

How Fashion Meets Traditions – On the Example of Italian Fashion in America - Thinking from a Cross-cultural Perspective

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“There is no design without discipline. There is no discipline without intelligence.” – Massimo Vignelli.

Abstract

Throughout its overlong history, Italian fashion has influenced and cultivated relationships with many nations, with the United States holding a prominent position. The fashion industry in America has a past of evolution, with its complex system continuing to expand. As it is well-known in the USA there is a variety of ethnicities known as “melting-pot.” Italian Americans provide alternative views of ethnic experience, based on culture, sociology, design and fashion (Alba, 2023).

Italian fashion in America includes the elements of art, design, culture, sociology, and economics. There is a strong connection between modern and traditional styles which combine creative and critical thinking from a cross-cultural perspective. It unites cultural pluralism and local traditions with the industry’s innovative and economic elements. Italian Americans rapidly joined majority of Americans, thus there was a strong connection between the two nationalities (Alba, 2023).

This paper aims to explore how Italian fashion integrated with American one. It examines the history of Italian fashion in America, using this dialogue to enhance discussions in higher education system. As well there will be discussed the aspects of ethnicity, similarities and cultural differences (Alba, 2023).

Keywords: America; Italy; Fashion; Tradition; Modernity; Cross-cultural perspective

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Introduction

The dynamics of fashion systems and consumption places are put to the test by contemporary fashion traditions. These systems are frequently seen as recent products of fashion and globalization. By examining their parallels and discrepancies, this piece challenges the ideas of tradition and modernity, emphasizing the conflict between continuity and change (Merlo & Polese, 2006).

First, it is important to challenge long-standing divisions like modern versus traditional or conventional against fashionable. Second, it's crucial to introduce new concepts and/or redefine existing ones. Instead of using "ethnic fashion," more and more people are using terms like world fashion, global fashion, postmodern fashion, and fusion fashion (Merlo & Polese, 2006).

Other fashion systems have a great influence on North America; fashion is culturally associated with these locations. After World War II, American and Italian textile industries worked together to reinvent conventional methods of design and the production of high-quality materials. Italian designers who thoroughly integrated the two cultures into their designs were Guido Carli, Emilio Pucci, and Alberta Ferretti. Besides that, Massimo Vignelli was an Italian designer who created the iconic New York subway map (Merlo & Polese, 2006).

Modern fashion designers are increasingly referencing their local cultural background to create distinctive design identities while both modernizing and recreating it. A general reevaluation of local cultural history as a counter-reaction to cultural globalization that has helped designers flourish at the national level. On the one hand, this enables designers to stand out in the fiercely competitive global fashion business in our increasingly interconnected world (Merlo & Polese, 2006).

It must be acknowledged that fashion also has an economic component. This volume examines a developing topic on the function of new fashion cities and venues of fashion consumption in an effort to challenge the global dominance of "conventional" world fashion cities (Merlo & Polese, 2006).

Both Italian and American trends are continuously produced in response to social, cultural, political, religious, and economic developments. Additionally, they are employed in the construction and manifestation of unique regional cultural identities. Modern fashion designers are increasingly taking inspiration from their local cultural background to create distinctive design identities while both updating and recreating it. Due to a broad reevaluation of local cultural history as a counterbalance to cultural globalization, this not only helps designers thrive at the national level but also helps them stand out in the very competitive global fashion market cities (Merlo & Polese, 2006).

Literature Review on the Topic: Tradition and Modernity in Fashion

Tradition is constantly being redefined and reinterpreted; it is a construct rather than a given. Instead of accurately depicting historical events, it is more strongly linked to ideological reasoning. Though they can be very old, traditions are often quite new, and sometimes they are literally produced in a single event or over a little period of time. Usually, invented conventions are responses to novel situations (Yadgar, 2013).

It must be acknowledged that the customs and fashions of clothing vary among cultures. In Japan, for instance, the kimono is not only a traditional garment but also a representation of style and morals. Textiles and materials are examples of how culture has influenced fashion. For instance, China's long history

of producing silk is the reason why silk is used in Chinese fashion. One may argue that fashion is a kind of protest; during the American Civil Rights Movement, African-Americans utilized dress as a symbol to question social standards. Traditional African hairstyles, for instance (Calanca & Capalbo, 2018).

It is about using fashion as a mirror to reflect the social, political, and economic scene, documenting changes, and incorporating it into the historical narrative. The main takeaway from this is that the history of fashion is not limited to the history of clothing and accessories, or the history of material objects per se. But more than anything else, it is the set of social, theoretical, and practical guidelines related to fashion phenomena that are transmitted from one historical context to another (Paulicelli, 2015).

There is a strong connection between Italian and American fashion style. In 1970s Italian fashion in America became both a creative and economic source. "The made in Italy Sold in America" explore Cultural Revolution of fashion. There was a boom of Italian fashion magazines in America, like – "Attenzione" it was for an elite readership and the magazine introduced Italian designers to Americans like Gianni Versace and Moschino. "Attenzione's" focus was on Made in Italy designers and culture of Italy. Magazine "Attenzione" made a cultural revolution in United States. (Dettori & Morselli, 2007). The Italian fashion has a long history in America, it has to be noted that

Conclusion

Creativity is influenced by cultural capital, the accumulation of knowledge throughout generations, and the relationship between past and current experiences. Pallazina del Meridiana in Florence is home to the "Galleria del Costume," a museum devoted to fashion and costume (Volonté, 2012). A museum with the same concept is planned to be built inside Milan's Palazzo Dugnani. The "Archivi della

nowadays there is "Casa Italiana Zerilli –Marimo" at New York University (Zerilli-Marimò, C. I.), where there is a space and availability for a dialogue about Italian and American culture. "Casa Italiana" programs reflect diversity of cultures (Zerilli-Marimò, C. I.).

It has to be noted that fashion itself is connected with cultural heritage. On November 14, 2011, The State Archives of Rome (Romana, A., Samuele, B., & Gianni, D. 2023) divided fashion archive into sections and contributed to increase the number of archival complexes, next year a campaign started with the name: "Europeana Fashion – Discover Europe's Fashion Heritage" it represented numerous fashion institutions and collections, for example, Emilio Pucci Archive, Museo Ferragamo, Fondazione Ferrè, Fondazione Micol Fontana, etc. (Romana, Samuele, & Gianni, 2023).

It is important to remember that fashion heritage is a social component that establishes values and ideas for daily living as well as the manner in which people dress. It is passed down from one generation to the next (Paulicelli, 2014).

The foundations of the fashion system include economics, material culture, and historical experience. It consists of fashion brand merchandise, customs, and emotional connections with clients. Because of this, incorporating historical positioning into current branding is essential (Paulicelli, 2014).

moda del 900," an Italian fashion archive devoted to recovering the nation's fashion heritage, is another. It is administered by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities. Fashion history is therefore important and directly relevant to the present. It is undeniable that Italian fashion has inspired American fashion (Lazzeretti, et.al. 2017).

Fashion is dynamic and changeable, but it is always connected with the past, history and traditions. At the same time, fashion is about business, and it

contributes to a country's economy, in the case of Italian fashion it has a positive contribution to USA's economy. Although trade among nations has been a fact for centuries, for nowadays the speed and intensity grows fast fashion (Cheng & Liu, 2008).

Fashion is the integral part of everyday life. It is a visual representation of society's economic, political and cultural state. There exists high, mass and classic fashion. In the case of high fashion, it is only for limited groups – like celebrities, fashion innovators, etc. Concerning mass fashion, it is produced for huge quantities for affordable price. The classic fashion – it is outdated and characterized with simplicity. Time makes fashion cyclical, and it keeps fashion business

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growing. At the same time the customers have the power to change what is acceptable, because if nobody buys a product, there is no fashion (Cheng & Liu, 2008).

A style is a characteristic feature that makes it look different from others. Italian fashion has its own style and it is spread globally, it has a positive influence on worldwide fashion and as well as it is popular in the United States (Cheng & Liu, 2008).

To sum-up, Italian and American modern fashion traditions unite together, it includes creative thinking from cross-cultural perspectives. Fashion is the mirror of society's lifestyle; it unites collective consciousness and traditions of the society.

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