

Readers or Consumers? Identity Portrayal in Italian Lifestyle Magazines

*A case study on *Cosmopolitan Italia**

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ABSTRACT

Lifestyle journalism is a form of media operating at the intersection of identity and consumerism, a place where multiple identity-related factors come into play. Magazines, one of the first instances of lifestyle media, have historically been able to shape culture through their recommendations, gaining a relevant spot in the media universe. Within the Italian lifestyle media landscape, Cosmopolitan is the only magazine which caters to young women aged 18-34, representing an interesting case study when it comes to analyzing how current portrayal of consumerism and national identity are represented in the magazine. Despite research has analyzed how American lifestyle magazines have shaped consumer identity in the past and the influence of branded advertising on Italian editorial content, little has been said about how Italian lifestyle readers are addressed within articles containing product recommendations, and how such articles represent and possibly shape culture. This research aims to explore the role of recommendation articles in mediating between cultural traditions and global consumerist trends. To achieve the goals described above, the research question investigates how Cosmopolitan's recommendation articles construct their readers' identity, especially focusing on the role played by consumerism and Italian identity. The study is developed as a qualitative analysis, interpreting results using MCDA (Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis) on 20 selected recommendation articles about fashion, beauty, and lifestyle, analyzing the magazine's printed edition from March 2024 to April 2025. Latent and implicit ideological meanings and structures are uncovered by analyzing the interplay of text and images in the articles. The articles were selected by using purposive sampling, as they needed to include specific product recommendations and have a length of at least 300 words. This research focuses on how consumerism and Italian identity are portrayed within Cosmopolitan's recommendation articles. The main findings show that consumerism is portrayed as a solution, identity-shaping, driven by social media, and finally as a normative practice; Italian culture is portrayed as an aesthetic, outdated, and in relation to the international environment. Ultimately, the magazine constructs a reader identity which is aligned with global consumer trends while selectively incorporating Italian cultural themes and references. The recommendation articles construct the readers' identity by blending consumerist references with relevant cultural phenomena, especially social media trends. Overall, Italian culture is commodified and selectively used, while consumerism emerges as a normalized and empowering behavior. The study contributes to understanding lifestyle journalism as a vehicle for cultural negotiation and identity construction in contemporary Italian media.

KEYWORDS: *Lifestyle, Magazine, Recommendation, Italy, Culture*

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1. Introduction

This thesis aims to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural elements at play in Italian fashion magazines targeted towards young women. In particular, the accent is placed on how the audience's identity is constructed throughout the magazine's recommendation articles, investigating whether those sections address their audience as consumers rather than just readers. The national context of Italy is addressed as well throughout the research, as it is necessary to provide a comprehensive outlook on how culture plays a role in how magazines shape identity. International and particularly American media have adopted since a few years ago an editorial model which mixes traditional editorial content with advertising bringing down the "wall" between the two (Ruggiero et al., 2024, p.3). Italian media outlets have also adapted their content strategy to fit this format at a slower pace, a change which involved Italian digital media in particular (Ruggiero et al., 2024, p.14). The goal of this research is to analyze how the Italian editorial market is changing by analyzing how print lifestyle media balances editorial content and brand placements in recommendation sections. Lifestyle magazine *Cosmopolitan* is an interesting case study because it is an international publication adapted for the Italian market, and therefore is influenced by both Italian and international culture.

1.1 Topic and rationale

This research focuses on researching the Italian fashion and lifestyle magazine *Cosmopolitan*, by analyzing editorial recommendation articles of the publication's printed edition between March 2024 and April 2025. By "editorial recommendation articles" is meant product exposure within fashion magazines which is not paid sponsorship or publicity. Specifically, this thesis aims to uncover how audiences are addressed within recommendation articles, and how language is used to construct identity through different topics. Recommendation articles are articles which, along the article itself, recommend specific products to the audience which are in line with the topic of the article. *Cosmopolitan* is a lifestyle magazine targets an audience of young women 18-34 years old (*Cosmopolitan, Il Cambiamento È "Onlife,"* 2022). Analyzing this publication provides insight into how *Cosmopolitan's* audience of young Italian women is addressed, and which topics are considered relevant by the publication.

Magazines, historically an element constructing culture (Alexander, 2021, p.328), play a role in shaping societal trends. Indeed, a study by Alexander (2021, p.329) investigating the role of North-American women magazines in the 1920s in shaping women's identity through

recommendation and advice, found that those magazines conveyed the idea that consumption was a form of identity creation. Analyzing recommendation sections provides an insight into how audiences are addressed, and into the values and identities that a magazine puts forward. According to Kitch (2015, p.9), magazines are a cultural form in its own right, and they play a part in constructing and perpetrating ideas related to identity creation. Furthermore, magazine play a key role in constructing lifestyle models for readers, in particular when it comes to construct lifestyle addressing the reader as a consumer (Weiss, 2020, p.163). For this reason, it is especially interesting to analyze how magazines construct their recommendations sections, historically an important component of fashion magazines. One important consideration is that the reasoning behind specific articles and product recommendations within magazines is driven for a large part by advertisers, who push editors to produce aspirational content which appeals to a young and wealthy audience (Frith, 2009, p.132). Gaining an insight into how a publication such as *Cosmopolitan* addresses their audience thus provides an insight into whether the content from a single magazine ultimately reflects such a demographic. Recommendation articles are an appropriate subject of analysis precisely because of their hybrid nature which lends itself to target the audience as consumers through advice which is potentially consumeristic in nature.

Analyzing how *Cosmopolitan* addresses young audiences in the Italian market offers a perspective on how lifestyle publications are possibly changing their content in the current era, in which lifestyle content is extremely prevalent on social media. Kitch (2015, p.12)'s model for analyzing magazines as cultural products is thus instrumental in analyzing the role of *Cosmopolitan* in interacting with and shaping Italian culture. Pedroni and Mora (2023, p.959) analyze the shift within the Italian editorial system throughout the 2010s, when the fashion discourse in Italy became increasingly accessible thanks to the diffusion of blogs and magazine websites deeply intertwined with culture which mixed the fashion discourse with art and design, in contrast with traditional publications positioning as "not-for-all" editorial products. In order to keep up with the digital environment, traditional publications opened up to online channels, maintaining the authoritative position of fashion media in defining trends. Magazine articles and overall content act as sites of meaning production through discourse, and they have a well-defined place in the current media landscape (Kitch, 2015, p.10). The highly differentiated Italian lifestyle editorial environment in the last 50 years has contributed to the development of a variety of publications and publishing houses, both national and international. Among these Hearst, the media company publishing *Cosmopolitan*, has affected the Italian cultural environment by bringing to the country an international publication and facing the challenge of catering to the Italian market. According to Pedroni and Mora (2023, p.965), the relationship between the editorial and the advertising world is bridged through product placement and positive messaging due to Italian publishers' necessity to increase advertising

revenue. Contemporary fashion magazines are defined by fashion, advertising, and photography, intertwining images and advertising to maximize commercial exploitation (Titton, 2016, p.212). This makes fashion magazines cultural products and commodities at once, blurring the boundaries between advertising and non-advertising further influenced by cultural and linguistic factors in Italy.

1.2 Research Question and Sub Questions

Given the issues and topics outlined above, this research proposal and the thesis will focus on the following research question:

RQ: How does *Cosmopolitan Italia* represent audience identity through their recommendation sections?

As introduced in the section above, the research question focuses on the analysis of how the Italian edition of *Cosmopolitan's* recommendation sections represent the readers' identity. The focus is on which identities are represented and how they are represented, to gain insight into how the publication uses its position in the cultural sphere to influence the audience based on Kitch (2015, p.12)'s model. The research uses MCDA (Multimethod Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate how identity is communicated through text and images. The following subquestions focus on analyzing how the two sensitizing concepts of consumerism (SQ1) and Italian identity (SQ2) are represented. Consumerism is analyzed by taking into consideration the role that brands and the ideal personas connected to them play in shaping identity (Oflazoğlu, 2015, p. 26). Italian identity is analyzed based on the concept of Italianness and the elements connected to it identified by Piancazzo et al. (2024, p.756).

SQ1: How is consumerism connected to identity construction?

SQ2: How is the concept of Italianness reflected through recommendation sections?

1.3 Relevance and Research Gap

This research is also relevant inasmuch not much research has been conducted on Italian magazines and media firms, especially with regards to how they address their audience and how they construct identity through the products they recommend. A starting point which prompts a research on lifestyle recommendation articles is the research conducted by Ruggiero et al. (2024, p.5) on how the platformization of news media affects the traditional separation between advertising and news in Italy. Investigating changes in news media's online content is relevant in an

age in which new media companies increasingly blur the line between advertising and own content (Rinallo & Basuroy, 2009, p.34). This thesis aims to investigate how recommendations of products and brands challenge the readers' identity effectively treating them as consumers by keeping into account women's traditional lifestyle magazine's position of cultural authority.

Past research observed how magazines in the 1920s contributed to women's self-perception and in shaping identities (Alexander, 2021, p.329) and investigated the relationship between reader expectations and content in women's magazine, specifically analyzing textual features (Ytre-Arne, 2011, p.218). Investigating Italian magazines' recommendation sections will provide deeper insights into Rinallo and Basuroy (2009, p.33)'s research on the influence of advertising spending on supposedly neutral media coverage of the advertiser in the Italian magazine market, which poses a threat to media objectivity. Ultimately, studying how Italian editorial content represents brands and branded products in connection to the readers' identity sheds a light on how Italian lifestyle media is shaped by culture and on how it influences it itself. Lifestyle journalism has the potential to merge consumer culture with aesthetic sensibilities, resulting in highly curated content which further influences the reader based on the magazine's own authority. Such editorial content is created by magazines to fit the target audience's dominant cultural discourse, a practice shared with advertising (Saraceno & Tambling, p.2).

Identity construction through language in an environment such as the publishing one which is affected both by commercial and editorial needs is a topic worth exploring because of the ties between consumerism and identity construction (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). The Italian lifestyle and fashion editorial market is particularly interesting to analyze because of the variety of concepts, stereotypes and aesthetics associated to "Italianness", which is defined as a concept that portrays Italy and Italians according to a range of stereotypes associated with Italian identity, including the notion of "made in Italy" (Piancazzo et al., 2024, p.756). Furthermore, Benson (2020, p.92) highlights how exclusionary practices are in place not only in traditional media, but also in lifestyle blogging and social media. This is why it is important to study how lifestyle media employs visual and linguistic devices which exclude anybody that is not aware of specific cultural discourses such as those related to consumerism and social media trends. A visual research on the depiction of heteronormative stereotypes in *Cosmopolitan* magazine was done in the United States by Saraceno and Tambling (2013, p.2), who analyzed how the magazine communicates and represents social values in its articles through imagery. The style of the aforementioned research informs this one inasmuch the magazine is analyzed from a cultural standpoint. Overall, the goal of this thesis is to perform an analysis on how consumerism is represented in an Italian magazine through both text and images. This research aims to bridge the gap between descriptive research and the social

studies approach described above. Analyzing the content in recommendation articles allows to draw conclusions on what such content aims to achieve through their readership. The messages communicated in the articles provide a specific portrayal of the magazine's audience and an overview of lifestyle journalism's contemporary focus.

2. Theoretical Framework

Since this research is based on the role that Italian magazines play in the realms of defining identity, this chapter will provide a background on magazine theory and branding devices.

The first section delves into the realm of magazine studies, outlining how magazines have operated throughout history and how they have evolved to become an influential player in the consumerist society. Kitch (2015, p.12)'s model for analyzing magazines as a form of culture and community is introduced as the main theoretical concept behind the analysis' rationale. The second section investigates the Italian magazine market in particular, contextualizing its role in comparison to international magazine culture and exploring how lifestyle media operate within the Italian cultural context. The use of language by magazines is addressed in the third section, which explores how magazines construct identity and which linguistic devices they use to do so; this section constitutes the basis for the operationalization of this thesis' sensitizing concepts in connection to how magazines construct their audience's identity through the portrayal of consumerism.

Finally, the last section investigates the role played by Italian culture in shaping identity through Piancazzo et al. (2024, p.774)'s concept of "Italianness", defining the aesthetic and cultural elements which play a role in the construction of the concept.

2.1 Academic Perspective on Magazines

Hanusch (2012, p.3) defines lifestyle journalism as a distinct journalistic field which addresses its audience as consumers through entertainment, offering factual information about goods and services which the audience may use in their daily lives. One of the distinctive elements of lifestyle journalism is the presence of what Hanusch (2012, p.2) calls "soft news", which tend to revolve around the cultural sphere, as opposed to "hard news" in traditional journalism, which focus on current events and political issues. Steensen (2011, p.50) mentions the softening of news as a consequence of journalism's "featurization", a synonym of "soft news" which refers to, among others, lifestyle stories, personal columns, and human-interest stories. Hanusch and Hanitzsch (2013, p.947) define lifestyle journalism's domain as the journalistic coverage of practices that help define a specific identity within the realm of consumption, primarily addressing audiences as consumers instead of as citizens, as done by journalism focusing on hard news. According to the authors it is also essential to consider that despite lifestyle journalism tends to be market-driven and consumption-focused, it offers value to audiences through information valuable to civic life (Hanusch, 2019, p.196). Despite lifestyle journalism's focus on consumerism, according Perreault et al. (2024, p.725) there is little evidence that lifestyle journalism is necessarily intrinsically unethical. Rather, lifestyle journalism focuses on providing solutions through a format which often includes

brand mentions and product recommendations, often translating into a genre which Thier et al. (2019, p.2513) have termed “solution journalism”, a term which refers to journalistic articles which follow a problem to solution narrative pattern. In academia, the topic of lifestyle journalism is analyzed mainly according to its connection with consumerism and identity representation, addressing how audiences are portrayed as consumers whose identities are placed at the center of discourse (Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2013, p.944).

Lasorsa (2015, p.88) emphasizes the normative nature of academic literature on magazines, observing that magazine research is mainly made up of descriptive research; however, a recent shift within magazine studies is leaning towards analyzing publications through social science theory. Holmes (2020, p.4)’s theory of magazine states that magazines target a specific group of readers, and their content is reflective of the everchanging need of said group; furthermore, magazines focus on fostering a sense of community through their readership, and are able to flexibly adapt to wider societal changes. Based on these two theories, magazines are a reflection of the dominant social culture, and their analysis should focus on publications’ wider social impact. The goal of this thesis’ analysis is to take into consideration how society and societal trends such as social media play a role in defining magazine content. The analysis ultimately focuses on the interplay between a lifestyle magazine such as *Cosmopolitan* and the larger societal cultural context.

A perspective which allows the possibility to analyze magazine according to a critical perspective which takes into account contemporary culture is provided by Kitch (2015, p.10), who has developed a model which analyzes magazines as forms of control, community, and culture. These three models analyze magazines as reflectors of society, and place emphasis on magazines’ role in constructing reality by putting forward ideals to which readers should aspire. When analyzing magazines as forms of control, Kitch (2015, p.12) explains that the focus is placed on the commodification of readers and topics, ultimately translating into audiences being addressed as consumers. A useful tool for analyzing magazines from a control perspective is a framing analysis focused on commercial discourse. The model analyzing magazines as community places emphasis on audience thematic segmentation, viewing the magazine as a gregarious element connecting people with similar interests, thus giving rise to imagined communities. Audiences have the power to create meaning and to express their social and cultural identity (Kitch, 2015, p.12). Finally, this thesis will mostly focus on the analysis of magazines as forms of culture, viewing them as cultural forms in their own right. This type of magazine research operates according to a structural analytical lens, analyzing magazines as systems of symbols arranged according to culturally specific storytelling codes (Kitch, 2015, p.13). Törrönen and Juslin (2010, p.141) go further into the cultural analysis of lifestyle magazine’s content by adopting a critical perspective on how

cultural view change based on public perception, by analyzing how contemporary social phenomena influence magazine content. By investigating how consumeristic trends and national identities play a role in shaping the audience's identity, this thesis adopts Törrönen and Juslin (2010, p.141)'s approach to cultural analysis.

2.1.1 Magazines as cultural artifacts

Kitch (2015)'s analysis of magazines as a form of culture understands the medium as a physical repository of text and art in which recurring elements, both textual and visual, constitute the basis of a cultural element. Historically, magazine have served as venues for the circulation of artistic ideas, gradually becoming the preferred vehicle of artists and writers for defining their artistic agendas (Allen, 2020, pp.263-265), hence serving not only as cultural items, but also as gregarious mediums that brought together communities of artists. Magazines' ability to reflect cultural changes and function as historical repositories is exemplified in Gromova (2022)'s analysis of the evolution of a Japanese children's magazine, going through the magazine's different cultural phases which reflected the wider historical moment. This instance demonstrates how magazines are fluid entities that reflect the wider culture, and therefore their analysis needs to take into consideration the environment within which the magazine exists and operates. Lynge-Jorlén (2015, p.8) mentions how niche magazines make use of visual elements that merge high fashion with art and style culture, a practice which, if observed in a mainstream fashion magazine such as *Cosmopolitan*, would identify how magazines with different target audiences and editorial practices culturally influence each other.

The concept that best summarizes Kitch (2015)'s model of magazines as a form of culture is the term "Magazine Exceptionalism", coined by Abrahamson (2007, pp.667-668) to describe magazines' unique feature amongst other publications to be a product of its culture and at the same time a catalyst for social change. Abrahamson (2007, p.668) brings the example of headlines in teenage magazines, designed to be shocking and generate disdain among conservatives. The result of such headlines was the boycott of those magazine's advertisers, exemplifying how magazines not only drive a social change in mindset, but they also hold the power to have economic, behavioral, and concrete implications (Abrahamson, 2007, p.668).

2.1.2 Magazines as communities of people with shared interests

Magazines as a form of community are instead understood as unifying mediums for people sharing similar interests and worldviews, leading to publications' thematic segmentation. According to Kitch (2015, p. 12) one of the exceptional aspects of magazines compared to other kinds of media

is the homogeneity of their audiences, who share interests and worldviews creating ready-made social groups.

The audience has the power to make meanings and to use those meanings to construct identities, and magazines in this model are understood as forums for the productive and organic expression of social and cultural identity, tying with the model analyzing magazines as forms of culture.

Fish (2004, p.219) uses the term “interpretive communities” to refer to shared interpretive strategies with regards to the meaning behind a text. The interpretive community is a social site where meanings are constructed and negotiated by the members of the community (Berkowitz & Ter Keurst, 1999, p.125), in this case of a magazine (Kitch, 2015, p.12).

Within this research, it is essential to analyze magazine content keeping in mind that throughout the articles there is an understanding that the audience is interested in the topic discussed and belongs to a social group that enacts specific dynamics and is aware of specific social codes. This consideration allows to situate the analysis and understand why *Cosmopolitan’s* audience may relate to specific themes, and especially why some topics, discussions, and linguistic framework will capture their attention more than others. Gamson et al. (1992, p.382) refers to the practice of using textual imagery which strengthens the social power and position of a specific group as “preferred meaning”, a compromise between journalistic and social practices (Berkowitz & TerKeurst, 1999, p.126). Furthermore, magazines often leverage the concept of “community” in order to create a sense of belonging in their readers, making them feel included and thus increasing their engagement.

The understanding of magazines as communities will be applied to the research by focusing on calls for action to the magazine’s audience in the recommendation sections, and on defining how texts are written in connection to a certain community, especially when it comes to using language specific to a certain social group.

2.2 Magazines in the Italian publishing market

Kitch (2015, p.12)’s magazines as culture model analyzes magazines as cultural co-creators which leverage society’s tendencies to engage their audiences, acting both as a sounding board and as a tool for inspiration. The relationship between those that play an active creative role in magazine production, financial pressures and network jeopardizes coherent editorial strategies, resulting in magazines being a unique product of this highly culturally connected interplay (Billiani, 2023, pp.191-192). Indeed, research into Italian magazines during the fascist period, found that even those magazines that declared themselves autonomous from political pressures, ended up acting as

mediators between the increasingly isolated Italian society and international aesthetic and political positions (Billiani, 2023, p.207).

Within the Italian magazine market, the decisions to cover a certain brand are made based on pressures from competing publishers, ultimately resulting in larger companies being more often featured in non-advertising editorial content. In their study analyzing the influence of advertising spending on editorial coverage, Rinallo and Basuroy (2009, p.34) emphasize that since media coverage influences a product's sales, the fact that advertising spending is linked to increased brand featuring poses a threat to media objectivity and reduces consumer welfare, as audiences interpret magazines' recommendation sections as neutral content. Indeed, within the Italian market, fashion and lifestyle publications are particularly vulnerable to advertisers' pressures to modify editorial content, as such publications derive the majority of their revenue from the advertising market (Rinallo & Basuroy, 2009, p.34). Such pressures ultimately connect to influencing the products covered, appealing to readers' consumeristic tendencies without the audience being aware of the reason behind featurization of a certain product or brand, ultimately leading to a lack of transparency from the publication's side. Related to the lack of transparency from the publication, another issue arising is that of "self-censorship". Within the fashion and lifestyle editorial market this implies choosing to offer extra visibility to a product or brand in supposedly neutral editorial content in order to favor big advertisers, ignoring other products from brands that do not have advertising relationships with a certain publication (Rinallo et al., 2012, p.426). Indeed, aspects related to what is unsaid and considerations about the reasons behind editorial choices are essential aspects to take into consideration when analyzing how *Cosmopolitan Italia* appeals to readers' consumeristic tendencies in order to drive profit, ultimately playing into covert advertising. Covert advertising is the diffusion of product information by a third party which appears to be independent from the advertisers, actively contributing to the diffusion of materialistic consumer lifestyles and taking advantage of consumers' trust in neutral media coverage (Rinallo et al., 2012, p. 428). This is the reason behind this research's choice in analyzing recommendation articles: their hybrid format between traditional magazine articles and editorial sections which recommend specific products to the audience taking advantage of their position in the cultural and editorial market renders them particularly suitable to analyze the role played by specific recommended products and brands.

As mentioned above, this research focuses on the analysis of magazines as cultural co-creators, active participants in the cultural zeitgeist. In particular, the role of magazines as physical repositories of text and art will be operationalized through a critical analysis of *Cosmopolitan Italia's* recommendation sections with a focus on the magazine's cultural contribution and on the influence

of contemporary culture on the magazine's content. Rinallo and Basuroy (2009)'s insight on magazines' contribution to consumeristic culture will play a role in the analysis of how specific recommendations are presented. Kitch (2015)'s magazine as culture model will be applied to the analysis of recommendation sections because it is both a top-down and bottom-up model, analyzing magazines as the product of both media companies and audiences and focusing on their uniqueness as a medium to reflect social, cultural, and economic contexts (Fürsich, 2012, p.16).

2.3 Linguistic choices and identity portrayals in media brands

In order to gain an understanding of how *Cosmopolitan* relates to their young audience, this research explores how language is used to construct identity and reinforce belonging to a certain group through the analysis of linguistic devices. With regards to the role of consumerism in identity construction, the analysis turns towards the depiction of the readers' identity in connection to the products recommended, the routines described, and the covert consumeristic practices present in the recommendation articles. In this research, language is to be understood as a means to an end, which is used by a media entity such as *Cosmopolitan* to achieve a desired goal, thus signalling a specific interpretation of society (Berger et al., 2020, p.2).

2.3.1 Language's role in audience engagement

Pezzuti (2023, pp.1-2) has analyzed the influence of linguistic choices on the meaning conveyed to audiences by brands wanting to portray an identity in connection to their image, outlining how brands use language in order to convey an implicit message to the desired audience. For instance, Uber and Nike's language choices within their ads highlight how those choices affect the meaning of the message and address a specific audience. The findings of the study highlight the positive effect of discrepancy-specific words such as *should* on social media engagement with the brand, suggesting that media brands would benefit from employing similar techniques to increase their user engagement (Pezzuti, 2023, p.14). The way language is used to address consumers is relevant for this research, as its goal is to address whether editorial content which recommends specific products addresses its audience as consumers. Using words which are fitting with a normative tone as highlighted by Pezzuti (2023, p.14) is an indication of how editorial content and advertising are intertwined in lifestyle magazines' recommendation sections. Furthermore, Barcelos and Munaro (2022, p.124) provide an overview of the implicit linguistic devices that media brands employ to maximize audience engagement, and particular emphasis is placed on evoking feelings of affection and interpersonal agreement with the goal of eliciting affective reactions through stylistic

linguistic elements. Among these devices are using pronouns to identify the affectional focus, using an analytical writing style as opposed to a narrative one or an emotional tone. The study highlights how using positive language increases consumer engagement, although established brands' appeal to users emotion might undermine their credibility. The research also found a positive correlation between brand engagement and the usage of graphic imagery, a variable which potentially affect the behaviour of media brands (Barcelos & Munaro, 2022, pp.128-129). Ultimately, both studies point to how language and linguistic devices are used by (media) brands to increase audience engagement, and Barcelos and Munaro (2022, p.128) also refer to the role played by images. Print editorial content, this research's element of analysis, is known for its use of imagery in connection to editorial article, especially in recommendation sections (Fangman et al., 2004, p.223).

When analyzing a lifestyle publication in the current socioeconomic environment, it is essential to keep into account the international context within which lifestyle magazines exist, which in the case of *Cosmopolitan's* Italian edition is a globalized world in which international culture has a profound influence, especially on language and linguistic practices such as code-switching. Code-switching refers to the alternation between two or more languages within a single text, often depending on the social context (Yousif, 2025, p.1217). Roux and Potgieter (2024, p.1228) explore how code-switching, which refers to the usage of words from a different language, in advertisement holds cultural significance and emphasizes the English language's profound influence worldwide, reinforcing connection to a certain group. Therefore, code-switching communicates belonging to a certain group, and indeed research has found that code-switching in advertising is used to increase feelings of desirability towards a brand highlighting different languages' connotations, such as French's association with haute couture or feminine brands (Conradie & Van Niekerk, 2015, p.118). In the context of youth culture the English language has had and continues to have a profound influence on cultural phenomena, and nowadays it is used as the primary language for exchange between different cultures (Roux & Potgieter, 2024, p.1227). In this context, code-switching becomes an important characteristic of language, further fostered by social media (Yousif, 2025, p.1218).

2.3.2 Consumerism and identity construction

The connection between consumerism and identity construction is explained by examining the role of brands' positioning towards their consumers. A postmodernist perspective describes the development of the self as an active process which partly happens through consumerism, focusing on how affiliation with a certain product represents a reinforcement of one's identity, both personally and communally (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998, pp.131-132). Indeed, brands play an

important role in constructing not only individual, but also social identity which certain groups appropriate, placing consumption at the center resulting in identity being the product of consumption patterns (Ofazoğlu, 2015, p. 26). Ofazoğlu (2015, p.32) found that fashion brands' symbolic meanings are essential in the construction of the ideal self, and that brands take advantage of this process by categorizing their consumers to better cater to their needs. Brands' portrayal of identities that make them recognizable to consumers plays into the concept of personas, images based on sets of associations consumers make about a brand (Nandan, 2005, p.267). In particular, in the current environment media brands need to portray unique values to their consumers, who play an active role in co-creating brand knowledge by circulating narratives about the brand (Bange et al., 2019, pp.69-71), engaging in the process of cultural co-creation illustrated by Kitch (2015, p.12).

The construction of brand narratives and their meanings constitute an important point of analysis in this research, and the concept of personas found in marketing literature serves as a tool to analyze how brands construct consumer identity. This research focuses on *Cosmopolitan* as a media brand, aiming to identify the personas discernible throughout the recommendation articles. Ultimately, this is done by analyzing how the product recommendations relate to the article's topic, and how the article frames said recommendations. The audience's identity is analyzed as the negotiation between how the magazine perceives its target audience and audience feedback, for instance through social media. The analysis will be conducted by analyzing the specific ways in which language is used to communicate to the audience messages related to brand identity.

2.4 The concept of Italianness

The concept of Italianness mentioned in the introduction constitutes one of the main elements of this thesis' framework, providing a lens through which the sub question "How is the concept of Italianness reflected through recommendation sections?" will be answered. According to Piancazzo et al. (2024), Italianness is a general term reflecting many elements of Italian culture. Among its main components, the "made in" label is a symbol of high-quality craftsmanship (Rech et al., 2023, p.99) often used to connect ideas of national stereotypes to the concept of Italianness in order to gain competitive advantages (Noris & Cantoni, 2024, p.153; Paris, 2019, p.144). Overall, Piancazzo et al. (2024) explore the factors that make up the concept of Italianness, such as esthetics reminiscent of the "dolce vita" (Adamoli, 2017), iconic traditional objects, food culture, and iconic sceneries.

Paris (2019, p.142) analyzes the concept of Italianness from a linguistic standpoint, assessing the images used to convey the concept of "Made in Italy". Italianness is presented as a way of being

and a skill (*saper fare*), connecting thematically to images and stereotypes typically associated to Italian culture. According to the author, the concept is synonym of quality, and is used by both Italian and foreign brands, giving origin to the concept of “Italian sounding”. Mass communication employs collective representations to represent traditions and popular culture through stereotypes, ideologies, and “mythologies”, a term which refers to systems of symbols representing societal culture in mass media (Barthes, 1956; Paris, 2019, p.143). Kitch (2015, p.13)’s framework of analysis of magazine as cultural products similarly approaches the medium as a conglomerate of symbols which acquires meaning through the cultural and social context in which it is produced. The advent of the Internet has seen a further and faster spread of the above mentioned representations, contributing to the diffusion of stereotypes which the concept of Italianness is in part based on (Boero, 2017, p.32). Balicco (2016, p.5) further explains how the Italian market has appropriated the stereotypes associated to Italianness and especially to the concept of Made in Italy to convey an international image and strengthen its position on the luxury goods market.

Among the main components of the concept of Italianness, the “made in” label is one of the most important elements, as it is a symbol of high-quality craftsmanship (Rech et al., 2023, p.99) often used to connect ideas of national stereotypes to the concept of Italianness in order to gain competitive advantages (Noris & Cantoni, 2024, p.153; Paris, 2019, p.144). Rech et al. (2023, p.100) also presents Statista (2017)’s Made-In-Country Index, which illustrates how prestigious goods are perceived by individuals according to the made-in label, with Italy being in the top-10 positions. In their study on the representation of Italianness in a series of fashion film, Noris and Cantoni, (2024, p.169) analyze how the idea of “made in Italy” is actively used to convey stereotypes about Italy to make communication choices consistent with the brand’s identity of high-quality craftsmanship and traditional roots, effectively reaching international audiences. Within this analysis, the discourse around the “made-in” label will be added as an operational concept as a constitutional element of Italianness, particularly in connection to fashion.

The series of stereotypes and imagery connected to the concept of Italianness has been taken advantage of by the Italian market to gain competitive advantage in the international luxury market (Balicco, 2016, p.8; Paris, 2019, p.144). According to Paris (2019, p.144), commercial communication tied to Italianness reflects social identities which contribute in creating a definite national identity. This process is evident in the discourses perpetrated by Italian brands in international contexts, which aim at conveying Italy’s cultural image through symbols and values. Balicco (2016, p.8) further clarifies how Italian identity has been portrayed, presenting itself as a supply to a demand in the international market, consciously using national stereotypes and cultural identities to its own advantage. Cultural stereotypes will be analyzed according to how they portray

Italian culture internationally, since visual and cultural stereotypes of Italy are mainly relevant in international culture.

The concept of Italianness is conveyed through aesthetic and cultural symbols and narratives represented through texts and visuals. Piancazzo et al. (2024, pp.774-775) identify four key templates that enhance the comprehension of the relationship between Italian fashion brands and the use of stereotypes tied to Italianness, namely (1) inspirational places and the idea of indeterminacy of time, (2) materials and decorations and the idea of perfection, (3) culinary delights and (4) iconic objects. Piancazzo et al. (2024, p.774-775)'s templates related to how the concept of Italianness is conveyed will be used in the operationalization of the analysis to identify instances where Italian identity and the concept of Italianness are present. Furthermore, the element of prestige of Made in Italy products (Balicco, 2016, p.5) contributes to create a framework of Italianness' representation along the aesthetic concepts presented by Piancazzo et al. (2024, p.774-775).

3. Methodology

This thesis uses qualitative methods to analyze *Cosmopolitan Italia's* recommendation sections on the publication's print edition in order to investigate how audiences' identity is portrayed according to consumeristic culture, and how the concept of "Italianness" is portrayed. The analysis will be conducted by analyzing the publication as a cultural artifact which contributes to and is influenced by the surrounding zeitgeist (Kitch, 2015, p.13). This research will take into analysis 20 recommendation articles taken from the "Style" and "Beauty" sections of *Cosmopolitan Italia's* printed editions from March 2024 to April 2025. This analysis takes into consideration magazines as cultural products and as media of dialogue with the current cultural and social background by using an approach (MCDA) which makes connections between the concepts analyzed and the national and international environment within which the magazine operates.

Qualitative methods were chosen for the analysis of this thesis' dataset because they provide instruments to critically interpret the material within their natural setting, focusing on the meaning people bring to such materials (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.3). Through the qualitative analysis of recommendation sections, the results will be interpreted in light of the research questions to provide a narrative answer to them. This approach follows Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.4)'s interpretation of qualitative research as a quilt or a bricolage, made of different pieces – in this case the analysis' sensitized concepts – that contribute to creating an overarching narrative that allows for a deep understanding of the topic based on the research framework. Indeed, the approach to the analysis follows a framework which is connected to the field of cultural studies, a field which aims to explore, among others, society's communicative practices, employing interpretative and evaluative methodologies to analyze all forms of cultural practice (Nelson et al., 1991, p.4). This research's method of analysis is MCDA (Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis) because it provides the tools to uncover implicit meanings in the text and to analyze the interplay between text and images.

Kitch (2015)'s culture and community models for magazine analysis will be used to analyze and interpret the results to provide an answer to the research question and sub questions. Additionally, the concepts of Italianness (Piancazzo et al., 2024), and branding (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Nandan, 2005) will be used as sensitizing concepts throughout the analysis and data interpretation, as these concepts relate directly to the sub questions. One of the points that this analysis will attempt to answer is how the dataset's recommendation articles talk about a topic or provide advice by relating the theme to products that are recommended within the article itself. Hence, the analysis aims to shed light on the meanings behind the recommendations and which identities are portrayed and thus communicated to the reader, focusing on the relationship

between consumerism and identity construction (How is consumerism connected to identity construction?). The concept of Italianness will be analyzed following the stereotypes connected to Italian culture outlined by Piancazzo et al. (2024, pp. 774-775), the economic background provided by Paris (2019, p.144), and the prestige connected to the “made in Italy” label (Balicco, 2016, p.5). The goal of this analysis is to explore how Italian culture is represented in connection with Italian fashion for Italian audiences. Ultimately, the analysis will focus on how Italian audiences are portrayed in relation to common Italian stereotypes used to represent the country in international contexts (Balicco, 2016, p.8; Noris & Cantoni, 2024, p.169; Paris, 2019, p.144).

3.1 Sampling and data collection

The dataset consists of a total of 20 articles from the “Style”, “Beauty”, “Body”, and “Life” sections of *Cosmopolitan Italia*, each article’s length being a minimum of 500 words. The articles are taken from the magazine’s print edition ranging from March 2024 to April 2025. This research uses purposive sampling to ensure that the recommendation articles selected for this research provide material which is relevant to answer the research question and sub questions, making sure that all the instance selected will constitute the final version of the dataset. The purposive nature of the data collection is defined according to a set of criteria outlined in the following paragraph. Such criteria are defined in pursuit of information-rich cases in relation to the sensitizing concepts (Needham & Appleton, 2025, p.4). Furthermore, purposive theoretical sampling will be employed by confronting the articles selected between each other as the article collection progresses, ensuring that all of the articles consistently fit the recommendation style. Thus, the selection is not operated a-priori, but it is continuously assessed according to the guidelines to ensure that the final dataset is able to provide an accurate analysis of the research questions (Campbell et al., 2020, p.654).

The article selection follows certain criteria which are outlined below, operating in a manner similar to Jalloh et al. (2020, p.3), who used purposive sampling in selecting the articles for their research on recommendations in men’s health magazines establishing guidelines for article selection based on the title or first sentence of a piece. Therefore, within this research the articles selected will follow the guidelines outlined as follows. (1) The articles have a minimum length of 500 words, and they fit the recommendation style outlined in this chapter’s introduction, meaning that it includes explicit mentioning of specific products which are recommended to readers. (2) To further ensure that the recommendation articles selected are appropriate for this research, the appearance of one or more of the words “guide”, “how”, “secret(s)” or “recommendation(s)” will be considered when selecting the articles. The last point is by no means a selection criterion. However,

such words appearing within the articles or in the articles' title is taken into consideration when evaluating whether an article's aim is to recommend something to the reader, and such words clearly identify a recommendation article.

Finally, the recommendation articles are selected from *Cosmopolitan Italia's* print editions ranging from April 2025 to March 2024, and are selected following the criteria mentioned above among the magazine's "Style", "Body" and "Beauty" sections, as the magazine's structure utilizes those sections, found towards the end of the magazine, to recommend products and items within articles that focus on offering style, beauty, and lifestyle recommendations to readers integrating product placement with positive messaging, prevalent in the Italian lifestyle editorial market (Pedroni & Mora, 2023, p.965). The articles chosen for analysis will be photographed and stored digitally in a folder, ensuring that all the articles of the dataset are in the same place.

3.2 Data analysis and operationalization

This research will use multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) including textual and visual analysis. MCDA focuses on identifying implicit meanings within a text, further implementing this analysis by integrating the interpretation of images that may contribute and add to the discourse (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p.9). This type of analysis is particularly relevant when analyzing magazines as the interpretive context, which refers to the social setting of a particular discourse (Tonkiss, 1998, p.249) and may provide additional information with regards to the underlying meanings, further explaining the co-creation of meaning between magazines and readers. Machin and Mayr (2023, p.54) outline how the usage of overlexicalization, metaphors, and structural oppositions within the text give away meanings and messages which are implied in the text. Analyzing what the text does not mention and why through the technique of suppression provides insight into the text's hidden meanings (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p.63), while the analysis of words' connotations and lexical choices serves to gain a deeper understanding of how the text frames a topic (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p.59). The analysis of images focuses on how they interact with the meanings conveyed in the text and on what the images depict through denotation and connotation (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p.67).

Data analysis will focus on the two sensitizing concepts, namely Italian identity and consumerism. Therefore, the focus will be on those sentences and imagery which are informative in relation to the aforementioned sensitizing concept to provide an answer to the research question as suggested by Tonkiss (1998, p.253). By using MCDA this research aims to analyze the way the publication approaches product recommendations and constructs identities, as the method

provides the possibility to uncover covert meanings. These methods have been chosen to analyze *Cosmopolitan Italia's* recommendation sections, as MCDA provides the tools to analyze the publication's contribution to the process of cultural meaning-making, generating insight into the production of text and deepening the understanding of the connection between language and ideology (Mak, 2024, p.187). These characteristics make it an ideal method to analyze material that carries cultural significance, providing an answer to the main question "How does *Cosmopolitan Italia* represent audience identity through their recommendation sections?". The analysis will consist in performing CDA on the selected recommendation articles, analyzing each technique used to convey meanings and reporting each instance in a separate document.

The analysis of the articles using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is carried out following the steps outlined in Meyer (2001, pp.17-18). Each article's text and images are analyzed according to the theoretical concepts, namely Kitch (2015)'s magazines as culture and community models presented in the theoretical framework. In the next step, sensitizing concepts, namely that of personas, consumerism, and Italianness, are searched for within the text. Meyer (2001, p.18) makes a distinction between observation methods used during data collection, and evaluation methods which transform the data into information relevant to the research objectives, restricting the opportunities for interpretation to sensitizing concepts. The analysis of the articles consists in performing lexical analysis on the selected articles focusing on the implicit and indirect meaning of both texts and images (Machin & Mayr, 2023, pp.14-15). The different codes will be identified and created in Atlas.ti, thus facilitating the analysis and the subsequent discussion of the findings.

3.2.1 General operationalization of concepts

This section presents how the thesis' sensitizing concepts will be operationalized within the analysis, following traditional critical linguistics by exploring how language is used to constitute society, and not simply to represent it. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the meanings behind linguistic choices (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p.9). Kitch (2015)'s magazines as culture model serves as the main research guideline, as the articles will be analyzed based on magazines' influential interplay with Italian culture, and on how product recommendations influence and shape cultural discourse within the articles, scouring texts and images for consistent elements and symbols relating to the research questions. Piancazzo et al. (2024)'s cultural elements defining Italianness will serve in identifying cultural aesthetics, a starting point in the analysis of cultural elements.

Because this thesis uses MCDA, the analysis will focus on the interplay between text and images in *Cosmopolitan Italia's* recommendation articles, with the goal of individuating elements

that, together with text, contribute to the communication of implicit and direct meanings (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p.9). When it comes to analyzing how images complement text and vice versa, the analysis uses the following question as a guideline: does the language used in the text complement the meanings communicated by the images? CDA is useful in analyzing how audiences are represented in the magazine by zooming in on how people are framed in discourse. Which aspects are emphasized, and which are left out? By focusing on positive versus negative representation of people, CDA also allows for the analysis of audience framing, such as the presence of an “us versus them” dynamic or what van Dijk (1993) calls “ideological squaring”, which indicates the use of referential choices (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p.9).

3.2.2 Concept operationalization – Italianness

Piancazzo et al. (2024)’s definition of Italianness serves as the starting point for the operationalization of the concept in MCDA. Esthetic factors that make up the concept of Italianness are searched for in texts and images, and they are analyzed based on what they aim to communicate. The analysis of the concept within *Cosmopolitan Italia*’s recommendation sections focuses on analyzing whether the “made-in” label is present, and in that case how it is represented. In these instances, the focus on the made-in label is on its usage to perpetrate stereotypes related to Italy as a country and as a culture to gain competitive advantage economically, and as a tool to effectively represent Italy to an international audience (Balicco, 2016, p.5; Noris & Cantoni, 2024, p.153; Paris, 2019, p.144). Linguistically, the concept is analyzed based on the definition developed by Piancazzo et al. (2024, pp.774-775) which includes the four key templates presented in the section above. The analysis delves into how Italianness fits the cultural paradigm presented by the article, for instance in relation to fashion or to a cultural phenomenon. From a visual standpoint, the analysis will focus on uncovering how aesthetics connected to Italianness are present in the articles again referring to the elements provided Piancazzo et al. (2024, pp.774-775).

3.2.3 Concept operationalization – Branding and consumer identity

Throughout the analysis of the dataset, consumerism is analyzed as an element defining identity. To analyze this concept, the question focuses on whether and how *Cosmopolitan Italia* addresses its audience from a consumeristic perspective in the recommendation sections. The analysis will focus on symbolic meanings presented as essential for the construction of the ideal self in connection with fashion and beauty brands, ultimately categorizing consumers to better cater to their needs (Oflozoğlu, 2015, p.32). Such categorization will be an important element of analysis

when it comes to the analysis of consumer sectors; relevant questions serving as starting points of analysis are: (1) what specific elements of personal identity are associated to (a) product(s)? (2) What messages related to personal identity are communicated in the recommendation article? And (3) How does the interplay of text and image contribute to representing a specific identity?

3.3 Credibility and Ethical Considerations

As this research's purpose is to provide an accurate representation of how Italian lifestyle magazines and specifically *Cosmopolitan Italia* use their recommendation sections as editorial content with commercial purposes, MCDA proves to be the most effective method to investigate how audiences are addressed. MCDA is an effective tool to uncover ideological frames and social tensions present in recommendation sections, such as the use of aging, health, and wellness as leverages to promote consumption-led advice. Using this method of analysis makes it possible to draw conclusions based on the overall style of the article, taking into consideration how the interplay of text and images contributed in conveying meaning. Analytical consistency is ensured by examining how each one of CDA's analytical tools contributed to meaning-making. The analysis is carried on according to Tracy (2010, p. 840)'s credibility criteria for qualitative research, namely by outwardly explaining nontextual references and by confronting the results obtained from the different articles in order to draw conclusions. The analysis on the articles is conducted on a data set large enough to ensure reaching a point of saturation, with similar paradigms being observed by the end of the analysis. Possible limitations include the fact that the selection criteria mainly fit articles from the *Beauty* section of the magazine, with a limited selection of *Style* section articles due to those articles' limited word count. The personal connection of the researcher with Italian culture also needs to be taken into account: intrinsic knowledge of Italian culture and personal experience might play a role in the analysis, influencing how concepts are analyzed and interpreted.

The constant comparative method will be used throughout the research to test provisional hypotheses. In the results sections, inferences regarding answers to the research questions will only be made when the dataset provides multiple instances of a certain phenomenon (Silverman, 2011, p.376). Comparison is used to verify that the recommendation sections of *Cosmopolitan Italia* taken into analysis consistently present similar phenomena. The findings of each article are compared with each other and the frequency of similar instances is taken into account when drawing general conclusions in connection with the sensitizing concepts. An overview of the analysis is provided by the data analysis file, which serves as a record of each article's analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

This section will discuss the themes found through performing MCDA on the 20 articles from *Cosmopolitan Italia* in connection to the research question. As this analysis' purpose is to analyze how the magazine represents its audience's identity through recommendation articles by investigating how these sections portray Italianness and consumerism, the themes analyzed reflect the two sensitizing concepts, namely Italianness and consumerism. The analysis of the themes found in response to the research questions also takes into consideration the target audience of *Cosmopolitan Italia*, namely 18 to 34-year-olds (*Cosmopolitan, Il Cambiamento È "Onlife,"* 2022). The topics touched in the recommendation articles and the products recommended go hand-in-hand with the audience that these articles address, which is interested in specific sources and social phenomena such as social media-fueled discussions and trends. The main question, which aims to investigate whether and how the publication addresses its readers as consumers, addresses two main points, namely how consumerism is presented as part of identity construction (i.e. how consumerism resonates with the reader's self-concept) and how the reader's Italian culture is presented, and which role it plays.

Within the context and scope of the research topic, other themes emerged throughout the analysis that are able to provide a deeper insight into how the magazine addresses its audience in connection with the topics of Italianness and consumerism. The topics that emerged from the analysis emphasize how there are different aspects at play within *Cosmopolitan Italia's* recommendation sections which play a role in constructing the identity of the reader as a consumer. Such aspects are related to culture, as magazines present themselves as an important character in the cultural dialogue, providing a perspective and an answer to cultural phenomena (Kitch, 2015, p. 9) and operating according to a framework that has audience engagement as its core goal through identity representation, one of the features typical of lifestyle journalism (Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2013, p.944).

When analyzing how the analysis' sensitizing concepts of consumerism and Italianness were framed in the recommendation sections, seven key themes were identified, four relating to consumerism and three relating to Italianness. In the themes relating to consumerism, "Consumerism as a solution" refers to recommendation articles which use product recommendations as part of a problem-solution framework; "Consumerism as identity-shaping" refers to instances in which consumer habits and the products associated to them are commodified as part of the reader's identity, while the theme "Consumerism as social media-driven" deals with how social media is involved in the articles as part of the cultural discourse; finally, "Consumerism as normative" relates to the affirmation of consumption as an empowering and necessary act. The

themes relating to Italianness include “Italianness as an aesthetic”, which refers to how Italian culture is reduced to a fixed aesthetic rather than treated as complex and evolving; “Italianness as outdated” refers to negative connotations implicitly assigned to Italianness, while the theme “Italianness and International” discusses the tension present in the articles between Italian culture and the international context.

4.1. The reader as a consumer

SQ1 addresses how consumerism is linked to identity construction. Despite not being sponsored by any brand or company, some of the articles use language which carries a persuasive connotation (N=7) and often reiterate a point by using repetition (N=8) as a tool to highlight a technique, product, or practice. The use of repetition and persuasive language in *Cosmopolitan* is consistent with the increased product placement in relation to positive messaging within Italian lifestyle editorials found by Pedroni & Mora (2023, p.965). As outlined above, consumerism is presented in *Cosmopolitan’s* recommendation articles in different forms, all of them shining a light on a particular aspect of the magazine’s audience. Consumerism is increasingly becoming a socially relevant topic as more products are recommended in different forms of media, since the consumer’s self identity is built through and involves product consumption (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998, p. 133). *Cosmopolitan’s* authoritative position as traditional media allows the magazine to contribute significantly to the cultural discourse (Pedroni & Mora, 2023, p.959).

4.1.1 Consumerism as a solution

One of the themes that emerges from conducting MCDA on *Cosmopolitan Italia’s* recommendation article is the portrayal of consumerism as a solution to personal issues. In some instances, the issues that buying and using a product solves is an issue that the magazine mentions to the reader to which a solution is offered in a second moment. Presenting consumerism as a solution implies that the reader is somebody with a certain issue that needs solving. The issues, themes and topics addressed in the articles indeed relate to those common to *Cosmopolitan’s* audience of young women, such as hair, aging, skincare, makeup and periods. In the following quote from *Cosmopolitan* (2024, pp. 105), “there is nothing wrong with having large pores, but if you would like to improve their looks, here is how to do it”, the article poses a solution to the issue of large pores while at the same time stating that there is nothing wrong with having large pores. The use of opposition allows the writer to provide a solution while maintaining a polite tone.

Magazines' authority in their own field, and specifically a magazine such as *Cosmopolitan* which is known and regarded by the public as a magazine targeted towards young women, provides legitimacy to societal trends. On the one hand, the magazine acts almost as an influencer, talking about products and trends descriptively and subjectively in order to empathize with the reader and leverage the meanings they assign to consumption activities (Batat, 2022, p.102; 2023, p.122). Many of the articles analyzed follow the problem to solution narrative (N=10), a journalistic style which became popular in the late 1990s by the name "solutions journalism". The term broadly defines journalistic articles that include a response to social problems, evidence of results, solutions and limitations (Thier et al., 2019, p. 2513).

In the context of lifestyle journalism and recommendation articles, the solution is often offered in the form of concrete steps and products which serve consumeristic purposes.

When focusing on solution journalism as a genre, it is straightforward to see how most of the articles analyzed share its characteristics. Beauty articles in particular tend to follow the problem to solution path, addressing the reader by describing issues that *Cosmopolitan's* audience likely resonates with and using products as part of the solution. Further supporting this last point, many of the articles (N=4) follow a step-by-step structure, as displayed in Image 4.1, in which products are recommended at each step, effectively showing how products can be integrated as part of a routine. Overall, solution articles take advantage of their target audience's concerns, interests, and cultural influences such as social media, turning them into recommendation articles that are presented as improving upon the readers' lives by suggesting products and step-by-step instructions.

Recommendation articles often employ metaphors that recall a fight, such as Article 20 calling hormones the "*enemies of our skin*" and "*precious allies in the fight against acne and imperfections*" (Bitmead, 2024, pp.94-95). Using such metaphor is particularly powerful as it showcases how the article proposes a solution to the reader's struggle, framing issues as a "battle" the reader is "fighting".

Image 4.1

Step-by-step article format (Cosmopolitan, 2024, pp. 104-107)

1. Lavate il viso almeno due volte al giorno

«Non detergere la pelle in modo corretto o costante può causare accumuli di sporicità e peggiorare l'aspetto dei pori dilatati», spiega la dermatologa Irina Iyer, MD. Al mattino, il bene pulire la cute con un detergente a acqua tiepida, così da agevolare l'apertura e la pulizia stessa dei pori. Prima di andare a letto, optate per uno doppio detergente, soprattutto se siete truccati. Iniziate con un olio detergente: può sembrare un controsenso, ma si detergono a base di oli rimovono efficacemente il trucco e aiutano anche a liberare i pori ostruiti eliminando così anche i punti neri, presagge Yeh. Quindi, ripetete l'operazione con lo stesso prodotto che avete usato di mattina. Infine, lavate sempre il viso dopo l'albergo: i pori si dilatano a causa del calore, della sudorazione, del trucco e della saponi, e i batteri possono rimanere intrappolati al loro interno rendendoli più visibili spiega la Dr. Barabstein.

Soluzione detergente per il viso, Banella Co., 25,40€
Detergente viso purificante, Dermagelidolipleg, 43€

106 **cosmopolitan**

2. Scegliete un tonico esfoliante

I tonici hanno scopi diversi e bisogna trovare quello giusto per la propria pelle. È consigliabile scegliere uno con acidi esfolianti: gli AHA o i BHA possono cambiare radicalmente la situazione, aiutano a sciogliere la colla che tiene insieme le cellule morte che ostruiscono i pori sulla superficie della pelle e migliorano la texture dell'epidermide.



Lozione con 2% BHA, **Paula's Choice**, 41€
 Siero esfoliante, **Topical**, 25€
 Micropeeling con acido salicilico, **Rilastil**, 22€

3. Evitate ingredienti che ostruiscono i pori

Assicuratevi sempre che ogni rituale skincare cui vi dedicate sia "non comedogenico", ovvero che non include prodotti potenzialmente in grado di occludere i pori, come oli e burri. Per farlo, leggete sempre con attenzione l'INCI, cioè l'elenco di tutti gli ingredienti che trovate stampato sulla confezione. Se scegliete fra i primi il silicone, passate al prossimo prodotto.



Trattamento anti imperfezioni, **Aveeno**, 20,20€
 Crema viso leggera, **Cerave**, 13,22€
 Gel idratante, **L'ORÉAL**, 39€

4. Indossate sempre la protezione solare

L'esposizione ai raggi UV può danneggiare il collagene che circonda le pareti dei pori, allargandoli. Per ridurli al minimo, applicate ogni giorno un Spf almeno a fattore 30.



Crema solare leggera con Spf 45, **Murad**, 55€
 Crema SPF50 con BHA e niacinamide, **Garnier**, 10,45€

5. Applicare il retinolo

Per stimolare la produzione di collagene e rafforzare le pareti dei pori, Marchéin suggerisce di integrare un prodotto a base di retinolo nel vostro regime di skincare. Potete richiederne uno specifico al vostro medico curante o scegliere un'alternativa da banco.



Siero viso al retinolo, **Cleave**, 89€
 Siero retinolo con retinolo e more, **Glow Recipe**, 54€
 Siero anti-age al retinolo, **Dermagelidolipleg**, 109€

6. Usate un primer

Preparare il viso con un primer prima di iniziare a truccarsi aiuta a ridurre l'aspetto dei pori e agevola anche la stesura del fondotinta. In questo caso lo scopo è estetico e non curativo, per questo è importante rimuoverlo a fine giornata.



Primer levigante, **Banella Cosmetics**, 41€
 Fondotinta liquido, **Huda Beauty**, 40€

4.1.1.1 Consumerism as a solution to medical issues

In multiple articles (N=4), product recommendations are proposed as the solution to issues of medical nature, such as hair loss, acne, and dermatological concerns. One of the instances of the addressing of medical topics, article 3 features a list of hair products against hair loss. The article itself is about the current trend of a luscious head of hair, posing this to the reader as a desirable thing to have. Even though the article does mention the role played by genetics in connection to hair type, it also ends by mentioning that "it does not hurt trying to make your head look thicker" (Quadrio, 2025, pp.69-71). Thus, the article's messaging is connected to generating a necessity based on a current trend for people that would like to attain a certain image. Articles that focus on practical recommendations often use the technique of repetition to shift the reader's attention to a solution, often concretely represented in the recommended products. Throughout the articles one of the key words that keeps coming up through repetition is "how?". In the article by Quadrio (2025, pp.69-71), which focuses on how to obtain a thick head of hair, the recommended products within the article are posed as an accessible solution, as the reader does not have to do research on haircare products – they are right there. By talking about the trend and the beauty of thick hair, the article creates a desire in the reader to obtain that look, despite it not being easy. The article talks about hair loss and medical drugs used to combat it, and afterwards writes disclaimers regarding health conditions and side effects. However, there is ambiguity inasmuch the medical drug is first presented as a more effective solution and afterwards some products are recommended. In order to gain credibility, the article also uses an ambiguous mix of medical terms and discourses, for instance

mentioning how hair loss may represent a medical issue. The medical advice is complemented by non-medical product recommendation to obtain thicker hair. A medical professional and her recommendations are also cited in the article, adding to the credibility of the piece and contributing to the stark contrast with the “non-medical” product recommendations.

Articles that relate to medical topics often quote a medical professional to increase the article’s credibility (N=10). In one of the articles for instance, which focuses on how to improve the looks of pores on the face, a dermatologist is brought into the conversation, creating a contrast through opposition with the informal language and tone of the article. Similar linguistic oppositions are present all throughout the article, alternating medical talk (“exposure to UV rays may damage collagen and thus enlarge pores”) to informal language (“we wish we could close those holes in our skin [our pores] forever”) which in this instance uses the dramatic register to refer to a personal struggle the reader may relate to (Cosmopolitan, 2024, pp. 104-107). The fact that articles which reference health or medical issues often cite a health professional is in contrast with the findings of Jalloh et al. (2020, p.7), who found that only 20-25% of articles in men’s health magazines are supported by professionals. This finding raises the question of whether there is a difference in the framing of health-related recommendation in women’s and men’s magazines. This analysis has found that citing a professional to increase the recommendation’s credibility is important for *Cosmopolitan* in Italy, but less so in American men’s health magazines (Jalloh et al., 2020, pp.6-7).

4.1.1.2 Consumerism as a solution to aging

The magazine inserts itself within the discussion on aging, often presenting it as a universal issue which all women deal with at some point in their lives. This framing of the issue opens the ground for age-preventing product recommendation such as LED masks, which in one of the articles are presented as an age-preventing device. Articles which talk about aging aim to propose a solution to the vast array of skincare products present on the market, following the problem-to-solution scheme outlined by Thier et al. (2019, p. 2513) by mentioning how “testing them all [the products] would be impossible [...]. *Cosmopolitan* has prepared a guide to orientate with your beauty purchase throughout the next months” (Gillette & Pai, 2024, pp. 103). Aging is portrayed as a strong motivation to buy a product, and it is an effective call-to-action. Another article talks about aging in connection to sun protection, by listing aging as the very first reason for protecting the skin from sun damage (Grimaldi, 2024, p.90). In this instance, suppression is used to imply that aging is more dangerous than other health conditions.

The articles analyzed discuss the theme of aging and the social media discourse around it, illustrated by the article by Pilotti (2025, p.73). On the one hand, the article criticizes the collective growing fear of aging, while at the same time recommending anti-aging products and talking about the author's experience with beauty preservation, resulting in a structural opposition which attempts to balance societal critique with motivating anti-aging product recommendations. Such ambiguity is immediately represented by the title: "What should a 30 year old look like?" (Pilotti, 2025, p.71). In this instance, product recommendations are to be interpreted as a tool to preserve beauty and prevent aging, once again representing the solution to the problem introduced in the beginning of the article. The message the article communicates to its target audience of young women is that aging is something to be feared, and that the products recommended are to be viewed as an initial solution to prevent the first signs of aging. By framing aging as something to prevent, the article is able to introduce products that help achieve precisely that result. The article frames aging as an exclusively feminine issue by employing pink colors for the background and by referencing movies targeted towards young women such as *Mean Girls*. In this instance, the article exploits the societal pressure that women feel about aging to promote a solution to this issue. This pattern is outlined by Lemish and Muhlbauer (2012, p.171), emphasizing how one of the portrayals of aging women in media is connected to jealousy towards younger women, which often translates in aiming to maintain a youthful appearance. On the other hand, despite depicting this stereotype, *Cosmopolitan* also explicitly mentions the negative social construct which encourages women to avoid aging. However, one of the patterns present throughout the articles which discuss aging is that text and images present a structural opposition. In fact that aging is framed as positive through the visual references, and as something negative to be prevented within the text (Image 4.2).

Image 4.2

Positive framing of aging through images (Pilotti, 2025, pp.72-75)



4.1.2 Consumerism as identity-shaping

Throughout the recommendation articles analyzed, consumerism is often justified by its being a means for self-expression, for instance through buying clothes or performing rituals which require specific products. Identity is often implicitly constructed through the products and items recommended in the articles through suppression. In one of the instances, this is done by condemning the rigidity of office wear, implying that clothing should be a vehicle for freedom and self-expression and asserting that daily outfits are “one of the first thoughts in the morning – one of the last at night – something which stays with us the whole day” (Palazzo & Miretti, 2025, pp.66-67). Ultimately, suppression is used to communicate that identity is shaped by what we buy and consume, in line with lifestyle journalism’s goal when it comes to identity definition (Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2013, p.947).

Fashion as an empowering element is brought into the picture to talk about how women use clothing as a statement and as a way to express their personality. Throughout the dataset, the articles present different fashion trends and recommend products under the guise of self-expression, using metaphors and evocative language to fit a certain style and thus render the articles the more persuasive. Palazzo (2025, pp.76-77) talks about the “Castlecore” trend, uses flowers-related metaphors (“after having blossomed in the intricate underwood of microtrends”) to

refer to the “Castlecore” social media trend’s individual interpretation, reinforcing the connection to the trend, which has flowers as one of its prevalent elements. Trends are thus made accessible and wearable by the discourse presented in the magazine, which partakes in the discussion by closely analyzing and discussing past and present fashion trends.

Often, consumerism is implicitly portrayed as a status symbol, for instance in articles whose product recommendations are not necessarily in line with *Cosmopolitan’s* audience, as such recommendations focus on luxury products. One of those articles is aspirational, as it focuses on how luxury products can be integrated into a pampering routine (Balsamo, 2024, pp.101-105). Aspiration is increasingly used in lifestyle journalism as a tool to emphasize an ideal lifestyle which is potentially accessible by consumers (Ashe, 2023, p.1344) and is intrinsically connected to consumption through the emphasis placed on social status (Banjac & Hanusch, 2022, p.1610). Aspirational articles on *Cosmopolitan* fit this paradigm, as they recommend more expensive products that fit in with an idealized identity connected to status inasmuch the person who buys the products is technically able to afford them. Consumption is often linked to success and belonging. In the recommendation articles, the magazine addresses its audience using informal language signaling familiarity and community, and often using it in a way which signals empathy with the reader’s struggles, such as Bitmead (2024, pp.94-95)’s “Skincare kit to survive your period”. At the same time, the idea of community is also turned around in order to persuade the reader to adopt a specific practice or buy a product. Machin & Mayr (2023, p.123) emphasize how the use of pronouns impacts the connection that the text creates with the audience and influences feelings of inclusion and exclusion. In the example above, the use of the personal pronoun “your” signals a close relationship with the audience. The patterns showcased throughout these articles outline how the audience’s identity is inherently tied to which routines they choose to follow and which products they choose to buy. *Cosmopolitan* discusses relevant fashion trends in a way that makes them appealing to its audience, for instance by discussing trends in a manner which highlights their accessibility or their connection to social status. In these contexts, the recommended products fulfill a double purpose. On the one hand, they serve as practical examples, while on the other they are seamlessly integrated in the magazine content arguably similar to an advertisement (Rinallo et al., 2012, p. 428).

4.1.3 The commodification of habits and personal hygiene

Habits connected to consumerism, and in particular habits connected to hygiene and self-care are presented as important for the reader’s personal wellbeing and development. Past research has indeed found that lifestyle magazines tend to commodify women’s exercise and self-care

practices through indirect forms of marketing and product placement (Bhalla & Moscovitz, 2019, p.98), in line with the findings of this analysis. One of the article is titled “Beauty routine a nostra misura” (= “Beauty routine to our measure”), and its imagery implies a strong identification with one’s self-care practices through the usage of the pronoun “our” and the images depicting a woman practicing yoga (Reid, 2025, pp.90-93). Issues related to self-perception such as the looks of one’s hair (“[conflicts in hair washing schedules] are a real issue”) frame personal upkeep as central to women’s identity, in which product recommendations represent the commodification of said routine. Some articles use repetition of the words, such as “self-love” and “pampering” in relation to the products, thus using self-love as a persuasive motive as to why people should invest in them, leading to the commodification of self-care (Balsamo, 2024, pp.100-105).

Personal care is reflected through many of the articles analyzed covering topics such as skincare (N=9), haircare (N=4), and personal care (N=2). What these articles have in common is the implication that self-care is presented as a defining experience of female identity, while at the same time using exclusionary language that creates a sense of urgency in the reader - “Sorry, face cleansing is out” (Gillette & Pai, 2024, pp. 102-109) - which involves them to further engage with the article. Articles about self-care and beauty also feature images depicting cleanliness and soap, as showcased in Image 4.3 and mention the social media “clean girl” trend, focusing on showers an essential part of a woman’s daily routine. Through suppression, the articles imply that a woman’s image is associated with cleanliness and attention to hygiene, in opposition to the usual portrayal of men’s image.

Image 4.3

Images connected to cleanliness and hygiene (Gillette & Pai, 2024, pp. 102-109)



4.1.4 Consumerism as social media-driven

An element that all the recommendation articles analyzed have in common is constant references to social media. Many times, social media represents the article's motivation for existing, and is ever present in mentions of trends and references. *Cosmopolitan's* recommendation articles are in constant dialogue with social media discourse, at times providing a critical point of view (N=8), and other times embracing social media trends (N=12). Despite those trends are often discussed critically as the title "Does it actually work or is it just viral?" (Quadrio & Grimaldi, 2025, pp.83-84) suggests, the discussion of specific products and practices which have their origins in social media trends plays into the capitalist ideology of consumerism often promoted on social media (Riboni & Ringrow, 2025, p.10). In this case, it is evident how through references to social media trends in recommendation articles, *Cosmopolitan* caters to its young, social media-savvy audience, providing identity-reinforcing content which automatically excludes those that are not able to or are not interested in participating in social media trends. Benson (2020, p.92) discusses how exclusion in media is usually driven by economic factors, as advertisers are targeting a specific demographic to whom their products appeal. For this reason, exclusion is particularly evident in a lifestyle magazine such as *Cosmopolitan*, which exclusively distributes content younger audiences can relate to, such as articles connected to social media trends. A sense of community is created through the discussion of topics relevant to the aforementioned specific audience, highlighting a

sentiment of belonging (Kitch, 2015, p.12). Furthermore, the magazine effectively participates in the cultural dialogue involving social media; however, its contribution is at times relatively limited. Even when providing a critical point of view, social media still remains central to the conversation.

Cosmopolitan's role as a cultural co-creator is lower in recommendation articles, as it does not create original content in response to social phenomena, but simply adds to the conversation about social media trends, taking a step back from its role as a catalyst for social change (Abrahamson, 2007, pp.667-668). At the same time however, *Cosmopolitan's* recommendation articles serve as repositories of contemporary ideas and imagery, engaging with its audience by leveraging one of their lives' most influential elements, namely social media (Kitch, 2015).

The ties with social media are evident in the domain of the language used in the articles in instances such as "How to obtain the most *viral* hair on Instagram" (Quadrio, 2024, pp.108-109). Opposition is another tool which is used to generate interest in the reader by highlighting the ambiguous nature of social media. This is done by using structural oppositions and contradictions within the text, as in the following examples taken from the article by Quadrio & Grimaldi (2025, pp.83-84), whose topic is offering a perspective on whether social media trends actually work. In the introductory paragraph the article mentions that not all social media trends work and they might even be unhealthy; however, at the end of each short paragraph about a trend, the article recommends products connected to the trend (Image 4.4). In another instance, the article uses a structural opposition within a sentence to generate interest in the reader: "you should not believe everything you see on TikTok but some things you should" (Quadrio & Grimaldi, 2025, pp.83-84).

Image 4.4

Recommendation connected to social media trends (Quadrio & Grimaldi, 2025, pp.83-84)



Articles about hair for instance tend to be exclusively trend-focused, providing product recommendations that help the reader achieve the type of hair that is trending on social media. One of the instances is focused on Matilda Djerf, a social media influencer who became famous for her voluminous hair. In the article, overlexicalization through repetition of the words “hair” and “volume” is used as a tool to convey a positive meaning associated to the voluminous hair trend. Furthermore, focusing on a well-known social media personality creates empathy with the reader, who will then be persuaded to buy the products in order to achieve voluminous hair. Hair-related articles also employ imagery as one of their main persuasive means. The pages are filled with voluminous hair and natural hairstyles fitting current social media hair trends, as displayed in Image 4.5. Often, the pictures are taken from influencers or Instagram accounts, once again creating a relationship with the reader through commonly consumed content they can easily relate to.

Image 4.5

Images depicting voluminous hair (Quadrio, 2024, pp.108; Quadrio, 2024, p.98)



4.1.5 Consumerism as normative

While some of the recommendation articles analyzed (N=6) address the topic of minimalism or perform a critique of consumer culture, consumption is ultimately reaffirmed as an empowering and in some cases necessary act. The products are often framed as a means to an end, a tool which

aids the reader to fulfill the social obligation to remain beautiful, young, and stylish. This message is conveyed through suppression, steering clear of mentioning this social obligation outwardly but clearly communicating it through normative language when giving recommendations about style, beauty, or personal care. The normative linguistic domain evokes the concepts of requirement or obligation, and often carries a negative connotation (Kac, 2019, p.104).

For instance the article by Balsamo (2024, pp.101-105) employs a normative tone when giving recommendations, titling the paragraph “The fundamental principles [of body care]” and stating that “there are three rules to observe for a correct body care” and “everybody should be using a body moisturizer”. The words “fundamental”, “principles”, “rules”, “observe”, “correct”, “everybody”, “should”, and “using” all belong to the realm of normative language, used in this instance to communicate the idea that the reader is somehow clueless with regards to the correct steps of body care, and the article is to be interpreted as a trustworthy source. In this case, *Cosmopolitan* takes advantage of its position of authority as printed media in order to motivate its product recommendations through said authority. Another feature indicative of normative language is the use of the imperative mood in the form of command, for instance in the sentence “Choose this product” (Palazzo & Grimaldi, 2024, pp.96-101) and in the advice to “Look for serums with Ectoin as the main ingredient” (Gillette & Pai, 2024, pp. 102-109). By using this tense in connection to product recommendations, the article is deliberately using its authority to affirm through suppression that the recommended product is the best choice and should be bought. Overall, *Cosmopolitan’s* effective use of normative language to influence consumer purchases highlights the publication’s authoritative position when it comes to giving advice related to personal style and beauty. This result is in line with Bakke and Casswell (2025, p.6)’s findings related to the usage of normative language in UN guidelines on alcohol consumption, which found that the UN uses normative language effectively thanks to its position of authority. Furthermore, these findings further highlight how the use of normative language increases audience engagement (Pezzuti, 2023, p.14).

4.2 Italian identity

SQ2 investigates the role played by the national cultural identity in *Cosmopolitan’s* recommendation articles. To do so, the larger concept of Italianness (Piancazzo et al., 2024) and the images associated to it are used to investigate the role played by cultural imagery associated to Italy. The analysis reveals that there are tensions at play with regards to Italianness and its associations. If the concepts analyzed by Piancazzo et al. (2024, p.774), Paris (2019, p.142) and Adamoli (2017) carry positive connotation, this analysis reveals that the imagery associated to Italianness is also

represented with implicit negative meanings, uncovering how the concept has the potential to move beyond aesthetic ideals. Overall, the findings show a discrepancy between the positive connotation associated to Italianness and the negative meanings present in some of the articles. Italy's advantage in the realm of fashion (Paris, 2019, p.142) is present, however it fades into the background in comparison to the importance assigned to an international outlook on both fashion and lifestyle topics. The audience targeted by the recommendation section is then represented not as Italian young women who grew up in a specific culture, but an audience of young Italian women *with a strong international outlook and background*. The techniques used throughout the articles such as code-switching target a specific group of people and exclude all those who do not relate to or understand linguistic and cultural references.

4.2.1 Italianness as an aesthetic

The representation of Italianness is often reduced to a visual portrayal rather than a complex cultural system, albeit stereotyped. Italianness is represented through classic imagery, both written and figurative, representing elegance, natural beauty, and simplicity. Historically, the Italian cultural system plays a central role in defining aesthetics related to refined taste through art, decoration, and fashion (Crane & Bovone, 2006, p.324). Overall the findings of this analysis highlight how traditional Italian cultural elements such as elegance are an intrinsic part of Italian culture not simply from a marketable perspective, but as elements deeply embedded in the culture which have been picked up by a publication exclusively targeted towards an Italian audience. This aesthetic representation is in stark contrast with that of international concepts and topics, especially those relating to social media trends. However, this is not to say that there exists no dialogue between Italian and international culture: Italian fashion is an integral part of the international aesthetic relating to a luxury lifestyle, as in fashion recommendation articles, Italianness' traditional visual elements mix with an international outlook.

Aesthetically, Italian is represented through traditions such as that of the "aperitivo" such as in the quote "Impeccable looks from the desk to aperitivo" (Palazzo & Miretti, 2025, pp.66-67), thus framing it as a chic and polished occasion in connection to fashion, fitting the idea of perfection related to Italianness. Italianness is associated with elegance in fashion articles through the display of Italian brands' elegant and decadent aesthetic, and as a precise unique expression and interpretation of trends. This is clear in the mention of the series *Il Gattopardo*, used as a reference by Palazzo (2025, pp.76-77) to describe elegance and originality in fashion, and in the minimal and elegant aesthetic of Italian brands (Image 4.6), in line with the stereotypes associated with "Made in Italy" products (Paris, 2019, p.142). One instance showcases the association between Italianness

and culinary delights, emphasizing how curated dinners represent an important element of Italian culture, such as “Sharing a good dinner and a bottle of wine with friends” (Jeffery & Sangster, 2024, pp.126-127) . Furthermore, the products recommended in the article showcase vibrant colors and tints (Image 4.7), also associated with Italianness, as well as the espresso cup symbolizing the Italian tradition of drinking an espresso after a meal. Italian aesthetic is also represented in Gillette and Pai, (2024, pp. 102-109)’s skincare recommendation, representing a LED mask in a picture reminiscent of the colourful, simple, and Italianness-reminding aesthetic in fashion cinema as showcased in Image 8, clear from the bright color palette (Noris & Cantoni, 2024, p.155). Image 4.8 also exemplifies how cultural imagery is represented in visual content, a practice normally attributed to niche magazines (Lyngge-Jorlén, 2013, p.8) . In this instance, *Cosmopolitan* is using a more elevated cultural reference among the more frequent references to social media content and culture. Thus, Italianness finds a space not so much in the text and in the topic, but rather in aesthetic creativity. An example is the article by Quadrio (2024, pp.108-109), which focuses on social media viral hairstyles and on international influencers, the darker physical traits associated with Italianness are used as an added element (Image 4.9), aiming to represent how Italy’s physical features can be combined to fit the social media aesthetic. Through suppression and by omitting to showcase multiple instances of physical features – in this case hair - closer to Italian ones, the article communicates that Italianness is not “trendy” when it comes to hair styles and colors.

Image 4.6

Visual elegance and simplicity of Italian fashion brands (Palazzo, 2025, p.76)



Image 4.7

Colorful product recommendations (Jeffery & Sangster, 2024, pp.126-127)



Image 4.8

Italian cinema aesthetic (Gillette & Pai, 2024, pp. 102-109)



Image 4.9

Italian physical traits (Quadrio, 2024, pp.108-109)



Another element associated with Italian culture both visually and culturally is luxury, intended both as a luxurious and traditional way of living, for instance in Article 2's mention of the Aperitivo, and as a visual aesthetic. Quadrio & Grimaldi (2025, pp.83-84)'s article gives recommendations based on viral social media products, the only two Italian brands mentioned fit a precise aesthetic which in the case of Miamo (a beauty brand) is associated with visual luxury and expensive taste (Image 4.10). The other Italian brand mentioned, Seletti (a stationery brand) is reminiscent of a traditional, elegant and tasteful aesthetic also associated with Italianness through the idea of perfection (Piancazzo et al., 2024, pp. 774-775).

Image 4.10

Italian luxury aesthetic (Quadrio & Grimaldi, 2025, pp.83-84)



4.2.2 Italianness as outdated

A finding which was consistent with Piancazzo et al. (2024)'s aspects included in the concept of Italianness is the implicit representation of Italian culture as oppressive and outdated. This meaning is conveyed mainly through suppression, and it is implicitly communicated either through imagery or associations in the text. Especially when it comes to language which originated on social media and is mainly associated to social media trends, such words and expressions are reported in

English within the Italian text, such as the words “workout”, “selfcare” and “wash days” in Reid (2025, pp.90-93). In this case, the Italian language is considered not modern enough to convey these meanings, and English is preferred instead, since *Cosmopolitan’s* target audience has a strong social media presence which enables them to understand such concepts. Overall, the conversation revolving around social media trends often appears to be too modern and international to be captured by the Italian language and culture. One instance is the “clean girl” trend mentioned by Reid (2025, pp.90-93), which revolves around self-care and shower products. The idea of cleanliness and clean minimalism associated with the trend are in stark contrast with the aesthetic associated to Italianness, which ultimately appears to be too traditional a culture to be able to represent these concepts; this is also communicated by the pastel colors of the article.

Throughout the articles analyzed, the one by Jeffery & Sangster (2024, pp.126-127) in particular stood out as the one which mostly used suppression and opposition to communicate the outdatedness of Italian culture. In the article, the Italian tradition of hosting dinners that revolve around good food and conviviality are said to be anxiety inducing (“organizing a menu and a mise-en-place might translate for some in social anxiety”, in stark opposition to a joyful and happy occasion such as a dinner with friends – the topic of the article. Through suppression, the article places emphasis on the fact that Italy’s traditional values are cause for anxiety in young people such as their audience, effectively communicating the message that those values are oppressive. A more relaxed approach to dinner hosting is suggested instead, using the term “accessible” to describe the reframing of the dinner tradition, thus suggesting an opposition between the concept of accessibility and Italian cultural values. The products recommended in the article, such as the espresso cup, are all reminiscent of Italian tradition, however the espresso cup has the phrase “You are hot as fuck” written on it, once again signaling a contrast through implicit opposition between an Italian ritual and a vulgar, non-traditional sentence.

4.2.3 Tensions between the Italian and International contexts

One of the clearest aspects highlighted throughout the articles in connection to Italianness is the tension between Italian culture and the international environment. Such tension is not always necessarily negative, especially when it comes to the influence and prestige of Italian fashion on the international background, in line with Paris (2019, p.144). Overall, *Cosmopolitan* does not place an accent on Italianness and Italian culture, but rather it focuses on international trends that have developed on social media and on how such trends may resonate with their audience. Under a cultural standpoint, *Cosmopolitan* aims to resonate with their audience by making them feel part of an international cultural context. One of the magazine’s goals through their recommendation

sections appears to be to represent a bridge between international cultural movements and young Italian women, catering to a generation of women who are most likely spending a lot of time online, enjoy travelling and interacting with multicultural and international environments, aware of the fact that traditional Italian values do not resonate with theirs. It is important to keep into account that *Cosmopolitan* is an American media brand which has been adapted for the Italian audience, and it is therefore in its nature to preserve certain international elements. Different perspectives are present in the magazine, implementing a cultural negotiation between the Italian and international culture, similar to the findings of Antonioni et al. (2021, p.437) in their analysis of the Italian adaptation of the Norwegian television show *SKAM*. Media targeted to a younger audience such as *Cosmopolitan* and *SKAM* which have been imported in Italy from a different country and culture lend themselves to having elements both from their mother culture and their adoptive one. Young Italian audiences seem to be receptive to “internationalized” content which maintains some clear elements of Italian culture such as the fashion discourse in the case of *Cosmopolitan*.

The aesthetics present in some of the articles showcase how visual elements associated with Italianness are viewed as traditional, while international associations are viewed as contemporary and modern such as in Quadrio (2024, pp.108-109). An interesting tension between Italian and international culture is present in one of the articles (Quadrio, 2025, pp.69-71), which revolves around hair product recommendations whose aesthetic inspiration is the Instagram account @capelli. The account is managed by a New Yorker with Italian origins, and showcases voluminous, natural, and long hair which are traditionally associated with Italian culture. Such a characteristic, typical of Italianness, has now acquired a positive association and is considered a desirable feature in social media culture, to the point it has generated a trend. The article represents the aesthetic influence of Italian culture on social media aesthetics, once again reiterating Italian culture’s international prestige. Such a pattern emphasizes that some of the elements which make up the concept of Italianness such as traditionally Italian physical features are perceived as “trendy” by the international community, highlighting a successful use of Italian culture to gain international recognition (Noris & Cantoni, 2024, p.153).

5. Conclusion

The aim of this research is to investigate how the Italian edition of *Cosmopolitan* magazine addresses its audience through identity portrayal. The research's focus is on how the magazine portrays its readers' identity as consumers, and on how the broader Italian cultural context comes into play when addressing readers. To achieve this goal, recommendation sections were taken into consideration because of the magazine industry's tendency to use such sections to foster relationships with consumer brands and thus operating in a grey area between editorial and advertising (Rinallo & Basuroy, 2009, p.34), which potentially leads to audience being targeted as consumers rather than readers. To analyze whether and how Italian culture comes into play within *Cosmopolitan's* recommendation sections, Piancazzo et al. (2024)'s concept of Italianness was used as the main guideline, as it provides a framework of elements which make up Italianness in connection with fashion and lifestyle brands.

MCDAs were used as a method of analysis to uncover the variety of hidden meanings and aspects at play, by analyzing how both text and imagery contributed to conveying assumptions and interpretations.

Overall, this research uncovered the messaging behind a reputable lifestyle magazine's recommendation sections, and provided a deeper insight into how Italian lifestyle editorials address their audience of young women. The magazine was considered according to Kitch (2015)'s model for analyzing magazines as cultural products, focusing on external cultural aspects which might be at play in *Cosmopolitan's* recommendation sections.

The main research question (RQ)'s focus is on how readers are addressed, while the sub questions address specific aspects, namely whether *Cosmopolitan's* audience is addressed as consumers (SQ1) and the role played by Italianness (SQ2).

5.1 Key findings

The key findings of this research relate to SQ1 and SQ2, focusing on consumerism and Italianness as the sensitizing concepts. Overall, magazines were found to use their relevant cultural position as print media to discuss relevant cultural topics, especially in connection with social media trends. According to Kitch (2015, p.13)'s model which views magazines as elements which define culture, *Cosmopolitan's* recommendation sections are influenced by cultural trends rather than apportioning something new and substantial to cultural discourses. However, *Cosmopolitan* makes use of its defined position in the traditional media landscape to critically engage with discourses and to discuss topics which are relevant to its audience of young women. This last point leads to the discussion of *Cosmopolitan* magazine as an element of community (Kitch, 2015, p.12). Through the

topics which are discussed throughout the recommendation articles, *Cosmopolitan* puts in place dynamics which enhance a feeling of community within the audience. The way different cultural discussions are treated in the articles is often only relatable for the magazine's target audience, just like the products recommended as mentioned by Benson (2020, p.92).

Consumerism was found to be widely present in the magazine's recommendation sections as a multi-dimensional concept often portrayed as a solution to an issue introduced at the beginning of the article. It is interesting to notice the role that solution journalism plays in the articles' structure, and particularly how the issues and insecurities common to *Cosmopolitan's* readership are used to recommend relevant products to their audience (Batat, 2023, p.122). In particular, aging and medical issues were found to be relevant topics for which solutions were proposed to the reader. Consumerism was also found to be portrayed as a means for self-expression. Recommendations about clothing and makeup for instance rely heavily on the representation of buying items as an empowering and self-affirming action, while lifestyle articles often exploit the relationship between identity and social media trends, often using a step-by-step article structure to provide recommendations focused on self-improvement. In line with Bhalla and Moscovitz (2019, p.98)'s findings, the commodification of personal hygiene routines was found to be present in some of the lifestyle articles (N=7). Social media was found to have a significant influence not only on the products recommended, but also on the articles themselves, providing an insight into how *Cosmopolitan* takes advantage of how its audience uses social media to recommend products in line with trends and cultures that originate online. Social media trends are mentioned in many of the articles, raising the question of how the magazine contributes to the cultural discussion on these topics. Social media is definitely an everpresent topic, however the magazine critically engages with social media trend, actively contributing to the cultural discourse. This pattern relates to what Kitch (2015, p.14) describes as the cultural co-creation between magazines and society. Consumption was also promoted by using a normative language and tone, portraying the reader as somebody in need of advice and the magazine as an authoritative source. Overall, consumption is used by *Cosmopolitan* to contribute to social narratives and identity formulation, affirming the magazine as a cultural agent despite not necessarily providing original discussions or points of view which activate social change described by Abrahamson (2007, pp.667-668).

Italian culture is represented in the recommendation sections mainly through a narrow aesthetic lens, which leaves little space for deeper cultural investigations as it was often presented according to stereotypes connected to Italianness. However, Italian fashion brands' authority was still found to play a role in both aesthetic representation and product recommendations, in line with Paris (2019, p.144). *Cosmopolitan's* representation of Italianness is often ambiguous, on the one

hand highlighting Italian culture's traditional and outdated features, and on the other emphasizing Italian aesthetics' relevance in the international background or on social media. Some of Piancazzo et al. (2024, p.775)'s elements of Italianness, such as the idea of perfection and the iconic status of objects and imagery are present visually but not in the text. Overall, Italianness and the Italian identity are not present in the dataset analyzed as anything more than an aesthetic concept related to elegance and traditional culture. Italian identity is not represented according to its positive connotations such as the use of its authority in the realm of fashion to gain advantage in the luxury market (Noris and Cantoni, 2024, p.169). Instead in some of the articles analyzed (N=2) it is portrayed negatively in the text and presented in connection with negative connotations such as oppression and outdatedness.

5.2 Theoretical and social implications

The findings reflect Hanusch and Hanitzsch (2013, p.947) definition of lifestyle journalism's domain as a set of journalistic practices whose goal is to define specific identities within the realm of consumption, a point proven by the use of set structures such as solution articles and step-by-step recommendations. This research has found that recommendation article's structure is a key element in conveying a specific message to the reader. Ultimately, one of the conclusion that can be drawn about contemporary lifestyle magazines in Italy concerns the fact that recommendation articles are an environment where consumeristic culture is interpreted in an editorial lens, reflecting both national and international cultural values and constructing a dialogue with social media and popular themes. However, in the case of *Cosmopolitan* no emphasis is placed on social change and shock factors (Abrahamson, 2007, p.668), but rather on self-improvement and adhesion to cultural paradigms.

This research has approached critically magazine's recommendations, shedding light on the practices that magazines targeted towards young women actuate in order to perpetrate a message. Although such a message is not necessarily negative, it is important to consider how traditional print media are approaching the topic of consumerism, recommending branded products strategically in connection to specific recommendations. The research has also highlighted tensions between the Italian and international cultural approach: the Italian edition of *Cosmopolitan* magazine provides an appropriate case study because of its international origins.

5.3 Limitations and future research

The main limitations relate to the fact that this research was conducted only on *Cosmopolitan* magazine, while analyzing multiple Italian lifestyle publications would provide a wider perspective on how recommendation sections operate across different audience targets in Italy. The findings of this analysis draw attention to specific dynamics present in the Italian lifestyle editorial industry, raising awareness on implicit messages communicated through recommendation content. The interplay between consumerism and the concepts that make up Italianness ultimately showcase that *Cosmopolitan's* young readership is addressed in lieu of their interest in international trends and belonging to an international community. Academic research may benefit from these findings by reflecting on the cultural role played by recommendation articles, and especially from the knowledge on the articles' structure and aesthetic elements. This research also sheds light on the existing tensions between Italian and international culture. Future research might delve into the analysis of recommendation articles from different countries and outlets, making it possible to draw conclusions on a global scale about the role of recommendation articles. One of the findings from this research which deserves further exploration is the portrayal of aging in *Cosmopolitan*. Particularly relevant is the analysis of how aging is portrayed in content targeted towards young women, especially in lifestyle publications. This research has turned the attention towards the environment of lifestyle publication in the Italian context, shedding a light on how lifestyle magazines are influenced by culture, especially from social media, privileging an international outlook.

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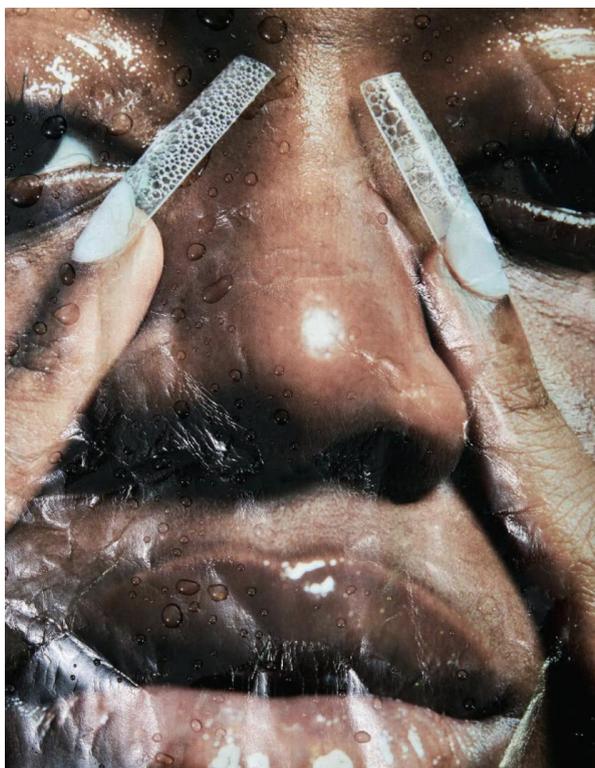
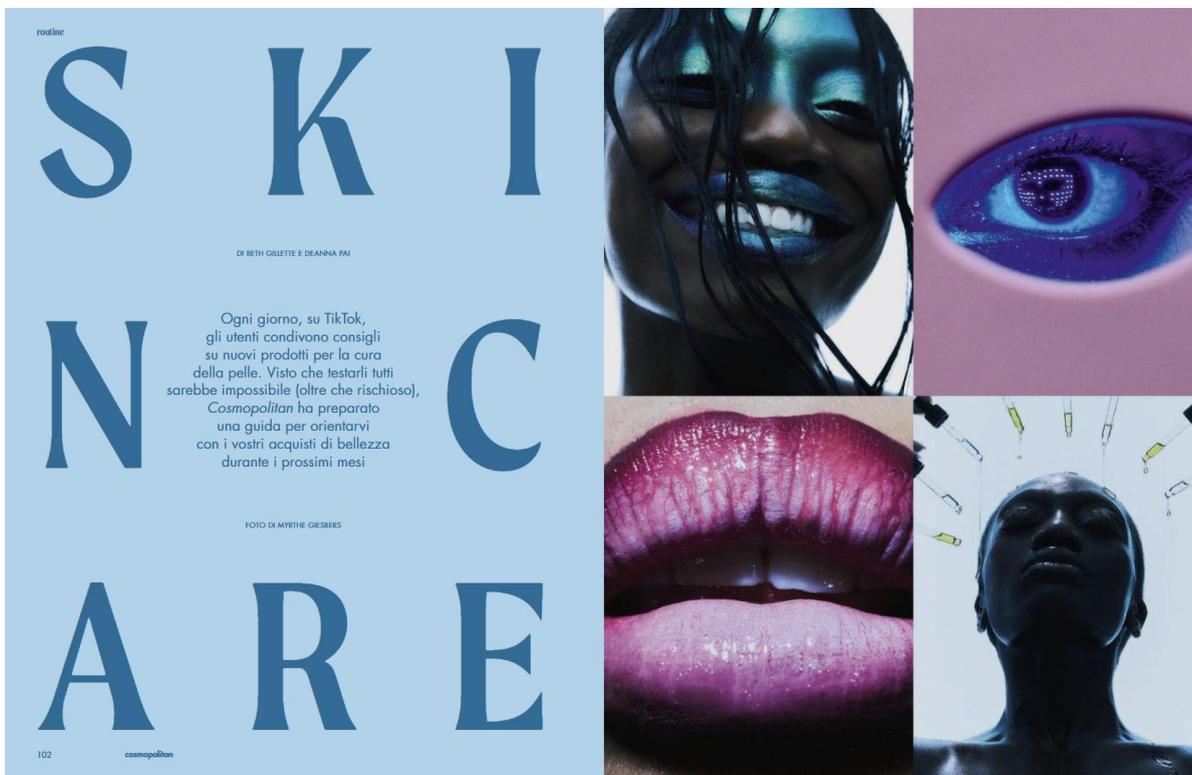
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Appendix A – Sample of Analysis

Article 13 – “Skincare”

Original article:



Immacabili peptidi

È davvero difficile fare un giro in profumeria o farmacia senza imbattersi in prodotti skincare a base di peptidi. Questo popolarissimo ingrediente, un tipo di aminoacido che si trova naturalmente anche nella pelle, può aiutare, come racconta Melanie Palm, dermatologa di San Diego, a ridurre l'aspetto delle rughe e migliorare la barriera cutanea, alleviando le infiammazioni e promuovendo l'elasticità della pelle. Tuttavia, non tutti i peptidi hanno le stesse caratteristiche: i peptidi inibitori enzimatici bloccano le sostanze che rompono il collagene; i peptidi segnalano le cellule a produrre più collagene, elastina e altre proteine; i peptidi trasportatori possono trasferire altri principi attivi, come il rame e il magnesio, nella pelle. I neuropeptidi, infine, possono bloccare alcune delle contrazioni muscolari che causano le rughe, rendendo la pelle più liscia ed elastica. Il metodo di somministrazione dipende da voi, ma con creme o sieri idratanti ricchi di peptidi non potete sbagliare.



routine

Il pick di Cosmopolitan
Anche i nostri esperti beauty hanno un ingrediente preferito per la loro routine di bellezza. Ecco quali sono e perché.

Leonarda Grimaldi
«l'attivo star della mia skincare è sicuramente l'acido ialuronico. Leggero ed estremamente rimpolpante, mi assicura comfort e idratazione in poche mosse. In qualsiasi stagione dell'anno».

Cecilia Alba Lub
«Forse l'ho scoperto troppo tardi, ma da quando lo utilizzo la cute del mio viso è super sana e luminosa: sto parlando della vitamina C».

Elena Quadario
«Le zone che mi creano più disagio sono quelle a tendenza grassa, nella zona T. Ad aiutarci in questo è la niacinamide, perfetta per regolare la produzione di sebo contrastando le impurità».

Sorprendente ectoina

Ci credereste se vi dicessero che spalmarvi batteri in faccia migliora il benessere della vostra pelle? In effetti, pare essere così nel caso dell'ectoina, della famiglia degli estremofili, piccole ma potenti molecole presenti in alcuni batteri. Se applicata sul viso, l'ectoina crea una barriera fisica contro fattori di stress potenzialmente dannosi come le temperature estremamente calde o fredde, i raggi UV, l'inquinamento, la luce blu dei dispositivi elettronici, sigillando l'umidità e mantenendo la carnagione sana. «Cercate sieri, detergenti e creme con l'ectoina in cima all'elenco degli ingredienti e usateli due volte al giorno per aiutare a lenire l'infiammazione, proteggere la barriera cutanea e ridurre le macchie», si raccomanda la dermatologa newyorchese Marisa Garshick. L'esperta aggiunge quindi un consiglio: l'efficacia dell'ectoina è ulteriormente potenziata se abbinata a trattamenti a base di retinolo. Infatti, dal momento che la molecola aiuta a idratare e a proteggere dalle irritazioni, la sua applicazione consente alla pelle di tollerare i potenti principi attivi del retinolo senza subire gli effetti collaterali: bruciori, prurito o desquamazione.



the leisure issue

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Every day on TikTok, users share tips on new skin care products. Since testing them all would be impossible (as well as risky), Cosmopolitan has prepared a guide to guide you with your beauty purchases during the coming months.

Ever-present peptides

It's really hard to make a trip to the pro-smoke shop or drugstore without coming across peptide-based skincare products. This very popular ingredient, a type of amino acid that also occurs naturally in the skin, can help, as Melanie Palm, a dermatologist in San Diego, tells us, to "reduce the appearance of wrinkles and improve the skin barrier, relieving inflammation and promoting skin elasticity." However, not all peptides have the same characteristics: enzyme inhibitory peptides block substances that break down collagen; peptide signaling-le peptides encourage cells to produce more collagen, elastin, and other proteins; transporter peptides can transfer other active ingredients, such as copper and magnesium, into the skin. Finally, neuropeptides can block some of the muscle contractions that cause wrinkles, making the skin smoother and more elastic. The method of delivery is up to you, but with peptide-rich moisturizing creams and serums, you can't go wrong.

Surprising Ectoin

Would you believe it if they told you that smearing bacteria on your face improves the well-being of your skin? Indeed, it appears to be so in the case of ectoin, from the extremolith family, small but powerful molecules found in some bacteria. When applied to the face, ectoin creates a physical barrier against potentially harmful stressors such as extremely hot or cold temperatures, UV rays, pollution, and blue light from electronic devices, sealing in moisture and keeping your complexion healthy. "Look for serums, cleansers, and creams with ectoin at the top of the ingredient list and use them twice a day to help soothe inflammation, protect the skin barrier, and reduce spots," recommends New York-based dermatologist Marisa Garshick. The expert then adds a tip: Ectoin's effectiveness is further enhanced when combined with retinol treatments. In fact, since the molecule helps moisturize and protect against irritation, its application allows the skin to tolerate retinol's potent active ingredients without suffering its side effects: burning, itching or peeling.

Cosmopolitan's picks

Even our beauty experts have a favorite ingredient for their beauty routines. Here's what they are and why

Leonardo Grimaldi

"The star active in my skincare is definitely hyaluronic acid. Lightweight and extremely plumping, it provides me with comfort and hydration in just a few moves. In any season of the year.

Cecilia Alba Luè

Maybe tho discovered it too late, but since I've been using it, the skin on my face is super healthy and glowing-I'm talking about vitamin C."

Elena Quadrio

"The areas that cause me the most discomfort are those with an oily tendency, in the T-zone. Helping me with this is niacinamide, which is perfect for regularizing sebum production by counteracting impurities."

A step toward inclusiveness

For decades, most skin care products were tested, for performance and safety, only on people with fair skin. Instead, everyone else was left to hope that the formula would work on them as well. But since sebum production, hydration levels, and the impact of signs of aging on the skin are phenomena that vary by skin tone and ethnicity, this was not appropriate. "Women with melanin-rich skin produce three times the amount of sebum than those with a lighter complexion," explains Rolanda Wilkerson, Olay brand scientist. "As a result," she concludes, they need products that act on excess sebum." Today, companies would seem to have finally changed the guidelines. Olay for example tested its latest cleanser on a diverse sample to make sure it could eliminate excess sebum while maintaining a gentle formula. Even the Mary Kay brand runs its clinical trials on all skin tones, from the lightest to the darkest, to make sure that its products are suitable for everyone, said Lucy Gildea, chief innovation officer.

Sorry, facial cleansing is no longer a thing

Let's face it, it never did much else to rid pores of impurities (and subject facial skin to considerable stress). Its next-generation replacements combine multiple treatments in a single session to improve dark spots, acne, fine lines, and dullness. Techniques such as dermabrasion, LED light therapy, microcurrent, and radiofrequency are typical. With immediate results.

2-in-1 Products

According to mua Daniel Martin, healing make-up, as well as the latest cosmetic trend-which you are probably already victims of-is what will really turn the quality of your skin around. These are hybrid products between make-up and skincare, that is, products that provide an optimal aesthetic result while protecting and nourishing the skin. This is the case with blushes, bronzers and even

fixing powders that contain active ingredients such as peptides and vitamins to brighten the complexion. And so, preparation that requires multiple steps and the application of multiple formulas can now be achieved in a single step. Great news for the lazy ones!

Body care has evolved

We've said it many times and we'll say it again: the skin of the body should re-receive the same attention as that of the face. Fortunately, cosmetics are coming to us with new formulas rich in active ingredients. Cosmetic chemist Ja-von Ford suggests using exfoliants such as glycolic acid to get rid of dead skin, while he recommends salicylic acid-based peeling and retinol-based serums to get rid of keratosis pilaris, ingrown hairs and rashes. Finally, he recommends vitamin C-rich lotions to alleviate post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation on the chest, belly and legs. Technology is also getting a makeover, thanks to devices once reserved for the face whose use is now spreading to other parts of the body. For example, microcurrent, which is also being used in home-use devices, works through low-level electrical pulses to stimulate and tone muscles, tighten skin and smooth dimples due to water retention. Or LED masks, which emit lengths of light that, over time, can reduce fine lines and wrinkles on the neck and chest.

Firming has become smart

Restoring smooth, firm skin once necessarily required cosmetic surgery. Today, noninvasive, i.e., scalpel-free, treatments are widespread and effective. <<"We use heat to trigger collagen production and help firm the epidermis," says Melanie Palm, dermatologist. Radiofrequency devices and microneedling tools work by stimulating the dermis, which is the second layer of the skin. <<"The ultrasound treatments target even deeper skin layers for better results, without the risk of contraindications," the expert specifies. All of these treatments work best for mild to moderate skin sagging and, as imaginable, are quite expensive. Prices vary depending on the provider, location, and treatment, but on average they range from €1,500 to €3,000 per session.

Exosomes are your new super power

And not just because they sound like something out of a science-fiction movie from the name. These tiny molecules, typically found in blood platelets, are basically tiny capsules that, as dermatologist Claire Chang tells us, play a key role in cell regeneration. They are becoming very popular within aesthetic medicine practices for the way they can help skin heal after surgeries by reducing inflammation and increasing collagen and elastin production. Have you heard of the vampire treatment, a therapy that involves drawing blood, separating platelets, and reinjecting them into the facial skin? Here, this works a bit like that. But without the needles. And the blood donation. And the vampires.

Article analysis

- “everyday on TikTok users share advice on new skincare products” -> focus on social media + “new” emphasizes the market’s quickness to change on a topic that is also medical like skincare
- “testing them all would be impossible (besides being risky) [...] *Cosmopolitan* has prepared a guide to orientate with your beauty purchase throughout the next months” -> emphasizes trust in the magazine’s authority in the conversation with social media. Here the magazine is posed as an authoritative item in the beauty space along with social media
- The images (for instance the one on p. 104) recall cleanliness (often associated with skincare and current beauty trends on social media like “clean girl”) through soap.
- The recommendations are here as well associated with the theme of the paragraph (e.g. paragraph 1: “unmissable peptides” -> recommends products with peptides in them.
- “It’s really hard to go to the beauty store or pharmacy without running into peptide-based skincare” -> by emphasizing the popularity of the product, the article makes the product desirable (= if many people want it, it must be good) through suppression.
- “it is naturally found in our skin” -> beauty as natural. Promotes consumerism when ethical and natural-based.
- This article also cites a professional (a doctor)
- Cites peptides as helping in improving the looks of wrinkles -> across the articles: getting old is portrayed (implicitly through suppression as something bad) but is outwardly mentioned as something “natural” and “good” -> consumerism as something that helps prevent/improve getting old
- Use of medical terminology like “administration” communicates to the reader that these skincare products perform a medical function and are therefore healthy -> consumerism as healthy/as aiding health
- “with creams and serums rich in peptides you cannot go wrong” -> after medical/professional talk comes a friendly and informal language to persuade the reader that the magazine functions as a “friend”
- “I pick di *Cosmopolitan*” (= “*Cosmopolitan*’s picks”) -> the magazine as authority. Use of English (code switching) + connection to social media
- “Maybe I found out too late about Vitamin C” -> creates feeling of urgency normally found in advertising
- “Would you believe that spreading bacteria in your face will improve the wellbeing of your skin?” -> uses opposition to highlight an ingredient and persuade
- “look for serums with ectoin as a main ingredient...” -> imperative tense creates the impression of urgency in the reader and of authority of the magazine. In this instance a dermatologist is also cited. The topic of skincare is a repetitive one in various articles, and the same topics are often highlighted.
- “Un passo avanti verso l’inclusività” = “a step forward towards inclusivity” -> the magazine imagines that its readers are involved in social causes and wants to be inclusive by giving a shout out to brands that promote inclusivity. Inclusivity in product development is seen as something to strive for.
- “for decades, the majority of products were tested exclusively on people with fair skin [...]. All the others could only hope that the formulations would work on their skin as well.” ->

the strive for product inclusivity (thus consumerism as something ethical which includes) is expressed through a sarcastic tone (“could only hope”), mocking how the cosmetic industry was not inclusive. The magazine is in on the cultural and social missions.

- The professional cited here is a scientist working for a skincare brand (Olay), who explains that the brand tests its new products on people with a range of different ethnicities. This promotes the brand without an actual sponsorship being disclosed. A reader will associate Olay with inclusivity.
- “Sorry, face cleansing is out” -> by using this exclusionary language, the article creates a sense of urgency in the reader which might not yet be in on the newest skincare trends. The focus is on new generation treatments that are able to improve different skin concerns (naming ALL the skin concerns creates a sense of urgency as well – more people are likely to have at least one). Indeed, at the end of the paragraph the article recommends a face detox treatment for €180. In this case, words such as “free radicals” (medical speak) and “skin’s natural balance” (beauty as natural) are used to persuade the reader into buying the treatment. Persuasion to buy is hidden in the articles.
- “2 in 1 products” refers to the new cosmetic trend to join makeup and skincare. “curative makeup is the last cosmetic trend” -> emphasis and overuse of the word “trend” as justification to talk about something. -> “hybrid products that guarantee an optimal esthetic result” -> the emphasis is always on the “optimal esthetic result”
- “vitamins and peptides” -> naming of skincare ingredients for credibility (overlexicalization)
- “a get ready that requires multiple steps can now be done with one product” -> persuasion through convenience. Cosmopolitan’s readers are young and busy and need to simplify and optimize their routine. Indeed, some the products recommended have the name of a skincare ingredient in their name (e.g. hyaluronic acid)
- The images also emphasize how skincare is viewed at the moment by showcasing a picture of someone wearing an infra-red mask. However, the red light of the mask glows from an unmistakably Italian face, with big eyes and lips in a style that reminds of the 60s and 70s, in a color palette which reminds of XX century Italian cinema (e.g. Fellini, Argento). Italianness then finds a place not so much in the text and the topic (which does not have a traditional connotation – the opposite, its about innovations) but it finds a place in aesthetic creativity, showing that past aesthetics and trends still have an influence.
- “Body care has evolved” -> much of the article’s focus is on innovation. I.e. the reader is pushed to keep up with innovations in the world of beauty. Other instances (in this paragraph) are: “technology also innovates”
- “the cosmetic world comes in our help with new formulas rich in active ingredients” -> the beauty world is seen as something helpful, not as something that tries to make a profit
- Repetition/overlexicalization of ingredients -> science and medical talk that increase the reader’s trust in the article’s recommendations
- The images’ aesthetic is also “clean” and modern -> emphasis on cleanliness and presentation of cleanliness as modern
- “LED masks help in reducing face and neck lines” (also an LED mask is in recs) but overall focus on -> consumerism (buying the mask) prevents aging
- “exosomes are your new superpower” -> usage of obscure/unknown ingredients is presented as a superpower, something that will definitely change things. Consumerism as a

final solution. Emphasis on similarity with science fiction -> the products also have a futuristic packaging through bright silver and purple colors.

- “firming became smart” -> emphasis again on antiaging advancements and on esthetic “tweakments”

Appendix B – Overview of the articles

Article 1 – Un’it-girl è per sempre + author and year

Explores iconic women as fashion revolutionaries, combining Italian and international cultural aesthetics.

Article 2 – Office Daze

Talks about officewear, proposing fashion as both professional and expressive.

Article 3 – Chiome Grandi

Focuses on voluminous hair as a beauty ideal linked to social media trends.

Article 4 – Che aspetto dovrebbe avere un 30enne?

Examines the fear of aging, balancing critique and endorsement of anti-aging products.

Article 5 – Funziona davvero o è solo virale?

Analyzes viral TikTok health and wellness trends.

Article 6 – C’era una volta in un castello

Discusses the “Castlecore” fashion trend as both historical and modern.

Article 7 – Beauty routine a nostra misura

Promotes a customizable beauty routine framed as essential.

Article 8 – Di luce colore e poesia

Highlights bright, creative makeup trends referencing social media.

Article 9 – Amici pori

Focuses on skincare for visible pores

Article 10 – Il futuro in un boccolo

Centers on influencer-driven voluminous hair trends

Article 11 – Cortesie per gli ospiti

Talks about how to organize a dinner with friends.

Article 12 – Ma questi integratori fanno davvero bene?

Critiques and validates supplement use through expert commentary and celebrity influence.

Article 13 – Skincare

Positions skincare at the intersection of medical advice and beauty trends.

Article 14 – Missione solare

Promotes sun protection in connection to the summer season.

Article 15 – La rivincita dei capelli

Advocates for embracing natural hair texture while promoting structured care routines.

Article 16 – Tendenze make-up s/s 2024

Overviews seasonal makeup and hair trends, referencing social media and high fashion. Uses aesthetic trends like “balletcore” and “clean girl” to guide product suggestions.

Article 17 – Due in uno

Focuses on hybrid makeup-skincare products.

Article 18 – Coccole per ogni corpo

Discusses luxury body care.

Article 19 – Perché meno è meglio

Advocates minimalist haircare, critiquing product overuse.

Article 20 – Sì, sincronizziamo skincare e ciclo

Explores hormone-sensitive skincare taking inspiration from social media trends.

Appendix C – AI declaration form

Student Information

Name: Stella Botta

Student ID: 741866

Course Name: Master Thesis CM5000

Supervisor Name: Debora Ramos Antunes da Silva

Date: 26/06/2025

Declaration:

Acknowledgment of Generative AI Tools

I acknowledge that I am aware of the existence and functionality of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, which are capable of producing content such as text, images, and other creative works autonomously.

GenAI use would include, but not limited to:

- Generated content (e.g., ChatGPT, Quillbot) limited strictly to content that is not assessed (e.g., thesis title).
- ~~Writing improvements, including grammar and spelling corrections (e.g., Grammarly)~~
- Language translation (e.g., DeepL), without generative AI alterations/improvements.
- Research task assistance (e.g., finding survey scales, qualitative coding verification, debugging code)
- Using GenAI as a search engine tool to find academic articles or books (e.g.,

I declare that I have used generative AI tools, specifically [Name of the AI Tool(s) or Framework(s) Used], in the process of creating parts or components of my thesis. The purpose of using these tools was to aid in generating content or assisting with specific aspects of thesis work.

I declare that I have NOT used any generative AI tools and that the assignment concerned is my original work.

Signature: 

Date of Signature: 26/06/2025

Extent of AI Usage

I confirm that while I utilized generative AI tools to aid in content creation, the majority of the intellectual effort, creative input, and decision-making involved in completing the thesis were undertaken by me. I have enclosed the prompts/logging of the GenAI tool use in an appendix.

Ethical and Academic Integrity

I understand the ethical implications and academic integrity concerns related to the use of AI tools in coursework. I assure that the AI-generated content was used responsibly, and any content derived from these tools has been appropriately cited and attributed according to the guidelines provided by the instructor and the course. I have taken necessary steps to distinguish between my original work and the AI-generated contributions. Any direct quotations, paraphrased content, or other forms of AI-generated material have been properly referenced in accordance with academic conventions.

By signing this declaration, I affirm that this declaration is accurate and truthful. I take full responsibility for the integrity of my assignment and am prepared to discuss and explain the role of generative AI tools in my creative process if required by the instructor or the Examination Board. I further affirm that I have used generative AI tools in accordance with ethical standards and academic integrity expectations.

Signature: [digital signature]

Date of Signature: [Date of Submission]