumers lifestyle as a framework to be able to understand and interpret change in fashion. One of the most important things to realize is that trends are made by people (Murek). You cannot force people to like something and it's hard to start a new trend out of the blue. This will usually "flop" in the fashion industry - in other words,

not be successful. In order to be successful you need to know what your consumer is involved in and what they need from you as a retailer or designer.

Diana Murek breaks down the development of trends by attesting that it usually involves three main factors: high culture, low culture, and pop culture. High culture refers to elite activities such as visual arts, music, photography, and design. Art is a product of human activity, stimulating our senses and mind by transmitting emotions or ideas (Murek). In terms of fashion inspiration, this can lead to concepts and collection ideas for designers. By observing contemporary art, it's possible to obtain information about what influences upcoming fashion trends.

Popular culture is appreciated by a much larger audience. Murek went on to say that it is highly influenced by celebrities and their daily lives which, in turn, trickles down into the mainstream. Most people want to look, act, or dress like their favorite actress or performers. If not to that extreme, they at least admire their lifestyle enough to want to incorporate it into their own. These celebs turn into role models who are then studied and copied by a lot of people (Murek). Mass media has definitely increased the exposure and power of celebrities over the past couple of years - they are constantly in the spotlight. Between reality TV shows and magazine cover-stories, it's hard for anyone to completely avoid getting caught up in this pop-culture lifestyle. When it comes to the fashion industry, many companies want to use these actresses and musicians to their advantage, draping them in their garments to advertise how glamorous an average person could be if they also bought these products.

Lastly, Diana Murek introduces the idea of low culture, or local street movements, that vary from city to city. Low culture is the most difficult to identify because their look is quickly adopted by the masses for commercial purposes, such as their clothing and music. Observing the streets are of equal importance as keeping up with contemporary arts and popular culture. None of

these three aspects are isolated from one another and, therefore, equally influence the fashion world and the way trends are tracked and developed over time (Murek).

To obtain a better understanding of the Italian perspective on these matters, I traveled to Italy this summer to do some of my own observations first-hand. Of course, as an American, I didn't want my views of Italian fashion and culture to be biased from an outsider's perspective, so I conducted multiple interviews with Italian citizens to analyze how their views about themselves may be different from my own. Please note: Some content quoted from Alessandro Donati or Philippa Stannard may have had to be slightly modified to correct any grammatical errors in translation from Italian to English, or to enhance their sometimes "broken English" that may have otherwise been misunderstood.

V. Different Aspects of Italian Culture

a. Family

Italians are very family-oriented people. People don't move around that often, so childhood friends and family always come first. They are expected to live at home until they are married, which isn't very common until they are in their 30's. One of the locals told me that, "They often tell us we are 'mummy's boys,' because we usually still live with the family until we are married" (Donati). Instead of the typical 9-5 workday that is common in America, Italians are usually given a break from 12-4pm to spend lunch time with their families or take time to rest - whatever they choose to do with that time. "This close-knit type of community makes it very hard to break in socially if you haven't grown up in the place," says Stannard.

b. Lifestyle Choices

In general, the Italian lifestyle is more laid back than you would find in America. Something they really value as a society is time. "Time to eat, time to have a 'pausa,' time to have a vacation in August," Philippa explains, "In August, almost everyone has a month off [where]

everything shuts down and people go to the beach or the mountains” (Stannard). Everything is at a slower pace – you can be fifteen minutes late to something and still be considered “on time”.

Italian homes are simple. Most families do not own their own washing and drying machines; even less common is the dishwasher. Wifi is not an easily accessible item to obtain and wherever you do happen to find it, it is mainly there for tourist purposes, not for the residents themselves. Italians do a lot of their communication in person – some of them aren’t even quite sure what Twitter or Snapchat is. From my own personal observations, I saw very few iPhones. This isn’t to say they are far behind on technology – they have a means of obtaining all of the above – it’s that they choose not to.

Dinner consists of three courses because during the day, breakfast and lunch are fairly light. Every restaurant is filled with fresh food made with home-made ingredients. Eating in or out is just as good in terms of quality – you are not exposed to pre-made, frozen foods that you would find in an American chain restaurant. It’s quite hard to find an eatery that doesn’t serve pizza, pasta, or raw, curated meat. Italians find it rude when you ask to take leftovers home. Most families spend hours at a time eating together – when you reserve a table at a restaurant, it’s automatically assumed that you will be occupying your table for a majority of the night. The popular American take-out or “fast food” option is nearly non-existent.

Buses and trains are a main form of transportation. You can buy packages of travel passes from Eurail that run for a certain amount of days and gives you access to trains that even extend outside of the border. In the city-centers there are a lot of very small cars used to get from place to place along with Vespas. I did not see a single SUV in my 5 weeks in Italy. Even our study abroad program used multiple small cars to deliver us to our apartments. Inside many cities are a small railway called a “mini-metro” that stops at the most important points in the city. They are basically

small cable cars that fit about ten people in them at a time, going in constant rotations around the track; they have no conductors, they are fully automated. This popular transportation system shuts down by 10pm because by that point everyone is usually back home with their families. While all of these are important means of transportation, walking still seems to be the most common. I met a lot of Italians who didn't even own their own car.

c. Social Norms

If you've never been out of the country, you'd be surprised by the amount of differences in social norms. Italy has a very popular night life in general, with most people being out on the streets until around 3am or later. People gather in common areas, such as the city center, to mingle and casually drink. It's not uncommon for residents to bring a guitar or small conga drums from home to make music for themselves and others to enjoy. Religious and food festivals are extremely popular outings. It is okay to drink publicly and you can't go far without inhaling someone else's second-hand smoke. On the contrary, it's not acceptable to be overly intoxicated; Italians don't drink to get drunk. If someone sees you pushed past the point of being tipsy, they will call an ambulance because you are sick. Italians consider this a very unattractive and juvenile behavior.

As was mentioned, most meals are with family and friends. There is no such thing as not having enough time to sit down and enjoy a meal. Family also includes the pets of the household. You'd be surprised at the amount of dogs sitting in pizza shops or other public areas with their owners. Children are allowed to venture the streets and take trains independently. Everyone is respectful of each other and of one's self, regardless of age. There is the presence of gypsies and pick-pockets, though. Many of the train stations have announcements to beware of them every few minutes and it was one of the first things we were warned about during our orientation for the Umbra Institute. They've just become a social norm.

If you ask an Italian whether or not individuality is accepted, or whether it's more of a norm to conform to what everyone else is wearing, you'll hear "I would say that individuality is accepted, but we are strongly conditioned to dress accordingly to what the others are wearing, especially in a small town like Foligno. In Perugia probably the situation is slightly better" (Donati). For those that aren't familiar with cities in Italy, Foligno is more of a small and traditional Italian town. Perugia, where I lived over the summer, is a larger city known for attracting tourists with their famous chocolates. In comparison to cities such as Rome and Florence, it is a lot smaller and still maintains much of ancient Italy's charm. When I visited Rome, I saw more Americans than Italians, so it wasn't a good place to observe individuality with fashion. But it's important to note the differences between Perugia and Foligno, because it seems that when you gravitate away from the traditional, family-oriented towns, the young women aren't as apprehensive about showing their true style. But generally, "Most people follow the crowd. If something is in fashion, everyone is wearing it... like sheep. Those who do not follow the trends are viewed as somewhat exotic" (Stannard).

VI. Explain Italian Fashion

After hearing about their lifestyle and cultural values, it's no surprise that elegance runs in the Italian blood. Most of them would undoubtedly give up comfort in order to achieve this, says Damyanti Ghosh, one of the editors of the website *Life in Italy*. She states that these citizens are from a country that thrives on outward appearances - it is not enough to just have a good personality, but your clothes, shoes, and hair should match it. Even Hollywood, California has given credit where due when it comes to Italians and their sense of fashion - for the past few decades most of the red carpet has been clad in Italian apparel and jewelry (Ghosh). Some of these popular designs include the famous brands Fendi, Gucci, and Dolce & Gabbana. Some less expensive, but still popular, apparel stores include Intimissimi, Calzedonia, Guru, and Zara. Alessandro also made a

point to say that “there are really, literally hundreds of clothing brands... not so popular or not so well known, but of a very high quality” (Donati). So just because these are the brands that seem to be on the general consensus of what is popular, Italians also have the American equivalent of “thrifting” where some bold, vintage items can be discovered in less well-known retailers.

According to the article, “Fashion Advice,” in Italy (as well as most of Europe), unless you are doing something athletic, most Europeans don't wear athletic shoes, or anything athletic - socks, shorts, or sweatpants - for that matter (James). This doesn't mean women are walking around in dress shoes all of the time, but they try to steer clear of the "athletic" style and are more likely to lean towards a Converse or Vans shoe, instead. These sneakers don't have the bulky support that, say, an Asics sneaker would have, but they incorporate style through different colors and prints. Look around a classroom on Albright's campus and you'll see dozens of girls wearing the latest Nike Free Runs to class - this is not the case in Italy. These types of shoes would only be worn for going to the gym, working out, etc. and then be removed promptly afterwards, before going around the town for the day. The same goes for sweatpants and shorts, which seem to be a popular item around college campuses in America. The article goes on to say that, track pants and sweatpants are associated with trouble makers; shorts are associated with children's clothing. Socks are worn in the same color as a person's pants (James) – nothing like the diverse array of brightly colored basketball socks worn extensively throughout America. The more you stand out, the better. This was also confirmed by a local resident, Phillipa Stannard, who responded to the question, “What kind of clothes are a dead giveaway that someone is American?” by naming things such as tennis shoes, sweatpants, or any other clothes one might wear to a gym or around the house (Stannard).

The Savvy Backpacker is very informative about some good items to wear in Italy, starting with well-fitting clothing. You won't see many Italians walking around in "oversized" styles, even

with the men. Clothing is form-fitted to the body in order to show off the figure; anything that excessively drapes or hangs can be considered sloppy. For example, a college woman would typically not wear a large sweatshirt with a pair of leggings to class. An Italian student would comply more with the motto, "dress to impress". There is also a limited color-palette seen in Italy - Europeans tend to wear more subdued colors. This trend is slowly starting to fade away with the younger generations (who are starting to experiment with fashion a little more), but earth tones, black, and gray are very popular and are the most favorited colors by the current 18-22 year old age range (James).

As was mentioned earlier, I spent the summer in Italy to observe their fashion and lifestyle choices first-hand. On my second day there, we were touring around the streets of Perugia, gawking at how all of the Italians were walking around wearing jeans in 80+ degree weather. Our tour guide was swift to tell us that, "Italians dress for the seasons, not for the weather." It was only the middle of May – none of them dared to wear shorts and a tank top in the spring time. Meanwhile, most of the Americans in my study abroad program were clad in crop tops, rompers, and denim shorts – a dead giveaway that we weren't locals.

While walking around the city center, one only needed to glance around the various piazzas and streets in order to see the latest trends. Personally, I didn't see a lot of bright colors in Italy, aside from the tourists. None of their clothing was too risqué – they have a way of making their clothing sexy, but classy at the same time. Hem lengths were long enough to completely cover the buttocks; necklines didn't delve deep enough to show excessive amounts of cleavage. Sneakers (not running shoes) were worn with nearly *everything*, I didn't see any Italian girls wearing shoes like flip-flops. If they wore a sandal, it was the typical chunky, European style. Some wore classic flats, as well. But since the streets are made out of uneven cobblestone, you quickly learn that it's

not very practical to wear much else on your feet. I wore wedged heels to Rome and it was one of the most painful experiences of my life... in Italy you must sacrifice style for comfort sometimes; I figured that out the hard way. In their case, they've evolved to make comfortable walking shoes stylish. Most people walk from place to place, as opposed to driving, so Italians need to modify their outfit choices to fit this aspect of their lifestyle.

Below are some photos I took inside of one the stores in Perugia's city center, Subdued:





As you can see, a lot of the merchandise in this store includes graphic t-shirts and, interestingly enough, all of the typography is written in English as opposed to Italian. Some of them even include curse words across the chest, probably because they don't fully understand the translation of the words. It just goes to show how American fashion has been assimilated abroad. The color palettes didn't vary much – you see a lot of black, white, gray, and navy with the occasional pop of maroon. It was rare to see anyone walking around in bright, fluorescent colors. Some of these more vivid tones were used on swim suits, at most.

Another store I visited was the United Colors of Benetton. I didn't take photos in this store, but I grabbed a store catalogue for reference and scanned in the images from it, which you'll see shortly. Something I found really striking was the amount of blonde models in the photos. After talking to one of my Italian friends, Gio Russo, I learned that Italian men perceive blonde as one of the more attractive hair colors a female can have. Naturally, a majority of Italians are born with dark hair, so to see a woman with a lighter shade of hair such as blonde is something men are not

used to, which attracts them. So to follow suit, a lot of young females are fashioning their hair with blonde dye.

In regards to the garments from this company, here a few examples of outfits that were trending this summer and featured in their catalogue:



This photo features none other than a blonde model clad in a nautical floral print with a scalloped hemline. Although there are hints of blue and green in this garment, you'll notice how dull and faded the shades are. The length of this hem is probably one of the more risqué lengths I've seen on Italian woman, since most of the time they hang at least a few inches above the knee due to their conservative style. Ironically enough, even though they are conservative in the streets, there was a lot of full nudity featured in the April 2015 edition of Vogue Italia.

In the following photo, you'll see the model dressed in neutrals, consistent from what I noted earlier and the hemline on this skirt actually hangs consistent to the ones I've observed while touring around Italy. The garments are free-flowing, not necessarily clinging to the body in order to give it a more elegant feel versus tight and sexy. Also notice how the designer chose a classic polka dot pattern to keep the outfit timeless. Even the accessories feature earthy tones:



As important as it is to observe what is trending in stores catalogues, it's also important to note what is popular on the streets, as you can often catch hints of what is about to be the next up-and-coming trend. According to local Italian, Alessandro, this year Italy has seen an influx of shirts or jackets with mandarin collars, skinny trousers with turn-ups, more aggressive hairstyles, longer beards, bow ties, and monochrome v-neck t-shirts – things that would have been considered to be

a fashion “risk” the previous year (Donati). Italians have also caught up on some of the things Americans have been wearing for years, according to Philippa, such as skinny jeans and Brazilian swimsuits, which seem a little risqué for their nature (Stannard). But overall, there is more to Italian fashion than just the clothes. It also has incorporated a sense of attitude - an attitude of custom designed, fluid sophistication (Ghosh).

VI. Different Aspects of American Culture

a. Family

Family is becoming less and less important in America. Statistics show that on average there are 877,000 divorces a year in the United States compared to only 54,000 in Italy (National Marriage and Divorce Rate Trends). There’s been an increasing trend of young adults rushing into marriage at a young age and an equally increasing number of girls are becoming pregnant and engaged before even graduating college (Kost).

Work has become a priority over family. Unlike the Italians who have long breaks during the day to spend at home, many Americans are out working overtime in order to make ends meet or to be on top before the next round of promotions. The whole idea of business over family is clearly exhibited during Black Friday weekend, when retailers are opening their doors on Thanksgiving – taking people away from their families – in order to make a profit. The people who still value family over everything else have become a minority.

b. Lifestyle Choices

One single motivation uniting many Americans is the desire to be rich and famous. It’s the “American Dream,” so to speak, to be rich and money is openly admired, according to *Just Landed*. Americans are the greatest consumers in the history of the world and their primary occupation is spending money; materialistic items are of utmost importance (The American Style). With all of the technological advancements these days, it’s not surprising that most Americans turn towards

their iPhones, tablets, laptops, and Bluetooth devices are their primary forms of communication. Emailing has become more of a norm than in-person conversations.

American homes vary as much as their fashion alternating from modern, to mid-century, to western, and Victorian styles. People try to find homes that fit all of their needs, as well as their personal style, which is why television shows like *Love It or List It* and *Property Brothers* on HGTV have become so popular – it's all about customization and obtaining the best possible homes in the best locations. This is pretty ironic, since Americans don't spend much time at home anymore. With the always-changing busy lifestyle they've adapted, people have turned to quickly stopping at chain restaurants and taking food to go whenever possible in order to fit in meals around their busy schedules. Because of these busy schedules, family meals have become less and less common.

Transportation is mainly by car or bus, with taxi systems like Uber becoming increasingly popular. There is not a lot of walking unless you live in an extremely large city like New York City, but even then the streets are packed with personal cars, tour buses, and taxi cabs. As stated on Pix 11 News, America contributes to majority of the planet's pollution, aside from China (Pix 11).

From my personal observations, 18-22 year old women lead an extremely busy lifestyle that requires them to switch from class, sports practices, cramming in homework, and participating in extracurricular activities in just a matter of hours. Accordingly, you'll see her dress to this lifestyle – it wouldn't make sense to wear a dress and heels to class, just to have to change for, say, soccer practice in a couple of hours. She'll dress in garments that can be considered practical for all of her daily activities. Likewise, when Italians were asked if they dress according to their

lifestyle, they replied with things such as, “Personally I consider myself an elegant person in my behaviors, and I dress accordingly to it, so yes” (Donati).

c. Social Norms

Recently, America has been undergoing big changes when it comes to individuality and being accepted in society. No longer do you have to dress, act, and present yourself according to the norms. In June 2015, the United States Supreme Court passed a bill legalizing gay marriage and we’ve seen an influx of people “coming out of the closet” or revealing themselves as transgendered since then. Women are taking a stance to express themselves – exposing more of their bodies has been a popular movement in order to equalize themselves with men. What is considered to be socially acceptable should span across both genders, not just males. In this case, it’s the idea of being topless, but there are plenty of other scenarios where women are not held equal to men (unrelated to fashion). Look at some of the garments celebrities have worn to the VMAs and other award ceremonies throughout this year, and you’ll notice that in some cases, their private parts are hardly even covered with a thin layer of fabric – one of the best examples being Miley Cyrus.

With this being said, Americans are constantly torn between wanting to be different and the need to belong. Especially within the 18-22 age group, cliques are frequently formed (such as a sorority or sports team) that promote uniformity. At the same time, individuals struggle to stand out and not conform to the rest of society whether it be by an extreme fashion statement, a sense of power over others, or a unique talent. With the younger generations especially, being disrespectful has become a norm, even towards elders. Psychologists argue it’s to break away from others and gain a sense of independence – following their own rules and not complying with others. This aspect of American culture has even been noticed overseas. When asked about any clear differences between Italians and Americans, Phillipa responded by saying, “Americans value

individuality – everyone wants to be different [and] unique, almost to the point of being ridiculous at times,” in comparison to her culture where, “Italians value style, so if something is in style, everyone does it... Unless they are trying to make a point” (Stannard).

Also unlike the Italians, getting drunk or high every weekend is totally acceptable (at least by typical college age students, ranging in the same 18-22 age group). It’s all about having fun and making a good impression with others and less about taking responsibility for your own actions. This is reaffirmed by the University of Minnesota who states, “People are motivated to behave in ways that will project socially desirable images of themselves,” as one of the reasons this behavior is so common (Why Students Drink). It’s not very surprising to see someone meet a stranger and invite them back to their homes during the same night. The value of one’s self has drastically decreased along with respect for others. Clubs and bars are one of the most popular hangout spots for this age group; public common areas used to mingle and just enjoy each other’s company are almost nonexistent. This is a huge 180 degree difference from the Italian counterpart.

Society isn’t considered to be safe. In America it’s dangerous for kids to go out alone – or at least that has become everyone’s perception. This is similar to the Italian gypsy and pick-pocket problem, but on a more extreme scale. Americans are a lot less trusting, which could be related back to the lack of family support and stability.

VII. Explain American Fashion (How its history derived from Italy)

Naomi Huober, a graduate from Drexel University, performed extensive research on the early beginnings of the American fashion industry and found that Americans actually have Italians to thank for their initial start in the fashion world. In the years following WWII, the United States collaborated closely with the Italian textile industry, helping to rebuild a centuries-old tradition of designing and manufacturing fine fabrics. Before American fashion could stand on its own, Italians designed the clothes worn by many American women. Without the Italian fashion industry as a

model from which to build its own, the American fashion industry would not be what it is today. Although the United States was a worldwide leader in the production of factory-made clothing, clothing *designs* were almost never indigenous to the United States.

It was during this time that the United States fashion industry began its import of Italian fashion by adopting Italy's textile technologies and fabrics. As the world of design and manufacturing merged, Italian styles became increasingly popular in the United States. Americans saw Italian goods as an inexpensive alternative to French couture. Three factors explain the success of Italian clothing in America: (1) the Italians successful marketing to department stores and fashion magazines; (2) the Italian love for Hollywood; and (3) the close match between the wants of the Italian consumer and those of the American, according to Naomi.

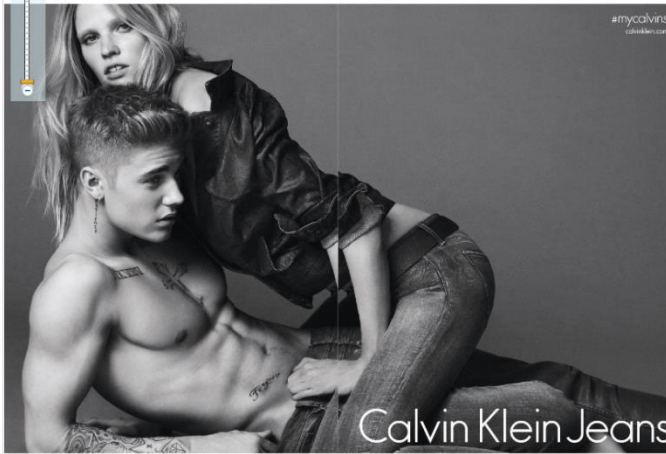
Today, the American fashion industry has developed into a force of its own. After World War II, the American fashion industry continued to grow despite the prevalence of Italian fashion in the United States. It was in the 1980's that the American fashion industry became a dominant force able to stand on its own two feet. In order for a garment to appeal to the American consumer, freedom, along with self-expression and independence, must be fundamental to the design (Huober).

Fast-forward to present day America: college women have also been following the trend of "dressing to impress". They view campus as their runway, a place to show off their style. Zephyr Basine, the editor of collegefashion.net, noted that "the stereotype used to be that college students live in sweatpants and don't care about fashion. But today that isn't so." Women are trying to define themselves by the way they look. Thanks to the democratizing influence of the Internet, trends are disseminated at warp speed, traversing regional borders and, paradoxically, encouraging a more individualized approach to dress (Ferla). This is in complete contrast to the Italian students

who are not able to access upcoming fashions with such ease, due to Italy having the 3rd slowest bandwidth in all of Europe.

Interestingly enough, this tech-savvy generation has also has a huge influence on the American accessory industry. As opposed to Italian students' traditional style, American college women are all about wearable technology; the new focal point being the wrist, according to *Vogue*. In their article "Arm CANDY" this new concept, that designer will.i.am is coining as "fashionology," has led to his creation of a i.amPLUS smartband - a small computer on your wrist. Simpler versions of this can already be found in FitBit bracelets which track things like your pulse and the number of steps you have taken during the day. The i.amPLUS allows women to choose what is "pushed" onto their wrists from their phones. For example, if they are at work and only want to be notified when emails come through or texts from their significant other, the watch will block out everything else. When designing these bracelets the main concern was enabling them to look like an ordinary fashion accessory women would wear on a daily basis. They succeeded (Sullivan).

If you flip through an issue of *Vogue Italia*, there is no chance that you'll find an ad pertaining to the denim industry. Calvin Klein and Levi ads are not present in the April 2015 edition of *Vogue Italia*, as compared to multiple two-page spreads in the American counterpart. Denim vests, shirts, dresses, and skirts are popular in the United States, but they are not a fashion statement abroad. In Europe, all things denim are just a casual, staple piece for the wardrobe. You are more likely to see Italians clad in pants made out of a cotton fabric or dressier bottoms altogether. Here are example of a few ads that are mainly popular in the United States and not targeted to the Italians at all:



Here you have the whole notion of #mycalvins and "Live in Levi's" being incorporated into these ads with the idea that jeans are essential to a person's everyday life. Levi's are pushing the "wear anywhere" factor, showing how you can dress denim up or down, depending on the occasion, since it is such a versatile fabric. One of the reasons that denim jeans are so popular in America,

more than anywhere else, is simply because this is where they originated from back in the mid-1800's.

VIII. Differences Between the Two Countries' Fashion

While analyzing the differences between the two countries' fashions, something I found really striking was the contrast between what was published in the American Vogue magazine vs Vogue Italia. In order to maintain consistency, both issues I pulled were from April 2015. Just by looking at the cover pages you can tell that Vogue is clearly appealing to two completely different audiences:



The image on the left is from American Vogue and the one on the right is from Vogue Italia. Italy has a reputation of being very timeless and elegant which is clearly exhibited on the magazine cover. There isn't much text or insights as to what will be covered throughout the magazine, unlike its American counterpart. What's important to note is that all of the small story

blurbs have to do with celebrities, models, staying fit, or the importance of independence - all key aspects of American culture! American's lives, especially the young adult age group, revolve around what the stars are doing and what it takes to impress people. It's also important to notice that there is an athlete on the cover of the American magazine - athleisure (clothing designed for athletic workouts that is worn outside of the gym for a social occasion) becoming an increasing trend in U.S. fashion. Italians would never think of wearing athletic wear on the streets and I think the power of athletes definitely has less of an influence on the general public in their culture. Not to say they don't enjoy sports - they very much enjoy soccer- but they understand that the attire is strictly to work out in, not a fashion statement. In a conversation about athleisure, Alessandro stated, "Maybe [it is] something normal in America, but certainly not in Italy. A person dressed in athletic clothes, if he's not playing any sport, is seen as someone who doesn't care about his or her appearance" (Donati).

There were multiple instances where I would be talking to my Italian friends, Gio and Alessandro, about how conscious I've had to be with my wardrobe for Italy because back home I typically romp around campus in sweatpants, or spandex shorts, depending on the weather. And it isn't just me, it's fairly common to see Albright's student athletes following suit because they are squeezing in practices before and after their busy class schedules. Ale would joke about it being "not sexy" or odd because the only time they wear these types of garments is to go the gym. For them it's not common to stop by, say, a coffee shop after your workout; you'd typically go home to change first (Donati). Not once did I see an Italian college girl walking around city center in running shoes or spandex clothing. This observation can be supported all by looking at the differences in magazine covers!

Flipping through the magazines you see a lot of the same high-end designer brands in both: Dior, Celine, Chanel, Fendi, Louis Vuitton, Burberry, and Prada, just to name a few. Some of the ads are exactly the same, as was the case for Fendi, Chanel, and LV. On the other hand, some had purposeful differences depending on the audience they were targeting. These retailers fully understand how culture and lifestyle affect fashion and market their brands to the different countries accordingly. Here are two that I found most striking, Celine and Burberry:





At first glance, it might be hard to differentiate which Celine ad belongs to which country's Vogue. Once applying some of the analyses discussed in this paper, it becomes clearer. In this case the American ad displays a lot of neutral colors, but has daring cut-outs and slits in the shirt. Then to pair it with oversized pants (and purse!) is a complete giveaway that it coincides with Italian style. On the adjoined ad, there is a huge emphasis on accessories to make the outfit appear pricier, which is a flashy trait Americans tend to flaunt when possible. In addition, the necklaces appear over a knit, which is usually relatively baggy and doesn't cling to the body.

In the European ad, Celine chose a garment with a traditional floral pattern, keeping with the solidary black and only adding a small splash of color - not bright, but toned down. The dress has puffed sleeves which is a traditional aspect of fashion, dating back many decades. Since this is the April edition (geared towards May/June trends) those are still considered to be spring months which is why it's essential to have covered shoulders. Bare shoulders are reserved for strictly

summer months, unlike American woman who will jump to start wearing sleeveless attire the moment weather starts to climb in the mid-70s, regardless of the month they are in. Also notice how the hem length is well below the knees. In the adjoined ad it's composed in all black - classic. To have an older woman modeling is a strong exhibit of the Italian value of timelessness and the importance of family, gearing it towards a wide age range. You would rarely see an elder model in American Vogue, it's not trendy.



Clearly the differences between these two ads lie within the color choices. The American ad (on the left) features bright, jewel-toned coats with matching over-sized purses and scarves with interesting graphic patterns on them. The way the models are displayed with a majority of their legs showing, exhibit the risqué side of American fashion that you don't usually see with the more conservative Italians. As was mentioned earlier, they favor earthy tones with little pops of pastel colors. The scarves don't have any patterns on them to preserve their simple, elegant style. Even

the size of the purses vary - American women tend to carry their whole "life" around in oversized totes, whereas Italians stick to small, practical sizes. The models in the photo seem to be carrying a clutch.

Some people believe there is a psychology behind these major differences. Philippa Stannard speculates that, "The Italian believes that she always needs to make a good impression wherever [she is]. Impressions and appearances are much more important in Italy. In the States, you dress up for occasions or when social norms dictate it (such as church, work, or going out to dinner)" (Stannard). Alessandro Donati agrees with this statement by saying "in general ([although] not always true), Italian style is much more elegant; American style is much more casual" (Donati). The reason behind this goes back to the dissimilarities between American and Italian lifestyle and cultural values, although there are times where you can argue some similarities between the two countries, as well.

IX. Similarities Between the Two Countries' Fashion

As seen in the April 2015 edition of *Vogue*, one upcoming trend in America is transforming the sneaker into a graphic statement with a bit of a "lift", sort of like a platform shoe (Smith). This coincides with the Italian style of not wearing a typical Nike running shoe on the streets. By dressing up the sneaker and adding clever design elements to it, American sneakers will potentially have enough of an edge to be worn in Italy, too. The extra chunkiness is also a plus. You can already see similar styles to this in *Vogue Italia* where the editor featured a twist on typical Adidas sneakers by adding fun patterns such as polka dots and zig zag design features (Focus On).

X. Conclusion

There is a huge variance when it comes to Italian vs. American sense of fashion. This is because cultural aesthetics and lifestyle choices have a strong influence on the different trends,

making each country's style unique to its particular area. The Americans are always on the go, which makes the need for comfortable clothing so much greater. They do not value time the way that Italians do and that reflects in their clothing choices. Young women favor the oversized purse because they are unsure of the next time they are going to be home, therefore, needing enough space to carry all of their necessities for the day. Italians have a certain allotted time during the day to go home and focus their time on family and friends, which is an easy time to swap out items they may or may not need for the remainder of the day.

Because of this busy schedule there isn't necessarily enough time to walk from place to place or even fit in time for exercise. This could be a key reason why nearly 70% of Americans are considered to be overweight. So for obvious reasons, they aren't going to want clothes that are form-fitting to the body, which is why there has been an increasing trend on athleisure and other baggy garments. This is in complete contrast to their Italian counterparts who mainly walk to their destinations and are only on public transportation for a short period of time. Constant exercise combined with their healthy, naturally-made eating habits explain why less than half is not in risk of being overweight and, therefore, are willing and able to wear garments that cling a little closer to the body to show off their figure.

There is also the strong aspect of family in Italy which is a contributing factor to their style. By default, living at home until you are in your 30s would cause you to be a little more conservative than most. You want to respect your home and present yourself well to the public because you are also representing your family, who probably know most of the town thanks to the tightly knit communities Italians form in their towns. Since everyone knows everyone, it's possible that you may even run into your future employer on the streets, so it's always wise to represent yourself well. This is done by dressing conservatively, elegantly, and classy at all times. On the other hand,

Americans don't seem to have any of these worries. Some are getting married by the age of 20 and some are still partying at college with not a care in the world. Many colleges have to reiterate the fact that students should be cleaning up their Facebook profiles so any inappropriate pictures – ranging from getting drunk, to skimpy outfits they might have worn out to a party – are not the first thing employers see when they visit their pages. By the age of 18 most Americans reach independence and use the first chance they get to rebel against the rules that have been enforced on them since their childhood.

The strong presences of pickpockets and gypsies in Italy also have an effect on their fashion, believe it or not. In the decision between a zippered closure on a purse and magnetic snaps, it would be wiser to purchase a bag that closes securely so that it's not as easy for someone to swipe something out of it. This explains why book bags are not much of a trend in Italy; with the bag over your back, it's impossible to keep watch over all of the different compartments, especially in crowded areas. Walking through the city streets, locals will actually *warn* tourists to flip the backpack over so that you're wearing it on your stomach instead. It may sound silly, but a surprising amount of people do it to protect their belongings.

Because of small cultural and lifestyle differences like these, it's important for retailers to be able to identify the trends that will work in some countries, but not others. Fashion cannot be generalized around the world – it is constantly changing and being modified depending on consumer needs. And clearly, these needs are created by individualized values of countries and even smaller sub-cultures within. Being able to predict trends and what will be successful is a frequently sought out talent in the fashion industry often accompanied by a fairly high income. By performing similar analyses like this one, designers and retailers have an easier time predicting what would be best for their business.

Albright College Gingrich Library

Works Cited

Alessi, Ashlyn Rayne. Knowledge Gained from Personal Interactions with Italians. May-June

2015. Raw data. Perugia, Italy.

Dolores, Aaron. "The Evolution of Streetwear." *Mixologi*. The Art of Diversity, 18 Sept. 2012. Web. 13 Nov. 2015.

Donati, Alessandro. "Differences Between Italian and American Culture/Fashion." Personal interview. 10 Sept. 2015.

Ferla, Ruth L. "The Campus as Runway." *The New York Times* [New York City] 12 Oct. 2011, Fashion & Style. Print.

"Focus On." *Vogue Italia* Apr. 2015: 124-26. Print.

Ghosh, Damyanti. "Italian Fashion and Beauty: Latest Trends." Life in Italy. Web. 20 Mar. 2015.

Huober, Naomi. "American Fashion, Italian Style." Drexel University, 2010. Web. 15 Sept. 2015.

James. "Fashion Advice." The Savvy Backpacker. 05 Aug. 2013. Web. 20 Mar. 2015.

Kost, Kathryn, and Stanley Henshaw. "U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births and Abortions 2008: National Trends by Age, Race and Ethnicity." New York: Guttmacher Institute. Web. 7 December 2015.

Kroeber, A.L., & Kluckhohn, C. "Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions." Harvard University Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology: Papers 47, 1952. Print.

Murek, Diana Marain. "Cultural Influences On Trend Forecasting." Into the Fashion. 6 Jan. 2010. Web. 15 Mar. 2015.

"National Marriage and Divorce Rate Trends." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 23 Nov. 2015. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.

"Pix 11." *News*. Tribune Broadcasting. New York City, New York, 30 Nov. 2015. Television.

Russo, Gio. "Differences Between Italian and American Culture/Fashion." Personal

interview. 10 Sept. 2015.

Smith, Cynthia, ed. "Index: Fresh Kicks." *Vogue* Apr. 2015: 282. Print.

Stannard, Philippa. "Differences Between Italian and American Culture/Fashion." Personal interview. 30 Sept. 2015.

Sullivan, Robert. "View: Arm CANDY." *Vogue* Apr. 2015: 184+. Print.

"The American Style: Culture, Politic, Mentality and Lifestyle." *Just Landed*. Sept. 2008. Web. 16 Nov. 2015.

"Why Students Drink." *Seminar for Parents: Alcohol Use On Campus*. University of Minnesota, 27 Nov. 2013. Web. 07 Dec. 2015.