Master's Thesis

M.Sc. Economics and Business Administration – International Marketing and Management

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Made in Italy as a Marketing Strategy

Leveraging the Country's Image to Improve Sales Performance

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Abstract

The country of origin of a product is a relevant factor consumers take into consideration during their purchasing decision processes. It is renowned that a country's reputation has an impact on the way its products are perceived by customers. This research project investigated how Italian companies can leverage the perception of Italy to improve their sales performance. The motivation behind this choice can be traced both to a personal interest of the authors, as Italians, in how their native country is perceived, and to investigate how this perception can be exploited to the advantage of Italian companies.

To provide an answer to the research question, the authors employed a three-step mixed methods approach. The first stage was the conduction of qualitative unstructured interviews in order to lay the foundations for the following phase. The latter consisted in an online questionnaire. Lastly, focus groups were used to further explore the findings resulting from the questionnaire. The outcomes showed an overall positive perception of both Italy as a country and Made in Italy products. Specifically, it was noticed how Italians had a better opinion when it comes to both their native country and Italian goods. Eventually, a finding worth to be mentioned was the general confusion among participants around the usage of the Made in Italy label and the relative regulations.

The results suggest that Italians are more emotionally attached to their own country when compared to foreigners. On this basis, companies manufacturing and commercializing Made in Italy products should implement a customer segmentation to separately target, through marketing campaigns, Italian and foreign consumers.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

It is well known that in 2021 Italy has achieved several goals at the international level in the fields of sport and music, but above all in politics. Indeed, Italy was proclaimed country of the year by *The Economist* (2021), especially for the election of Mario Draghi as the country's new prime minister (PM). Italy has gone from being one of the most hardly hit countries by the Covid-19 pandemic to representing a model of growth and rebirth for other countries to follow. These successes have brought about some positive externalities for the country. Interestingly enough, Italy has experienced an increase in both GDP and exports (DIPE, 2021).

The purpose of this research project has been to investigate the connection between the successes and the positive externalities mentioned above. Specifically, we wanted to explore whether the perception of Italy and *Made in Italy* products had changed as a result of these achievements and whether this change in perception, by both Italians and foreigners, mediated the relationship between these accomplishments and the improved economic performance of the country.

There were several reasons behind the choice of this topic. First of all, both being Italian and proud to be so, we have always been rather curious to explore the perception of Italy and *Made in Italy* products[1] by both Italians and foreigners, factors that could affect it and also whether Italian companies could use the image of our country as a marketing strategy. On top of that, as we are both attending a Master's in International Marketing and Management, it was natural that a topic related to strategic marketing, such as the one under consideration, represented not only a common area of study but also a topic that intrigued us both.

1.2 Problem Identification

Problem identification is the first step in any research project and includes the recognition, identification and construction of a research problem (Reiter-Palmon & Robinson, 2009). In order to identify the problem, there are some steps to be followed. Firstly, the problem must be contextualized by delineating the information already possessed on the topic. Secondly, the main research question needs to be outlined in order to guide the future research of appropriate information to address the

[1] For the aim of this investigation, the terms Made in Italy and Italian products were used as synonyms.

issue. Subsequently, the relevance of the problem must be defined: in particular, the problem should be researchable and feasible, and especially it needs to address a relevant concern. Eventually, a framework of the methods employed to address the issue needs to be designed (McCombes, 2019).

In general, the authors deemed this project to be part of marketing research at large. Marketing research has been defined by the American Marketing Association (2017) as the activity that connects the general consumers to the marketer through data. Indeed, marketing research supports marketing decision-making by providing valuable information about marketing variables, consumers and the market in general (Malhotra et al., 2017). Problem identification is one of the two areas in which marketing research is divided, the other being problem-solving. Problem identification reveals the market potential that may lead to a competitive advantage (Malhotra et al., 2017).

It has been demonstrated that the Country of Origin (COO) bias has an impact on the sales performance of products manufactured in a certain country. Even though nation and country have different meanings, as the former indicates a group of people united by the same race and language and the latter refers to a land occupied by a nation (Fan, 2006), for the purpose of this research project, the terms have been used as synonyms. As previously stated, the authors focused on the image of Italy, specifically, and how the feelings about it evolved as a consequence of certain events. The achievements the authors referred to in this paper were especially the Italian rock band Måneskin winning the 2021 Eurovision Song Contest and the Italian national football team's triumph at the UEFA Euro 2020 cup. Furthermore, in February 2021, the country experienced a relevant change in the political scenario with the advent of Mario Draghi as the current Prime Minister. In recent years, the Italian political scenario has been characterised by several government crises, exacerbated not only by the economic and health crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic but also by the constantly rising public debt. Repeated changes of government, caused by the highly fragmented political establishment, have not allowed Italian leaders to develop clear and long-term agendas (Dessì, 2021). Given his experience, as former president of the European Central Bank, and above all his international reputation, Mario Draghi was the person who could reassure investors and markets about the future of the Italian economy, and the sustainability of its high public debt (The Guardian, 2021). From the domestic point of view, Mario Draghi could ensure political stability as he is supported almost unanimously by all parties, but he could also lead to a strengthening of Italian Institutions by developing a reliable reform and investment plan (Dessì, 2021; The Guardian, 2021). Eventually, Mario Draghi also represented a guarantee for the European Union itself on the use to be made of Italy's share of the Recovery Fund money (The Guardian, 2021).

The main issue that had to be identified in this project was whether or not the above-mentioned events not only influenced the perception of Italy but also that of Italian products. On top of that, the authors wanted to investigate whether this change in impression brought upon a variation in consumers' willingness to purchase Italian products. The final aim was to understand if companies could leverage the concept of *Made in Italy* as a successful marketing strategy.

This problem was deemed relevant given that it had practical implications for companies and their marketing management. Moreover, it is renowned that COO bias has a real impact on the way final customers perceive the quality of a product and it is believed to be more important than the brand itself (Hollensen, 2020).

1.3 Problem Formulation

After having identified the problem, the latter has been translated into the following main research question:

"How can Italian companies leverage the perception of Italy to improve their sales performance?"

With the aim of answering this question in the most accurate way possible, the issue has been divided into several sub-questions to guide the research process and simplify the collection of the information needed. The previously mentioned sub-questions are listed below:

I. *"Can specific events have positive externalities on the perception of a country?"*

II. *"How is the perception of a country connected to the perception of a product manufactured in that country?"*

III. *"Are there specific industries that can benefit more from the positive externalities resulting from certain events?"*

IV. *"How is Italy perceived, both domestically and abroad, after the occurrences in 2021?"*

V. *"How are Made in Italy products perceived, both domestically and abroad?"*

VI. *"What effect does COO bias have on Made in Italy products?"*

VII. *"Can these positive externalities be exploited by companies to increase sales?"*

1.4 Topic Delimitation

As previously stated, our broad field of research has been the one of general strategy, with a particular focus on marketing strategy. Specifically, the COO bias in relation to Italy has been analysed in detail, with the aim of understanding how Italian companies could exploit the concept of Made in Italy to increase their sales volume.
The authors made use of theories and concepts both learnt during our master's courses and through the reading of academic papers and books associated with the study domain, as well as online articles and newspapers.

Even if the main topic of this study was marketing strategy and international marketing, the authors only took into consideration goods that are already present in foreign markets, thus not touching upon entry strategies in those marketplaces. The focus of the investigation was specifically on the perception of Italian products sold both in Italy and abroad. Furthermore, given that our reflection concerned the idea of Made in Italy and its perception, the authors did not make financial considerations when focusing on how Italian companies could exploit the image of the country to improve their market position. Eventually, the authors only analysed the difference in perception between Italian and foreign consumers, without exploring this distinction across different nationalities.

1.5 Methodology

In order to outline the methodology of a research project, Saunders et al. (2019) developed the so-called onion model. This model is composed of several layers representing consequential decisions that researchers need to take to ensure coherence throughout the project. The research philosophy behind the investigation has been selected first, followed by the identification of the most appropriate type of reasoning to be used. Afterwards, the research design and research strategy have been chosen in line with the previous stages. Eventually, the time horizon of the overall study was defined, and data collection and analysis techniques were discussed (Saunders et al., 2019).

Every research philosophy is constituted by three underlying assumptions: ontology, epistemology, and axiology (ibid). Among the possible research philosophies summarised by Saunders et al. (2019), the authors deemed pragmatism the most suitable for this research project. Furthermore, deductive reasoning has been adopted, given that this way of reasoning starts from a general idea and leads to a specific conclusion (Herr, 2007) in the same way as the investigation has been unfolded. Indeed, the authors continued by analysing the idea of COO bias related to Italy to then conclude with a practical reflection of how Made in Italy could be used as a marketing strategy by companies.

The selection of a research approach depended on the philosophical foundation the study was based on, the research design, and the data collection and analysis techniques that have been used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specifically, a research design is a framework for conducting a research project which specifies the procedures necessary to obtain the information to solve the research problem (Malhotra et al., 2017). Existing literature has distinguished three types of research design, namely qualitative, quantitative and mixed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). For the sake of this research project, a mixed-method design has been applied, as the integration of qualitative and quantitative data provides a more accurate comprehension of a research problem than either qualitative or quantitative data alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). On top of that, this investigation took the form of explanatory research. The reason for this is that an explanatory research design is aimed at increasing the understanding of a particular topic by forming cause-effect relationships between variables. Indeed, this type of research allows researchers to become more familiar with the topic examined (QuestionPro, n.d.). In addition, considering the different research strategies presented by Saunders et al. (2019), two of them were employed in this project, namely the survey and the archival research strategies. Eventually, these strategies and the previously stated methodological approach affected the choice of a fitting time horizon, which in this case has been a mix of cross sectional and longitudinal horizons (Saunders et al., 2019).

To conclude, both primary and secondary data were collected and analysed. Primary data are information originally gathered for a determined research purpose. On the other side, data which were formerly collected with a different aim and then reused in another investigation are known as secondary data (Hox & Boeije, 2004). Specifically for this project, primary quantitative data were collected through online questionnaires, while secondary data of the same type were retrieved from statistical databases and companies' websites. On the other hand, primary qualitative data were gathered through focus groups, while secondary qualitative data were used in the form of academic papers, books, online articles, government documents, and, eventually, organisational documents.

1.6 Theory

The first theoretical macro-topic touched upon in this research project was methodology. For this section of the work, a specific framework aimed at structuring methodology was used, integrated with other relevant academic sources.

Afterwards, in the section devoted to the literature review, distinct groups of theories were presented and analysed, going from the more general area of study to the more specific topics included in the project. To begin with, literature about corporate strategy was studied. Subsequently, the focus was narrowed from corporate to marketing strategy, not only because the latter can be regarded as a component of the former (Mansaray, 2019), as has been explained in the dedicated chapter (see Chapter 3), but especially because the authors deemed the research problem to have a marketing nature. Consequently, the authors touched upon the group of theories pertaining to the field of International Marketing Strategies, given that the aim of this project was to explore how Italian companies could leverage the perception of the country to improve their sales levels both domestically and abroad. Eventually, as a relevant part of the project was the investigation of the perception of Italy held by both Italians and foreigners, the groups of theories related to the COO effect and nation branding have been deeply reviewed.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

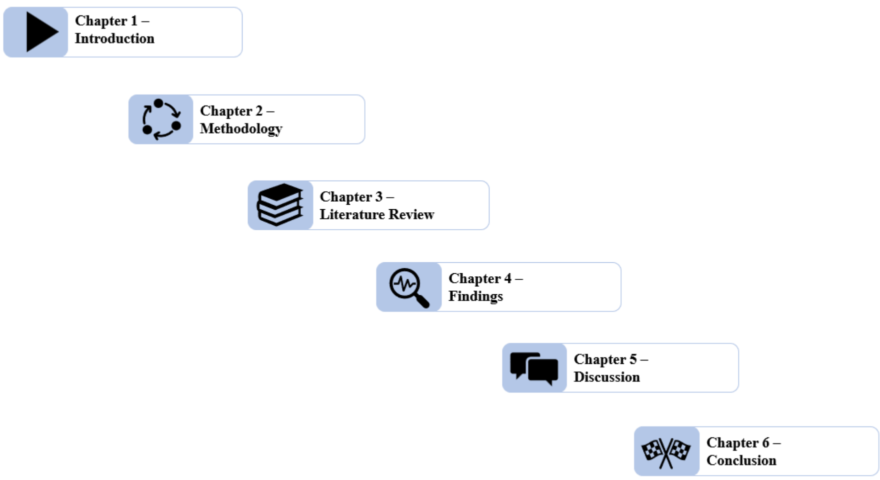

Figure 1: *Structure of the Project.* Source: own creation.

2. Methodology

In the following paragraphs, the methodology adopted in the project has been presented in detail. The structure of the chapter itself followed the Research Onion model by Saunders et al. (2019), employed to define the issues related to the selection of a technique for data collection. Said onion structure is composed of a number of layers, each one of them corresponding to the different stages of the methodology development. Each phase includes a set of possible options among which the researchers can choose with the aim of creating a coherent research project (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.1 The Research Philosophy

The research philosophy concerns a collection of assumptions and beliefs about the development of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2019). These philosophical underpinnings are hidden and implicit, but researchers need to make them explicit to clarify the choice of the research approach undertaken (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Saunders et al. (2019), there are three types of underlying assumptions to research philosophies, i.e., ontological, epistemological, and axiological ones, useful to differentiate between those philosophies. Moreover, each of these premises can be placed along a continuum between two opposing philosophical stances, namely objectivism and subjectivism (ibid). Thus, the resulting research philosophies will be influenced by the positioning of each type of assumption along the continuum (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.1.1 Ontology

Ontology is related to premises on the nature of reality. Precisely, ontological assumptions affect the way in which researchers perceive the world and therefore their selection of what to research for their project (Saunders et al., 2019). In the objectivism-subjectivism continuum, the ontology of this research project fell into an intermediate position. Indeed, while the authors considered facts and social entities to be real independently of other factors, in accordance with the realistic view, the individual perception of Italy as a country and of its products was still a crucial part of this study.

2.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with how individuals can understand the world and communicate it as knowledge. It allows one to distinguish between what can be considered true and legitimate knowledge and what cannot (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). Given that the field of business and management touches upon multiple disciplines, different kinds of knowledge, spanning from numerical to textual and visual data, are to be considered legitimate (Saunders et al., 2019). In the same way as for ontology, the epistemology of this study lied in the middle of the continuum. On one side, the main assumptions were scientific in nature as they have been drawn from academic literature in the business field. On the other side, the authors considered both facts and opinions to be acceptable knowledge for the purpose of this research, as well as good-quality information to be retrievable from both qualitative and quantitative data (ibid).

2.1.3 Axiology

Axiology refers to the roles that values and ethics play in a research project. It is important to take into consideration the impact of both the researchers' and participants' values and beliefs on the research project (Saunders et al., 2019). Given that the topic of this study was chosen due to our personal interest, as Italians, in *Made in Italy*, it was naturally implied that this project was somehow value-driven. On top of that, participants' answers were likely influenced by their values and beliefs and we, as researchers, had no control over that. On the other hand, in the analysis of the collected data, the authors attempted to keep a detached approach.

Considering the substantial variation of the three kinds of assumptions along the continuum, the research philosophy that would have most accurately fitted with the present study was one that managed to reconcile the conflicting views of objectivism and subjectivism. The stream of pragmatism does precisely that by considering theories, concepts, and ideas as relevant only to the extent to which they support action, that is, as long as they have practical consequences in specific situations, rather than in an abstract way (Kelemen & Rumens, 2011). Specifically, in this research project, the COO bias and the subjective perceptions of individuals regarding Italy and *Made in Italy* were studied in relation to the real increase observed in the GDP and export levels of Italian companies, and with the final aim for said companies to exploit *Made in Italy* as a practical strategy to market their products.

2.2 Approach to Theory Development

The design of the research project is influenced by the degree to which the project itself deals with either theory testing or theory building, resulting in three different approaches: abductive, deductive, and inductive (Saunders et al., 2019). While abduction and induction aim at generating and/or modifying theories, deduction has the purpose of testing existing theories and, thus, results in either their verification or falsification (ibid). Specifically, deductive reasoning aims at explaining the cause and relationships between ideas and variables using data collection to evaluate hypotheses (Saunders et al., 2019). In terms of generalisability, deduction proceeds from a general theory to a specific context (Bradford & Weisberger, 2021), drawing logical consequences from premises (Yu, 1994). As the crucial point of this investigation was to test the COO bias and its effects on Italian companies' sales performance by employing collected data to verify our hypotheses, the most suitable approach to theory development was deduction.

2.3 Methodological Choice of Research Design

A research design, known also as a strategy of inquiry, is a framework that provides a definite direction and structure to a research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moreover, research methods can be classified into quantitative, qualitative, and mixed, and involve different forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (ibid).

2.3.1 Quantitative Research Design

Quantitative research designs are usually related to a deductive research approach but can also include an inductive one (Saunders et al., 2019). In this type of research, relationships between variables are measured numerically and examined according to statistical models (ibid). The most common strategies associated with quantitative research are the survey and experimental ones. The former allows for the gathering of data that can be exploited to develop models of the relationships between variables, while the latter is a form of research aimed at exploring the probability of changes in a dependent variable due to alterations of other independent factors (Saunders et al., 2019). As has been further discussed in the dedicated paragraph (see paragraph 2.4), the survey strategy includes several data collection techniques, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative methods, but the most common ones in quantitative research are questionnaires, structured interviews, and structured observations (ibid).

2.3.2 Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is very flexible in terms of approaches to theory development; indeed, it is possible to use any of the three types of reasonings mentioned above (Saunders et al., 2019). The data collected in this research category takes the form of words and images, from which meanings are derived (ibid). Numerous research strategies can be adopted in a qualitative study: action research, case study research, ethnography, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry. In addition to that, since the survey strategy encompasses also qualitative techniques, namely semi-structured and unstructured interviews, it is often used in qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.3.3 Mixed Method Research Design

Mixed method research combines and integrates the use of quantitative and qualitative research and data collection techniques in the same research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). Generally speaking, this research design is supported by two different philosophical views, namely critical realism and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2019). Pragmatists, indeed, believe that reality can be interpreted in many different ways, and thus different methods of data collection are deemed suitable within the same research study. In the same way, critical realism accepts the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to better understand the hidden structures of reality that affect observable phenomena (ibid). For what concerns approaches to theory development to be used in accordance with this research design, all the previously mentioned (see paragraph 2.2) reasoning types are acceptable. The ways in which quantitative and qualitative data are integrated into this research method can range from simple, concurrent forms to complex and sequential ones, leading to the recognition of several alternatives of mixed methods (Saunders et al., 2019). One of the resulting variations is the *concurrent* mixed-method research, which consists in adopting quantitative and qualitative procedures within the same stage of data collection, allowing for simultaneous analysis of the findings (ibid). Another alternative of mixed-method research is the *sequential* one, which includes successive phases of data collection and analysis in order to elaborate further on the initial set of findings (Saunders et al., 2019). Within double-phased sequential mixed method designs, two other options can be identified, i.e., *sequential exploratory* and *sequential explanatory* research design. The difference between these two variations lies in the fact that the former exhibits a qualitative phase followed by a quantitative one, while the opposite is true for the latter (ibid). Eventually, an additional option is a more complex, *multiple-phased* design involving more than two phases of data collection and analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). The extent to which qualitative and quantitative methods are combined in the research project determines whether the mixed method will be fully or only partially integrated. Fully integrated models merge quantitative and qualitative techniques at each phase of the research, while partially integrated ones do so at some stages only (ibid). Based on the nature of the study, the value of either qualitative or quantitative methods can change, with the result of one having a superior role and the other a secondary, supportive function (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.3.4 Choice of Research Design

Taking all the above-mentioned factors into consideration, the authors deemed the mixed-method research design as the most suitable for this study. One of the reasons for this choice lied in the research philosophy previously selected, pragmatism, which supported the aforementioned design. Indeed, pragmatists regarded this method as reliable, credible, and relevant in order to answer the research problem (Saunders et al., 2019). On top of that, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods provides researchers better opportunities to achieve the goal of the investigation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). What is more, using a single method often results in a mono-method bias, which has to do with the difficulty of data validation when using only one research technique. For example, when a survey is employed as the sole procedure for collecting data, it is advisable to integrate it with qualitative insight in order to refine the findings (Markovic, 2021a). Moreover, mixed methods allow both for the collection of richer data than a single-method design (Saunders et al., 2019) and for triangulation of data, resulting in a tool to achieve convergence across qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Another critical reason for choosing a mixed approach is the fact that it neutralizes the weaknesses that both qualitative and quantitative methods hold separately (ibid). In particular, qualitative techniques exhibit the researchers as the means for collecting data, with the consequence of their feelings and judgments influencing the interpretation of the results (Abdullah & Raman, 2000). Indeed, especially for what concerns interviews, the phenomenon of double hermeneutics occurs, so that respondents first understand reality according to their social context and then researchers interpret their answers (Markovic, 2021b). Given this subjectivity, one has to keep into account that the validity and authenticity of results are debatable (Salvador, 2016). Moreover, some specific kinds of qualitative techniques, such as research interviews, do not allow for standardization of results and anonymity of participants (Abdullah & Raman, 2000). In addition to that, interviews can be affected by the social desirability bias, meaning that interviewees might lack authenticity in their answers due to their inclination to appear as competent as possible (Markovic, 2021b). Eventually, qualitative research is rather time-consuming and, given its open-ended nature, it can result in respondents having control over the content of the collected data (Choy, 2014). On the other hand, quantitative research designs do not enable participants to freely express their feelings and opinions about the topic of the study (Abdullah & Raman, 2000). Furthermore, for what concerns questionnaires specifically, once distributed, the modification of ambiguous questions is not an option (ibid). For sake of effectiveness, quantitative methods must take into consideration a sufficiently large sample, the achievement of which can be prevented by a lack of resources (Choy, 2014). To conclude, quantitative analysis requires a certain number of technical skills to be conducted (ibid).

For the sake of this research project, the multi-method alternative that was selected among the ones previously mentioned is the sequential, multi-phase design (Saunders et al., 2019). Indeed, data was collected in three different, successive stages: a first qualitative phase encompassing unstructured interviews, followed by a quantitative stage consisting in an online questionnaire, and then concluded with another qualitative phase involving focus groups. Each of these data collection techniques has been explained in detail in the designated paragraph (see paragraph 2.4). The decision behind the choice of employing this particular procedure stemmed from the fact that being the different stages interconnected, they subsequently informed and directed the next one in the data collection process (Saunders et al., 2019). In particular, we used a partially integrated mixed-method, as qualitative and quantitative data has been examined simultaneously only in the analysis section, while in each of the three phases of data collection identified before, the two approaches were used separately (ibid).

Notwithstanding the fact that a mixed-method research design presents numerous advantages, a few drawbacks are worth to be mentioned. To begin with, the combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection approaches results in a more complex model. On top of that, the overall procedure is relatively time-intensive as it implies an extensive data collection phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.3.5 Purpose of the Research Design

A research project is usually aimed at accomplishing a specific purpose, the nature of which can be either descriptive, exploratory, evaluative, explanatory, or a combination of these (Saunders et al., 2019).

A *descriptive* study has the objective to depict a valid profile of phenomena or people. An *exploratory* design, instead, allows for a deeper understanding of a specific area of interest through the use of open questions (ibid). Specifically, an exploratory research project is characterised by its flexibility and adaptability to changes, which also means that researchers must be prepared to modify the orientation of the study as they encounter new data (Saunders et al., 2019). *Evaluative* research is employed mainly to assess the performance of any organisational strategy, process, or initiative (ibid). Furthermore, *explanatory* investigations form causal linkages between variables through the analysis of specific circumstances (Saunders et al., 2019). Eventually, a combination of the aforementioned research purposes can be applied through the use of multiple design methods (ibid).

Taking into consideration the research question and sub-questions of this study, the nature of the research project at hand was explanatory. Indeed, the main target of this project was to investigate whether there existed causal relationships between Italian achievements in the musical and sportive field, as well as in the political scenario on one side, and the sales performance of Italian companies on the other.

2.4 Research Strategies

A research strategy can be described as a researcher's plan on how to provide a response to their research question and sub-questions (Saunders et al., 2019). It can also be seen as a methodological connection between the selected philosophy and the data collection method that follows to ensure coherence. In particular, a strategy of inquiry frames the structure of a study from the very beginning to the discussion of findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). A number of research strategies can be used either individually or simultaneously, through a mixed-method approach (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.4.1 Experiment

The experimental strategy has the purpose of analysing the likelihood of a dependent variable changing as a consequence of the variation of an independent one (Saunders et al., 2019). Specifically, instead of referring to research questions, the experiment employs hypotheses to explore the existence of a correlation between factors (ibid). Indeed, two contrasting hypotheses can be developed, namely the null hypothesis, according to which the variables are not correlated, and the alternative one (Saunders et al., 2019). Experiments can vary in their complexity: the simplest ones only examine the existence of a relationship between variables, while complex ones evaluate the magnitude of the change as well (ibid). The experimental strategy can be differentiated from the survey one in quantitative settings since the first inspects the correlation within variables, while the latter is aimed at verifying an estimated relationship between them (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.4.2 Survey

A survey strategy allows for the proposal of possible causes behind the relationships among certain variables and is commonly related to deductive reasoning (Saunders et al., 2019). Such strategy has the advantages of being both simple to comprehend and perceived as reliable by the general public (ibid). Within the survey strategy, the most widely used data collection technique is the questionnaire, which permits the collection of data through a standardised process and their easier comparison (Saunders et al., 2019). Other techniques included in this strategy are interviews and structured observations; specifically, interviews can be classified as either structured, semi-structured, or unstructured according to the level of standardisation in the interview itself. For sake of clarity, we refer to standardisation as to the extent to which formulated questions are identical and predetermined (ibid). On top of that, interviews can additionally be categorised as individual, one-to-one or group interviews depending on the number of participants. A specific type of group interview is referred to as focus group (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.4.3 Archival and Documentary

This type of research strategy includes an extensive variety of secondary data sources (Saunders et al., 2019). Some examples can be *government documents*, i.e., publications, national statistics data sets, and reports, *organisational documents* such as administrative reports and strategy statements, *media documents* including printed and online articles, *individual records*, and *communication* among individuals or groups (ibid). On one side, the main advantage of this strategy is the increasing accessibility of such data from anywhere in the world, which is enabled by the digitalisation of data and the establishment of online archives. Additionally, another benefit to be noted is that archival documents provide a rich data source ready to be analysed (Saunders et al., 2019). On the other hand, researchers must still be careful when using and inspecting these types of documents, given the fact that their original objective might differ from the aim of their research project and thus the original findings might not apply to all situations. On top of that, one needs to consider that the quality of available data can vary according to their origin (ibid). Eventually, these data sources can be examined in either qualitative, quantitative, or mixed ways (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.4.4 Case Study

A case study is defined as an in-depth investigation regarding a specific topic and its dynamics within its real-life context (Yin, 2018). Case study research is often based on both qualitative and quantitative data in order to obtain an extensive awareness of the case subject (ibid). Even if the use of case studies is widespread, they have been highly criticised by some researchers due to concerns regarding their potential for providing reliable and generalisable knowledge; this incongruence is known as the paradox of case study research (Flyvbjerg, 2011). As a result of their extensive use, case studies can be employed for different purposes and outlined in different ways (Saunders et al., 2019). A possible classification of this research strategy has been identified by Lee & Saunders (2020), who differentiate between an *orthodox* case study and an *emergent* one. The former refers to a fairly rigid approach in which the structure is clearly defined prior to the beginning of the research, while the latter involves a more flexible procedure where the focus of the research arises along the investigation process, thus no rigorous structure is delineated before the start of the analysis (ibid). Yin (2018) identifies four types of case study strategies, namely single, multiple, holistic, and embedded case studies. Some reasons for using a *single* case study are its rareness, relevance, and/or exemplarity. *Multiple* cases, on the other hand, can be examined in order to verify whether the results can be generalised across those cases. A *holistic* case study refers to a situation in which the subject of the case is studied as a whole. On the contrary, an *embedded* case study involves the examination of multiple sub-units within the same case subject (Yin, 2018).

2.4.5 Ethnography

The ethnographic strategy is aimed at exploring the culture and the social context to which a group pertains. Indeed, the object of the study is the interaction between people belonging to the same group, who share the same spaces (Saunders et al., 2019). Some varieties of this research strategy are described as follows. *Realist* ethnography takes an objective approach to the observed situations and customs through the use of standardised categories that allow the collection of quantitative data. Conversely, *interpretive* ethnography is much more subjective given that it stresses the importance of personal impressions rather than objective ones, which translates into the identification of several meanings. Another variety of the ethnographic strategy is the *critical* one, which studies those people who are subject to the influence of power or marginalised by it (Saunders et al., 2019). Generally speaking, the relevance of ethnography is evident when considering the need to conduct market research and analyse consumer experience, as it allows for gaining deeper market insights (ibid).

2.4.6 Action Research

Action research is defined as an investigation that, by fostering the active collaboration of participants, is aimed at finding practical solutions to organisational issues (Saunders et al., 2019). Specifically, the final objective of encouraging corporate learning is achieved through an iterative process consisting of multiple stages. Each of these stages begins with the identification of organisational problems and proceeds with planning, undertaking, and assessing actions (ibid). Given the repetitive nature of the process, albeit the strategy initiates with a specific research question, the focus of the research may shift as the exploration unfolds (Saunders et al., 2019). The practical approach of action research is what sets it apart from the other strategies (ibid). Despite providing valuable, practical outcomes, this research strategy is both time-consuming and resource-intensive (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.4.7 Grounded Theory

The objective of the Grounded Theory is to study social relationships and to give theoretical interpretations to data collected on them, with the final aim of generating new theories of these interactions (Saunders et al., 2019). Researchers following this strategy begin the study by gathering data from an early interview and analysing it almost simultaneously (ibid). Specifically, data analysis starts with the creation of analytical codes, used to label information stemming from the interviews' records, intending to compare different pieces of data (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.4.8 Narrative Inquiry

A narrative inquiry strategy requires interviewees' experiences to be narrated in the form of complete stories, rather than unrelated fragments, as researchers believe this approach provides a deeper understanding of those. Indeed, this strategy allows the preservation of the chronological order of events, reaching a more profound consciousness of the experiences (Saunders et al., 2019). Techniques belonging to the narrative inquiry strategy are in-depth interviews and participant observations in the research setting, but also biographies and autobiographies, diaries, and informal discussions (ibid). Interviews can be conducted with a varying number of participants. One option is to have only one to three interviewees, with them being representative of a larger cultural group. Another possibility is to have a small sample of people, more than three, considered as extreme examples of a population. Eventually, the last alternative is to employ a larger sample to ensure a more accurate representativeness of the community under investigation (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.4.9 Choice of Research Strategy

For the sake of this project, the survey strategy was employed. Indeed, we deemed it as the most suitable strategy given that the main focus of this study was to investigate the correlation between Italian achievements in the political, sportive, and musical sphere and the sales performance, both abroad and domestically, of Italian companies. On the other hand, since data regarding Italian economic performance, academic literature concerning the COO effect and online articles were analysed, the archival research strategy was employed as well. Specifically, for what concerns the survey strategy, the data collection techniques adopted were the questionnaire, unstructured interviews, and focus groups. Whereas, regarding archival research techniques, national statistics data set and reports, organisational documents, and media documents, i.e., online articles, were inspected. Eventually, the choice of the aforementioned strategies, and the consequent data collection techniques, were aligned with the selected mixed-method research design. In particular, while national statistics and the questionnaire are classified as quantitative data, unstructured and group interviews, together with academic papers and articles, provide qualitative data (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.5 Time Horizon

The choice of a methodological approach coupled with particular research strategies affects the selection of a pertinent time horizon (Saunders et al., 2019). There are two options when it comes to the time span, namely cross-sectional or longitudinal studies (ibid). While the former consists in the investigation of a certain occurrence at a specific point in time, the latter offers the chance to examine the evolution of a phenomenon over time (Saunders et al., 2019). The limited time availability, due to the academic nature of the project, and the intention to analyse the incidence of a phenomenon in a determined time frame, using the survey strategy, required the adoption of a cross-sectional study (ibid). However, many of the secondary data that have been used, i.e., articles and datasets, dated back a few years before. Moreover, given that such data were collected in different time periods, they allowed for a time-trend analysis. Thus, it is possible to assert that the nature of these secondary data was longitudinal.

2.6 Technique and Procedures for Data Collection

For the purpose of this research project, both primary and secondary data were collected through several collection techniques. On one side, primary data, both quantitative and qualitative were gathered via a survey strategy, specifically through an online questionnaire, unstructured interviews, and focus groups. *Questionnaires* are most commonly used in descriptive or explanatory research, and they allow for the explanation of causal relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2019). Although presenting several advantages, in particular the possibility of gathering a large amount of data in a rather short period of time, it is advisable to integrate questionnaires with additional data collection techniques, such as in-depth interviews (ibid). Specifically, the authors employed an internet, web questionnaire as participants could have accessed it via a hyperlink on either their computer, phone, or tablet. On top of that, online questionnaires exhibit some additional advantages, namely being cost-effective as the software we have used was provided for free by our university, enabling researchers to reach a larger and more geographically dispersed sample, and finally saving the researchers the burden of assisting respondents in answering the questions (Saunders et al., 2019). Eventually, in this project, a questionnaire was employed to explore participants' perception of Italy and its products, and whether this has changed following the Italian achievements in 2021. *Unstructured interviews* do not make use of predetermined questions, and thus are non-standardised, but instead allow for identifying the main themes that emerge from data collection (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, participants in this type of interview are allowed to express themselves freely about the topic under investigation (ibid). For the sake of this study, unstructured interviews were used to identify which industries participants associated the most with *Made in Italy*. Indeed, the question asked was *"What industries come to mind when you think of Made in Italy?"*. The participants were not selected beforehand, but were part of groups of friends, classmates and even relatives; the question was asked in informal contexts while discussing the thesis and 16 responses were collected (Appendix 1). The reason behind this decision was the intention to minimise our bias, as Italians, on what we thought were the most famous Italian industries. The most common industries mentioned by participants were then included in the subsequent questionnaire. The last technique employed for primary data collection was the *focus group*. Focus groups are non-standardised group interviews, which can be conducted as either one-to-many or two-to-many depending on how many researchers are performing the interview (Saunders et al., 2019). In this data collection technique, the theme to be explored is determined and clarified in advance, with the researchers being in charge of facilitating the dialogue among participants and maintaining the focus of the discussion within certain boundaries (ibid). Specifically, two-to-many focus groups were used in this investigation primarily to gather a deeper understanding of the findings resulting from the questionnaire. On top of that, they were also employed to gain valuable insights into the perception participants had of Italy and their consumption of Italian products.

On the other side, secondary data were collected through the use of the archival research strategy. In particular, the techniques adopted were national statistics, academic literature, media documents, and third parties' dataset and/or reports (Saunders et al., 2019). For the sake of this investigation, national statistics data regarding Italian GDP and export levels were collected to assess the Italian economic performance. Academic literature mainly focused on the COO effect, as well as on the concepts of corporate strategy, with a special emphasis on marketing strategy. Information about Italian achievements in the political, sportive, and musical fields, alongside figures regarding the changing in the export levels, were retrieved from media documents, in particular from online articles. Eventually, third parties' databases were examined to acquire additional, valuable information, i.e., spread value levels.

2.6.1 Creation of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) was developed through the software Qualtrics, which was free of charge as it was provided by the university. In particular, the survey was composed of 29 questions, including questions both open and closed in type. For what concerns the way in which these were recorded, while closed questions were naturally pre-coded, open questions were gathered in either an open-ended or pre-coded manner (Brace, 2018). Since some of the questions exhibited a display logic, they were only shown to participants who had chosen a certain answer in the previous questions. An example of display logic is given by the open-ended questions asking for examples of Italian companies operating in a certain industry; the industry in question was dependent on the answer provided in the previous question (e.g., Q6 asked "Which industries do you associate to Made in Italy?"; if the participant had selected the Food and Beverage industry, the next question would have been "Give one or two examples of Italian companies operating in the Food and Beverage industry").

In order to maximize data quality and keep respondents engaged during the completion of the questionnaire, the duration of it was kept at a reasonable time of around 10 minutes (Brace, 2018). Moreover, in order to provide an experience as pleasant as possible to the respondents, a few techniques specially designed for online questionnaires (Brace, 2018) were adopted: to begin with, even though most of the questions were made mandatory, it was not the case for the open-ended question asking to cite examples of Italian companies in a certain industry. This choice was made with the awareness that it could have been a difficult task, especially for foreigners, to name any company at all. Moreover, given that respondents like to know how far through the questionnaire they are (Brace, 2018), a progress indicator, in the form of a progress bar, was included in it. Furthermore, almost all single-response questions in the form of scales included a medium option to allow flexibility for respondents in giving the most accurate answer. However, as the use of too many middle answer choices may induce respondents not to think sufficiently about their answers (Brace, 2018), selected questions did not provide such a medium option, i.e., Q20. For the creation of most of these scale questions, the authors used 5-point scales; each option was assigned a numerical value, with the minimum value being 1 (e.g., "very low") and the maximum one being 5 (e.g., "very high").

For what concerns those questions investigating change in perception (Q20, Q21, Q22, and Q25), the authors used both 5- and 4-point scales. In particular, in Q20 and Q25 the 4-points scales were adopted, while 5-points scales were used for Q21 and Q22, with the only difference being that the latter provided a medium (i.e., "not affected") option. In these scales, the values assigned to each answer ranged from -2 to +2 to better represent the change in perception (e.g., “very negatively” = -2, “negatively” = -1, “not affected” = 0, “positively” = +1, “very positively” = +2). Finally, in order to get some external feedback on the ease of completion of the questionnaire and its level of mobile-friendliness, a pilot version of the survey was sent to 13 people. The outcome was a general approval of the questionnaire structure and its questions, with the sole exception of slider-scale questions, since they were perceived as not entirely mobile-friendly. Thus, for the final version of the questionnaire, the majority of such slider questions were turned into matrix ones employing radio buttons (Brace, 2018).

The parameters in question 1 and repeated in question 21, as well as the statements of questions 2 and 22 were retrieved from Buhmann’s (2016) model. Indeed, the author was the first to theorise and develop a model for measuring the image of a country by combining ideas from national identity, attitude, and reputation management theories (ibid). As the aim of this paragraph has been to describe how the questionnaire has been structured, Buhmann’s model has been explained only briefly, for the time being, in order to understand its relevance to and use within the questionnaire; the notion of country image was analysed in detail in its dedicated chapter (see paragraph 3.3.1).

The model developed by Buhmann (2016) includes four dimensions of a country image: functional, normative, emotional, and aesthetic. The *functional* dimension concerns how the competence and competitiveness of a country, on economic and political terms, are evaluated. The *normative* dimension is related not only to the perception of a country’s integrity, norms and values but also to what extent it can be considered socially and ecologically responsible (ibid). The *emotional* dimension concerns the emotions and feelings a specific country can trigger in people. Eventually, the *aesthetic* dimension refers to the attractiveness of a country in terms of landscape beauty, culture and traditions (Buhmann, 2016). Returning to the questionnaire, the parameters of Economic Strength, Political Stability, and Infrastructure Efficiency” reflected the functional dimension. Environmental Protection Policies, Civil Rights Protection, and Just Welfare System concerned the normative dimension, while Rich Culture and Traditions, Rich Culinary Traditions, and Beautiful Scenery were elements of the aesthetic dimension. Finally, the statements “I like Italy as a country”, “Italy is a fascinating country”, and “I feel attracted to Italy as a country” represented the emotional dimension (Buhmann, 2016).

The list of industries in question 4 was developed as a result of the unstructured interviews carried out prior to the start of the questionnaire, as mentioned above. Eventually, the series of product attributes listed in Q15 was in part retrieved from Statista (Kunst, 2019), while others were added for their alleged usefulness for the purposes of this research project.

The three reports containing the raw data about the total answers, Italian respondents' answers and foreign respondents' answers have been presented in the appendix (Appendix 3), while the Excel spreadsheets containing the calculations and analysis are available upon request.

2.6.2 Preparation of the Focus Group

The authors decided to conduct two focus groups to further explore the findings resulting from the questionnaire, specifically with the aim of deepening their understanding of participants' consumption habits and knowledge of Made in Italy. The two focus groups were conducted on two separate days, with the first one including seven participants and the second one six participants. The choice of such a number of individuals was made in accordance with the guideline of Duke Trinity College (2005). Moreover, the two groups of participants were homogeneous in the sense that participants belonged to the same age group (i.e., in their twenties) and possessed similar academic backgrounds, with some of them recently graduated and some others about to graduate. Homogeneity is important especially because it reduces any eventual embarrassment and maximizes disclosure in the focus group (Duke Trinity College, 2005). For the same reason, a balance was sought between Italian and foreign participants, as well as between male and female individuals. The focus groups were conducted in a two-to-many, semi-structured way, with 9 pre-determined, open-ended questions being asked, but still allowing room for eventual clarifications; some of the questions presented additional sub-questions to further explore the topic. In line with the Duke Trinity College guidelines (2005), which state that focus groups should be no longer than 45-90 minutes, the two focus groups had a length of 60 minutes approximately. Both focus groups were held at the university, specifically in a study room, which was deemed as a neutral and comfortable environment. Furthermore, to make participants more at ease, snacks and beverages were provided. At their arrival, all participants were asked to fill in a consent form, in line with the Duke Trinity College instructions (2005).
The transcripts of both focus groups have been reported in the appendix (Appendix 6), while the Excel spreadsheet containing the coding and the analysis of participants' answers can be presented upon request.

2.7 Securing the Data Quality

A critical topic in the drafting of a research project is the issue of ensuring data quality and thus lowering the possibility of errors altering the results (Saunders et al., 2019). Given that the methodological approach of the study at hand was mixed, different criteria for evaluating the quality of data has been introduced.

For what concerns quantitative data, the two universally recognized indicators are reliability and validity (ibid). In particular, reliability can be categorized into external and internal reliability. External reliability has to do with the consistency of results, meaning that a reliable study is one that, when replicated, provides the same, original results. Internal reliability, instead, concerns the structure of the project itself, which has to maintain a certain degree of coherence (Saunders et al., 2019). In the same way, there exist different types of validity. Measurement of validity deals with the suitability of the measures used, i.e., whether these measures actually fulfil their assessment purpose. Internal validity concerns whether the results are direct consequences of the phenomenon studied or whether they derive from errors in the investigation process (ibid). A common example of internal validity, when it comes to questionnaires, is criterion validity, which refers to how accurately the questions measure what they are intended to. Finally, external validity, instead, concerns the generalizability of the findings to other contexts (Saunders et al., 2019). Additionally, the term triangulation was first introduced by Denzin (1970), and it was referred to as a strategy for results validation through the combined use of different methods. After undergoing several criticisms (Caillaud & Flick, 2017), the term triangulation was no longer defined as a strategy but more as a substitute for validation which could lead researchers to a deeper comprehension of a given phenomenon (Flick, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). For the purpose of this investigation, focus groups were conducted with the aim of interpreting and further analysing the results of the survey (Caillaud & Flick, 2017).

Even though the aforementioned measures of data quality have been vastly adopted in quantitative studies, they have come under criticism when used in qualitative research projects (Saunders et al., 2019). For said reason, different streams of thought arose. In the first place, some scholars adapted the criteria of reliability and validity to qualitative data analysis. However, adapting external validity to qualitative research presents some issues, namely the fact that it is difficult to generalise findings originating from a limited sample to a wider population (Saunders et al., 2019). Secondly, another solution has been to establish alternative versions of reliability and validity, which are deemed as more fitting for qualitative studies. Instead of reliability, the term dependability has been coined to indicate to what extent a research process is logical, traceable and accurately documented (Nowell et al., 2017). The concept of credibility has been established in place of internal validity to refer to the fit between participants' representations of reality and how researchers interpret them (Nowell et al., 2017; Saunders et al., 2019). Eventually, external validity has been converted into transferability, meaning that the researcher has to provide a complete, detailed description of all the research stages, in order for the reader to assess whether or not the study can be transferred to other settings (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.8 Structure of the Methodology

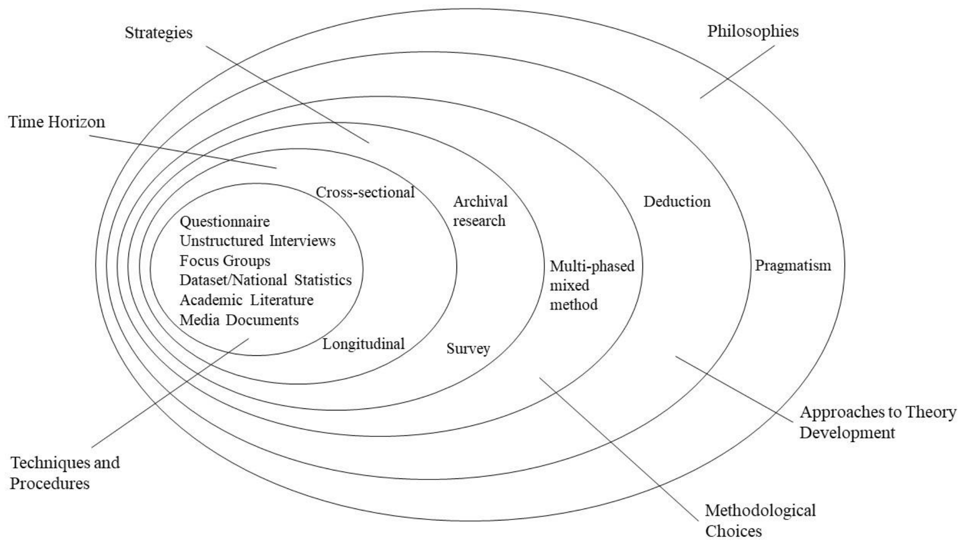

Figure 2: *Structure of the Methodology.* Source: own creation based on Saunders et al. (2019).

3. Literature Review

For the sake of this project, several works and research papers in the areas of corporate strategy, marketing strategy, nation branding, and Country of Origin effect were analysed. Given the marketing nature of this research project, literature on corporate strategy has been studied given that marketing represents an important growth function (Mansaray, 2019), and thus is part of the organisational growth strategy, a component of the overall corporate strategy (Pidun, 2019). On top of that, academic sources on marketing strategy have been reviewed. As the main research question of this investigation dealt with the perception of Italy, relevant academic papers on the concept of nation branding have been studied; this choice stemmed from the fact that nation branding is a process involving marketing and branding communication strategies with the aim of promoting the image of the nation, which can affect the perception of that country (Fan, 2006; Aronczyk, 2013). Eventually, literature on COO has been considered since one of the sub-themes of this research study, as expressed in the sub-questions, was how Made in Italy was perceived.

In this chapter, an in-depth analysis and review of these academic works have been presented.

3.1 Corporate Strategy

According to Hayes et al. (2005), the strategic decision-making process is carried out at three different levels: corporate, business, and functional. *Corporate strategy* is concerned with corporate advantage and with the ways in which a group of businesses are managed together by the holding, with the final aim of making sure that the total portfolio of businesses is more valuable than their sum (Bowman & Helfat, 2001; Pidun, 2019). The concept of corporate strategy is relevant not only for multi-business firms but also to those organisations selling more than one product and/or doing business in more than one location (Pidun, 2019). *Business strategy* has to do with the competitive advantage an individual business unit can achieve in specific markets and over its competitors (Bowman & Helfat, 2001; Pidun, 2019). To effectively implement a business strategy, it is important for companies to firstly set clear objectives, to understand the competitive environment, and then to define the resources the organisation possesses (Grant, 2018). Eventually, at the *functional level*, strategy is concerned with how the contribution of each specific functional area within a business unit can contribute to the overall strategy (Hayes et al., 2005). For the sake of this exam, the authors only focused on corporate strategy, as it is a broader concept encompassing the different elements for the development of a sound business strategy.

Corporate strategy is composed of several elements, which are grouped into three different levels (Pidun, 2019). At the first level, corporate strategy is concerned with defining the company's *mission* and *vision*. The mission illustrates the ultimate purpose of the firm, and it is considered the starting point when outlining the corporate strategy, while the vision defines where the company wants to be in the future, and the target state to be reached taking into consideration the existing resources and capabilities of the firm (ibid).

At the second level, mission and vision must be converted into *corporate portfolio strategy* and *corporate growth strategy*. While the former deals with the desired composition of the overall business portfolio, how to reach it and the roles that each business plays in its achievements, the latter has the aim of underling those elements in the corporate portfolio which have the highest potential for creating long-term value (Pidun, 2019).

Eventually, at the last level, corporate strategy is implemented in practice through the use of three different sub-strategies: parenting strategy, resource allocation strategy, and financial strategy (Pidun, 2019). The *parenting strategy* has the objective of defining which role the parent company will have in achieving the corporate vision. The *resource allocation strategy* has a central role as it enables the successful execution of both the corporate portfolio and the growth strategy by redistributing resources to the different businesses based on the role they play in the overall portfolio setup. Finally, the *financial strategy* is concerned with the determination of the company's financial policy (ibid).

3.1.1 The Role of Resources and Capabilities

As mentioned before, when developing a corporate strategy, it is crucial to take into consideration the company's existing resources and capabilities and to match them to the opportunities arising in the external environment (Pidun, 2019). According to the resource-based-view theory, both capabilities and resources are extremely valuable for a company as, if managed effectively and strategically, they enable the accomplishment and sustainment of a competitive advantage (Pidun, 2019), which is achieved when the strategy implemented by a company cannot be imitated by its competitors (Barney, 1991). Resources and capabilities are strategically important for a company to the extent that they enable incoming streams of profit: this depends on their ability to bring a competitive advantage to the company, to maintain this advantage over time, and to secure the competitive advantage's returns (Grant, 2018). In addition to that, each organisation owns a distinctive set of resources and capabilities, which differ from those held by competitors (Grant, 2018;

Pidun, 2019). *Resources* are defined as the productive assets, knowledge, and information owned by an organisation, while organizational capabilities are described as the ability of a firm to leverage its resources to achieve its objectives (Barney, 1991; Pidun, 2019). Resources can further be classified into tangible, i.e., financial resources, intangible, such as reputation, which are usually considered more valuable than tangible resources, and human, which are the most difficult to identify and include employees' skills and values (Grant, 2018; Pidun, 2019). Central for a company to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage are also *core capabilities*, which are cross-functional capabilities and are defined as sets of intangible resources and capabilities, comprising managerial skills and experience, that bridge the different businesses within an organisation and enable their successful functioning (Grant, 2018: Pidun, 2019). In order to assure the company's advantage over its competitors, core capabilities must provide access to several markets, contribute to enhancing the benefits perceived by customers in relation to finished products, and especially they must be difficult to replicate for competitors (Pidun, 2019). In view of the speed of innovation of new technologies, the constant change in customer preferences and the ever-changing competitive scenario, companies are required to develop a different set of capabilities, named *dynamic capabilities* (Pidun, 2019). They are defined as the ability of an organisation to renovate its current sets of resources and capabilities to rapidly address the changes the external environment is undergoing (Teece et al., 1997; Pidun, 2019).

3.1.2 Corporate Growth Strategy

Growth is regarded as the most important driver of value creation and success for a company in the long term, and therefore is considered a critical element in the development of a corporate strategy (Pidun, 2019). The corporate growth strategy design process can be divided into three levels: the setting of time horizons of growth, the decision on where the growth should come from, and the selection of the best ways in which to achieve this growth (ibid).

The first decision to make is over what period growth should be achieved. Growth horizons can be further categorised into three different groups: short-term growth, emerging growth, and long-term growth (Pidun, 2019). *Short-term growth* opportunities include measures aimed at enhancing existing businesses' performances in the short run, i.e., improved marketing actions, and are normally assessed based on their contribution to the firm's profit. *Emerging growth* opportunities are aimed at providing the firm with considerable revenue streams in the future, but they also require substantial investments; an example can be the entry into a new market. Eventually, *long-term growth* opportunities demand acquisitions of or partnerships with other businesses to ensure growth in the long run, which is achieved with outstanding investments (ibid).

Growth can be sought through the maximisation of the core activities, the expansion into adjacent businesses, and the exploration of unrelated growth (Pidun, 2019). *Maximising the core* is about drawing on the unexploited growth potential of businesses already present in the portfolio of the organisation; an example of activity falling in this group is the introduction of a significant marketing initiative. *Expanding into adjacencies* has to do with the harnessing of existing capabilities to penetrate new but correlated businesses. Finally, *exploring unrelated growth* concerns seeking chances for growth in activities that are not related to the core business of the company (ibid).

The last decision to take into consideration is in which way the organisation can achieve corporate growth, and there are three possible pathways: internal development, mergers and acquisitions, and strategic alliances (Grant, 2018; Pidun, 2019). *Internal development*, or organic growth, keeps expenditure low as it builds on internal resources, but leads to a slow growth. Although it allows the internal knowledge to foster, a limitation of this method is that it does not allow the company to enter sectors with substantial barriers to entry, such as incumbents controlling strategic assets, where the sole internal capabilities are not enough to overcome these obstacles (ibid). *Mergers and acquisitions* allow the organisation not only to obtain new resources but also to face the constraints of internal development, especially when the acquisition of an incumbent occurs, and they lead to a growth in the short-term. On the other hand, they require substantial capital investment and, consequently, high exposure to risk (Grant, 2018; Pidun, 2019). Acquisitions are defined as the purchase of one firm by another, while mergers are the fusions of two organisations (Grant, 2018). Eventually, *alliances*, which entail the collaboration of two firms to achieve common goals, enable companies to lower the risk as it is shared between partners and to combine capabilities, and access to the other’s resources with the aim of achieving a successful performance and a deeper penetration of the market (Grant, 2018; Pidun, 2019).

There exist several possibilities for growth within the existing portfolio of businesses (Pidun, 2019). *Market penetration* is concerned with improving the market share with existing products in markets the company is already present in through, for example, the launch of new marketing campaigns. *Market development* refers to seeking growth by expanding into new segments with the current products or services portfolio by, i.e., offering a lower-cost version of an existing product (ibid). *Product development* concerns the designing of new products to be sold in markets the firm is already serving. Eventually, *business model innovation* refers to a change in the way the company creates, delivers, and captures value. Specifically, it reflects a change in the strategic choices undertaken by an organisation that will lead to the achievement of an advantage over its competitors (Pidun, 2019; Shafer et al., 2005).

3.1.3 Corporate Portfolio Strategy

Portfolio management is regarded as the most important function for all multi-business companies (Grant, 2018). The corporate portfolio strategy, in turn, is a crucial element in the corporate strategy development process and it is concerned with decisions on the desired portfolio of businesses to reach and on the roles each business unit plays in the overall corporation (Pidun, 2019). The development of the corporate portfolio strategy commences with the identification of gaps between the actual and the target businesses portfolio. The closure of these gaps can occur either by changing the configuration of the current portfolio or by adapting the individual business units' objectives and the resulting adjustment of the allocation of resources (ibid). An effective corporate portfolio can be developed through the recombination of existing strategic business units, but growth opportunities can also be found outside the current portfolio (Pidun, 2019).

Furthermore, corporate portfolio strategy is also responsible for assigning each business unit the role they will play in the overall portfolio: development business, growth business, base business, and harvesting business (ibid). *Development businesses* bring long-term growth to the company by focusing on reaching a strong market position, these businesses are usually in an early phase of their industry life cycle and active in emerging markets. *Growth businesses* require high financial investments as the objective is to exploit the growth opportunities in the market and enhance their position to ensure value creation (ibid). *Base businesses* are the core of the portfolio and, as they are in the mature phase of the industry life cycle, they only focus on maintaining the market position without seeking further growth. Consequently, they do not require high investments, and they produce positive revenue streams. Eventually, *harvesting businesses* are situated in declining markets, so their aim is to capture the maximum of the remaining value of the business, contributing with fundings for other businesses (Pidun, 2019).

In order for a company to achieve its desired corporate portfolio, it is often necessary to divest from some existing business to then seek growth in new ones through mergers, acquisitions and alliances (Pidun, 2019).

3.1.4 Corporate Parenting Strategy

The concept of parenting advantage is crucial to the development of a corporate strategy; the parent company has the objective of adding value to each business in the portfolio and to the corporate portfolio (Pidun, 2019). In order to develop the most successful parenting strategy, the starting point is to outline which activities are value-adding and which value-destroying among the ones the mother company can undertake (ibid). An effective parenting strategy can be said to be a combination of different value-adding activities that is both in line with the competencies of the core business and with the requirements of the single business units (Pidun, 2019).

The holding company can rely on different levers to add value to the portfolio of businesses, namely strategy development, financing advantages, corporate functions and resources, business synergies and operational engagement (Pidun, 2019). Depending on the relative importance that the individual levers play in increasing the value of the individual businesses, it is possible to outline six distinct parenting strategies the mother company can undertake (ibid). The *Hands-Off Owner* creates value by investing in new businesses and divesting others at the same time. A F*inancial Sponsor* company is limited to providing funding and financial counselling to the businesses while playing a minor role in the development of their strategy (Pidun, 2019). The *Family Builder* mainly focuses on providing financial support to the businesses in the corporate portfolio, which in this case are carefully chosen because of their synergies; the parent company aims at creating an environment in which knowledge and best practices can be easily shared among the actors, without getting involved in the operational and strategic development of the individual businesses. The *Strategic Guide*, as opposed to the others, plays a major role in the definition of each business's strategic choices and offers strategic guidance, leveraging on its own experiences (ibid). A *Functional Leader* is a company that actively participates in the development of strategies of the individual businesses and aims at building an ecosystem in which both resources and knowledge are shared; given the active role of the parent company, the main drawback of this strategy is that it prevents the businesses from having greater autonomy. Eventually, the *Hands-On Manager* plays a significant role not only in setting financial objectives but also in the development of the strategy, it is considered the decision-making authority that exerts its influence in the management of the individual businesses, leaving them no independence (Pidun, 2019).

If it is true, on one side, that the higher the level of parent involvement in the management processes of the businesses, the higher the value-added, on the other the risk of value destruction is also increased as the parental involvement becomes stronger (Pidun, 2019). Therefore, not all the strategies above-mentioned are optimal, but the best parenting strategy must take into consideration the portfolio strategy, the corporate capabilities, and the needs and opportunities of each business unit (ibid). In conclusion, the parenting strategy must be aligned with the overall corporate strategy, as it is a crucial element in the implementation of the latter (Pidun, 2019).

3.1.5 Corporate Financial Strategy

The financial perspective has become increasingly more important as financial stakeholders and institutional investors play a bigger role than before in deciding the direction of a company and exert stronger pressure on the management (Pidun, 2019). The corporate financial strategy is concerned with including these actors' perspectives in the development of a corporate strategy, and it is composed of three key elements: an investment thesis, a reliable financial policy, and an investor strategy (ibid). The *investment thesis* is aimed at explaining to stakeholders the corporate strategy the company will pursue to create long-term value and how it will reach the goal. The *financial policy* has the purpose of defining the sources of funds, the structure of the debt, the dividends policy, and the use of the generated cash. The financial strategy must be aligned with the corporate strategy as the latter determines the financing needs of each business unit and the former ensures these needs are addressed. Eventually, the *investor strategy* aims at defining the desired composition of the investor base and how to manage the relations between the company and this stakeholder group (Pidun, 2019).

In conclusion, the corporate strategy is crucial for a company to achieve its objective and to create value, to ensure long-term growth and steadiness (Pidun, 2019). Its importance is even greater when the context the organisation is operating in is dynamic and characterised by rising uncertainty, and where adapting capabilities are essential to survive and thrive (ibid). In such contexts, to increase its adaptiveness, the firm needs to pay higher attention to the external environment in order to identify changes and future trends and to adopt a flexible approach to the strategy development process by, i.e., increasing the frequency of strategy evaluation meetings (Pidun, 2019).

3.2 Marketing Strategy

3.2.1 The Importance of Marketing and Marketing Strategy

Marketing is defined as the organisational function and processes for generating, communicating, and delivering value to consumers, partners, and society at large and for handling customer relationships in ways that will benefit both the company and its stakeholders (American Marketing Association, 2017; Mansaray, 2019). It is the set of activities that allow a firm to examine customer needs, with the final aim of providing products or services that will meet their demands (Mansaray, 2019). In the past, marketing had no strategic role, while nowadays it is regarded as a crucial function that allows companies to deeply understand consumers' needs, communicate them throughout the organisation and meet them with their offerings (Hooley et al., 2020; Mansaray, 2019). On top of that, marketing allows firms to be aware of the competitive scenario of the marketplace and to choose in which segments or markets a company can better compete, with the final aim of gaining a competitive advantage (Hooley et al., 2020; Mansaray, 2019). Eventually, marketing is considered as a fundamental growth function that allows companies to reach their desired market position, and a well-designed marketing strategy can help firms to face and adapt to changes characterising the fast-changing environments they are operating in (Mansaray, 2019).

3.2.2 The Designing Process of a Marketing Strategy

The marketing strategy is influenced by a firm's mission and vision statements on one side and, given its final aim of helping the organisation to achieve its overall purpose, it must be aligned with the overall planning course of the whole organisation (Mansaray, 2019). Furthermore, the marketing strategy can be said to represent how and to what extent the firm's corporate strategy is market-driven (Mansaray, 2019).

In order to create an effective marketing strategy, a company needs first to assess its own capabilities, the growth opportunities present in the marketplace, and the threats it will have to face when competing in certain markets (Hooley et al., 2020). Then, the firm must decide on its competitive positioning, meaning that it needs to determine not only in which target markets it will compete, based on an analysis of the attractiveness of the given markets and of the capabilities the company currently has to serve those markets, but also how it can serve the final customers better than its competitors, leveraging its strengths (ibid).

Once these decisions have been taken, the function of marketing is to implement the strategy using the elements of the marketing mix, organisation and control (Hooley et al., 2020). The *marketing mix* concerns what products to sell, at which price, and how to promote and distribute them. The *organisation* of the marketing department influences the success of the implemented strategy and concerns mainly how resources are managed. Eventually, the marketing department has a *controlling* role in the sense that it oversees the monitoring of the implementation of the strategy and the performance levels (ibid).

3.2.2.1 Competitive Market Analysis and Consumer Analysis

For a company it is crucial to conduct an analysis of the competitive scenario of the marketplace in which it operates and especially to be aware of the changes taking place in the marketplace (Hooley et al., 2020). The external environment can be divided into competitive environment, including competitors and customers, and macro-environment, which includes the political and economic scenario and the society at large (ibid). One of the most important changes the markets are undergoing in today's economic landscape is globalisation and, as a result, global competition (Hooley et al., 2020). The globalisation of markets is leading to increasing levels of competition between firms and to the arising of new threats coming from both domestic and international markets (ibid). Another change markets are experiencing nowadays is the enhanced customer awareness and the possibility for consumers to access products and services more easily and from where they prefer, both enabled by the high speed of development and diffusion of new technologies (Hooley et al., 2020). In addition to that, customers are not only becoming increasingly demanding, requiring their needs and wants to be met in the shortest possible time and in the best possible way but also their demand is characterised by relatively low stability in the long run (ibid). In this evolving scenario, the main function of marketing is to detect changes in the external environment and make sure the company can adapt to them as quickly as possible (Hooley et al., 2020).

On the other hand, an effective marketing strategy is tailored to the customer segments the company aims at serving, conveying the importance that precise information on customers is vital for a firm to grow and to gain an advantage over its competitors; consumers information is used to provide them with products and services that meet their needs and might lead to consumer loyalty when the offering is up to their expectations (Hooley et al., 2020).

3.2.2.2 The Role of Resources and Capabilities

As mentioned above, a sound marketing strategy must take into consideration which resources the company have at its disposal and which capabilities it necessitates to compete in certain markets (Hooley et al., 2020).

Resources such as brand reputation and customer relationships are termed marketing resources as they can be leveraged by the marketing department to generate customer value and are directly connected to marketing activities (Hooley et al., 2020). Given the changes that have affected the markets in the past decades, i.e., globalisation, crucial for every company are the dynamic capabilities (Hooley et al., 2020), which are defined by Helfat et al. (2007) as the abilities of an organisation to create, extend and modify its resource base to adapt to changes occurring in the external environment. In addition, dynamic capabilities allow companies to recognise opportunities in the markets and enter new businesses by developing new products and service offerings (Helfat et al., 2007; Hooley et al., 2020).

According to Hooley et al. (2020), marketing assets, defined as resources that can be used to gain an advantage over competitors, can be divided into customer-based assets, supply chain assets, internal marketing assets, and alliance-based assets. *Customer-based* assets, such as the company's reputation and the country of origin, are identified as those assets that are valued by customers. *Supply-chain* assets regard the way in which products and services are delivered to the consumers (ibid). *Internal marketing* assets are resources used to improve the overall organisational performance; examples can be the creation of cost advantages by employing new technologies and an existing base of satisfied customers. Eventually, *alliance-based* assets are termed so when the above-mentioned assets are acquired by a company through alliances or partnerships (Hooley et al., 2020). Marketing capabilities, in turn, are defined as the organisation's abilities to exploit marketing assets and concern the effective implementation of the marketing mix; they deal with the management of existing products, the communication with customers, the capacity to manage distribution processes, and pricing decisions (Hooley et al., 2020).

Eventually, Hooley et al. (2020) describe marketing dynamic capabilities as the abilities of a firm to develop new marketing resources to recognise and address market changes.

3.2.2.3 Competitive Positioning and Market Segmentation

Competitive positioning is defined by Hooley et al. (2020) as the way in which consumers perceive the different offerings present on the market and compare them with each other, while market segmentation concerns how marketers divide the market into segments based on the different characteristics and needs of customers, so that customers with similar features will be grouped together.

For what concerns market segmentation, Burnett (2008) identified four different, existing types of markets in which a company can compete based on the type of business it is conducting: consumer markets, industrial markets, reseller markets, and institutional markets. *Consumer markets* are defined as those marketplaces in which the buyers are represented by individuals and families who purchase goods or services for their own use. *Industrial markets* differ from consumer markets in that the buyers are represented by organisations or their employees who buy products or services for use within their business processes (ibid). *Reseller markets* are characterised by the presence of intermediaries that buy products and resell them to make a profit Eventually, several types of profit and non-profit organisations are the main actors in *institutional markets,* and, unlike companies, their primary aim is not to make a profit but to satisfy esoteric and intangible needs, i.e., access to healthcare (Burnett, 2008).

Despite being seen as individual constructs, in the planning of a marketing strategy, decisions on competitive positioning and market segmentation are correlated (Burnett, 2008). Once the different customers' characteristics are identified and market segments determined, the company needs to decide in which segments it should enter based on its attractiveness and potential future opportunities, and afterwards, the firm should carry out an analysis of the competitors' positioning both in the market and in the individual segments in order to develop its possible positioning strategies that would ensure the company a competitive advantage over the other players of the market (Hooley et al., 2020).

3.2.2.4 Competitive Strategies

A successful competitive strategy has the purpose of building and maintaining a stronger position within the markets the company chose to operate in (Hooley et al., 2020). *Build strategies* aim at enhancing an organisation's performance through the growth of its activities, which can come from either an expansion in another market with the same products or service offerings or from the erosion of competitors' market share. *Holding and Defensive strategies* can be employed by those companies that are already situated in a strong position and do not seek growth; these strategies are usually pursued by businesses that function as cash generators for a company, meaning that they produce revenue streams invested in the growth of other businesses within the organisation (ibid). *Market niche strategies* are undertaken by small-medium companies that concentrate their business in limited market segments that are not being properly served by other players. *Harvesting strategies* are applied when the products have reached the maturity stage of their life cycle and are aimed at obtaining the highest returns possible before withdrawing the products from the market. Eventually, *divestments* occur when not even the harvesting strategy has resulted in profits and the products keep losing money (Hooley et al., 2020).

3.2.3 International Marketing Strategy

The expansion of world trade has resulted, as mentioned above, in increasingly intense competition at a global level and, consequently, in the emergence of cross-national customer segments; to address this trend, companies are starting to develop and implement global strategies (Hooley et al., 2020; Tien et al., 2019). An international strategy, as defined by Tien et al. (2019), is the business strategy implemented by a firm in all its markets, both domestic and foreign, intending to conduct international activities. More specifically, the international marketing strategy has the purpose of commercialising products in more than a country by deciding on the different elements of the marketing mix and adapting them to specific markets (Tien et al., 2019). International marketing is composed of export marketing, local marketing, multinational marketing, and global marketing (ibid). *Export marketing* is aimed at identifying customers' needs in a foreign country market to allow and help the company to export its products in that market. *Domestic marketing* includes all those marketing activities carried out in the countries the organisation is already operating to better understand the markets' needs and plan business policies accordingly (ibid). *Multinational marketing* involves a collaboration between marketing activities in different markets to help the organisation develop specific plans. Eventually, a *global marketing* strategy is employed by international companies that apply the same marketing strategy in every market it has penetrated (Tien et al., 2019). The theoretical concepts described in the following sub-paragraphs belonging to the section on international marketing strategy are drawn from the work of (Hollensen, 2020).

3.2.3.1 Global Competitiveness of the Firm

In order to develop a competitive advantage at the international level, a firm must adapt itself to its competitors, customers, and the relevant public authorities (Hollensen, 2020). It is the outcome of its *global marketing plan,* whose objective is precisely the creation of a sustainable competitive advantage, that mostly drives a company's competitiveness abroad (ibid). With the occurrence of globalization, many companies try to expand their sales into foreign markets, however, it is unlikely that their internalization process will succeed unless the firm prepares itself in advance. Such a degree of preparedness depends on the firm's actual skills in international business operations (ibid). Global marketing identifies the firm's commitment to coordinate its marketing activities across national boundaries with the aim of finding and satisfying international customer needs better than the competition. A possible process of internationalization across the main functions of the value chain is an option that should be considered by all those firms that wish to operate beyond their national borders: an international company has indeed to decide whether each value chain function is best performed centrally (i.e., from the headquarters) or should be moved to the export markets (Hollensen, 2020). Each value chain function should indeed be performed in the geographical location exhibiting the highest competence. In most cases, while the firm must locate the capability to perform downstream activities (i.e., marketing and sales, service) in every country it is active in, upstream and support activities can be placed more independently from where the buyer is situated (ibid). An exception is represented by the case in which the international markets are culturally similar to the home market: in this eventuality, it may be advisable to centralize the control of all the value chain functions (ibid). This distinction brings upon some noteworthy consequences. To begin with, downstream activities create a competitive advantage that is largely country-specific: a firm's brand, reputation, and service network in a country emerge mainly from its activities and create entry barriers solely in that specific country (Hollensen, 2020); competitive advantage in upstream and support activities, instead, is often developed across the entirety of countries in which a company operates rather than from its position in a single country (ibid). Moreover, in those industries characterized by the fundamental role played by downstream activities in the firm's competitive advantage, there tends to be a more multi-domestic pattern of international competition (ibid).

3.2.3.2 Approaches to Entry Modes Choice

The decision regarding the mode of entry in foreign markets decisively affects a firm's performance in its global operations (Hill et al., 1990). Seen from the perspective of the manufacturer or international marketer, market entry modes can be classified into three groups: *export modes,* characterized by a low level of risk and high flexibility; *intermediate* or *contractual modes,* in which ownership is split, with the consequence of control and risk both being shared; and, finally, *hierarchical* or *investment modes,* which feature a substantial level of control and risk, and a low degree of flexibility (Hollensen, 2020). It cannot be stated which category is the most appropriate one. The literature shows, indeed, that no entry mode among the previously mentioned ones is inherently better, however, the relative importance of resources for SMEs' permanence in foreign markets is mediated by the chosen internationalization strategy (Sui & Baum, 2014). The decision of which entry mode is most suitable for a firm should be taken keeping into consideration its whole strategic stance, rather than evaluating the options in an isolated manner (Hill et al., 1990).

There are many internal and external factors that influence this choice, and it should be underlined that a manufacturer wishing to engage in global marketing may use more than one of these methods at the same time (Hollensen, 2020). Different product lines, for example, may require different entry modes. The choice of entry mode is thus a matchmaking of internal capabilities (among which product complexity and product differentiation advantage) and external factors (among which sociocultural distance between the home country and host country, and direct and indirect trade barriers), moderated by the desired mode characteristics and transaction-specific factors (ibid). Moreover, given that the aforementioned variables to consider in the strategy decision often result in different entry mode choices, companies engaging in internationalization processes should be willing to accept trade-offs (Hill et al., 1990). Product differentiation advantages give companies a certain amount of willingness to raise prices to exceed costs by more than normal profits. They also allow firms to limit competition through the establishment of entry barriers, as well as meeting customer needs better than the competition (Hollensen, 2020). For what concerns external factors, the greater the perceived cultural and socio-economic distance between the home and the host country, the more likely it is that the firm will shy away from direct investment in favour of joint ventures or even low-risk entry modes like agents or an importer (ibid). Moreover, among direct and indirect trade barriers there are tariffs and quotas on the import of foreign goods that favour the establishment of local production (case of hierarchical modes). On the other hand, the preference for national suppliers, or tendencies to "buy local" often encourage a company to consider a joint venture or other contractual arrangements with a local company (i.e., intermediate modes) (ibid). Furthermore, the internationalization literature also theorizes how realizing a gradual internationalization process through the choice of adequate options is preferable given the high potential to save costs deriving from it (Petersen et al., 2010).

3.2.3.3 Product Decisions: Positioning

Decisions regarding the product are among the first ones that managers make to establish a global marketing mix. There are 3 levels when it comes to the product that should be considered: core product benefits (i.e., functional features, performance, perceived value, image, technology), product attributes (namely brand name, quality, packaging, design, size and colour variants, country of origin, price, staff behaviour), and support services (i.e., delivery, installation, guarantees, after-sales service, spare parts) (Hollensen, 2020). While product elements belonging to the core product benefits and to product attributes are respectively easy and moderately easy to standardize, the same can't be said for those pertaining to support services (ibid).

Product positioning, being one aspect of the marketing mix's 7Ps (Ivy, 2008), represents a key aspect for the successful marketing of any company in any market: indeed, competitive advantage and premium pricing are dependent for the most part on the customer's perception that the product/service differentiates itself from the competition (Hollensen, 2020). Product positioning is defined as the activity through which a desirable product position is created in the mind of the customer, given that what is relevant is the customer's perceived benefit-generating attributes (ibid). Thus, product positioning in foreign markets starts through the description of specific products as possessing specific attributes which create a series of benefits for the buyers/users. Then, the marketing planner puts said attributes into sets so that the benefits created fit the specific requirements of each market segment (ibid). The design of the product includes both the basic components (physical, packaging, service, and country of origin), but also the styling, brand name, and others (Hollensen, 2020). The country of origin (COO) of a product, typically signalled by the phrase "made in (country)", has a substantial effect on the perceived quality of that product (Han, 1989; Oberecker & Diamantopoulos, 2011; Pastore et al., 2011). Some countries have a good reputation for certain products and/or industries, while others hold a bad one. (e.g., Germany and Japan have a good reputation concerning car manufacturing) (Hollensen, 2020; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). The COO effects are particularly strong among consumers from Eastern Europe, in the sense that they evaluate domestically manufactured products as being of much lower quality than those produced in Western countries, regardless of the brand name. The COO is more relevant than the brand name, and this is good news for those Western firms who wish to penetrate the Eastern European markets with imports whose brand name is not yet renowned (Hollensen, 2020). An example of the challenges posed by the COO effect is the case of the Chinese piano industry. Indeed, even though China is the biggest piano manufacturer in the world (recently overtaking South Korea and Japan), it is difficult for individual firms to alter the negative perception of the "made in China" label (which represents a branding dilemma). This alteration would indeed require China to change its general image, which is definitely not immediate and may take more than a generation. To overcome this challenge and obtain a more favourable position in the minds of Western consumers, Chinese piano producers should try to associate their brands with values and names which are Western-friendly (ibid). When it comes to product positioning, given that target customers for a specific product may differ from market to market, it is crucial to keep in mind that positioning can be different from country to country. It is thus necessary to establish in the consumers' minds how a product stands out from potential and existing competition and what it represents in terms of values, to confirm its positioning in a specific market (Hollensen, 2020). This differentiation of the product can be based on one or more elements of the total product offer, i.e., quality, price, one or more attributes, its target consumers, or others (ibid).

3.2.3.4 Product Decisions: Pricing

Pricing decisions should be included with the other 7Ps of the marketing mix (i.e., product, place, promotion, people, physical facilities, and processes), given that price is an integrant part of any marketing strategy (Hollensen, 2020; Ivy, 2008). Given that foreign consumers are often price-sensitive, and that pricing is the only element in international marketing that can be changed without substantial direct cost implications, price changes are erroneously often used as a rapid fix in place of actions in other marketing mix factors (Hollensen, 2020).

Pricing is one of the most important elements of the marketing mix because pricing policy guides revenues, which constitute the only source of profit for a company. As previously mentioned, in contrast with the other elements, it can be altered without incurring relevant costs and is highly manageable (ibid). Pricing decisions usually consist in both establishing the initial price level and in adjusting it when needed. When dealing with international markets, there is a number of pricing issues to consider. Compared to pricing decisions in domestic markets, pricing decisions in international markets are substantially more complex given the fact that they are influenced by external factors such as inflation and changes in exchange rates (ibid). More specifically, international pricing decisions are affected by two groups of factors, namely internal and external ones. In turn, internal factors can be further subdivided into firm-level factors and product factors, while external factors can be classified as either environmental factors or market factors (Hollensen, 2020). The COO effect belongs to the internal, firm-level elements and it represents a crucial factor given that it influences the maximum price level consumers are willing to pay when purchasing a branded product. Thus, if a specific product is manufactured in a country characterized by a positive image, establishing a premium price for it will be easier for managers because of consumers' higher willingness to pay and vice versa. Pricing power is defined as the ability to set a higher price than the competition without it resulting in a diminished demand level (ibid).

3.3 Nation Branding

Nation branding has been defined by Fan (2006) as the application of marketing and branding communication strategies to promote a nation's image. Another definition of nation branding has been given by Aronczyk (2013), who described it as the process of creating and communicating the national identity through the use of tools and techniques retrieved from the corporate brand management discipline.

The term "nation brand" was coined by Simon Anholt in 1996, who subsequently developed the Nation Brand Index (NBI) with the aim of evaluating the perception people have of nations, cities and regions of the world (Ipsos, 2019). The NBI was developed to give governments, businesses, and organisations a guide to measure and eventually establish a strong nation image and reputation (ibid). The study has the aim of evaluating the strength and quality of the countries' brand image through the combination of six dimensions, namely Exports, Governance, Culture and Heritage, People, Tourism, and Investments and Immigration (Ipsos, 2019; Ipsos, 2021a). The *exports* dimension refers to the perception people have of products and services originating from a specific country, whether or not people are willing to buy products from a certain country and to what extent. *Governance* is about the perception the public has about the competencies and the integrity of a country's government, and its commitment to global issues, i.e., the environment. The dimension of c*ulture and heritage* is concerned with the opinion held by people on a country's heritage and its culture, including for example sport and music (ibid). *People* is referred to how the population is perceived in terms of competencies, openness and cordiality. The dimension of t*ourism* measures to what extent people are eager to visit a specific country and the attractiveness of natural and man-made touristic sights. Eventually, the *investment and immigration* dimension evaluates the ability of a nation to draw people to live, work or study, but it also measures the perception people have of the country's living quality and business environment (Ipsos, 2019; Ipsos, 2021a). When analysed together, these dimensions provide a general indication of a nation's reputation; the country's scores in each dimension are reported on the Nation Brand Hexagon. This tool allows the comparison between countries' total Index scores and the comparison of the scores obtained by the nations taken into consideration for each factor influencing their reputation (Ipsos, 2019).

The concept of nation branding has become increasingly important in recent years, as countries need to manage their image strategically to compete at the international level to help the commercialisation of their products and services (Hao et al., 2021). The purpose of nation branding is to help the country compete for and attract international capital in the forms of tourists, foreign direct investments (FDI), import-export trade, and skilled labour (Aronczyk, 2013; Hao et al., 2021), but it also communicates an idea of legitimacy and authority and ensures the nation to be seen and ensures that the nation is recognised internationally (Aronczyk, 2013). In other terms, the final aim of nation branding is to promote the values and strengths of a nation to make it appear more attractive than other countries to international investors and stakeholders in general (ibid). Competitiveness is no longer measured only on the basis of productivity of the country, but it also takes into consideration both quantifiable measures, i.e., GDP, and subjective elements, such as opinions and attitudes towards the country (Aronczyk, 2013; European Management Forum, 1979). Eventually, attractiveness is a key indicator of a country's competitiveness level; attractiveness is defined as the probability that individuals will invest in or conduct business with a country (Aronczyk, 2013).

Nation branding involves both the local and national government of a country, the public sector's actors in general, citizens, and tourism authorities (Aronczyk, 2013). In particular, nation leaders have the role of promoting the national identity of a country in the international context and ensuring its importance within the international community; in order to achieve this objective, they can leverage and exploit the country brand (ibid). A country brand is defined as the product of the information communicated by a nation about itself (Buhmann, 2016); a strong country brand leads to a positive image and perception and can help increase exports and attract tourism (Hao et al., 2021). Two methods were developed to assess a country brand: the customer-based brand equity and the company-based brand equity approaches. While the *customer-based brand equity* concerns the value customers associate with a determined brand, the *company-based brand equity* measures the performance of a nation in terms of exports and FDI attraction (ibid). There exist two levels of consumers' perception of a nation; the macro-level is about thoughts and associations about the country, while the micro-level concerns how the country's products are seen, which is the so-called Country of Origin effect (Hao et al., 2021).

3.3.1 Country Image

Within the field of nation branding, the concept of country image plays a crucial role as it influences a country’s success in terms of business, tourism, and diplomatic relations due to its impact on the behaviour of its stakeholders (Buhmann, 2016); nowadays it is considered as the most valuable attractive feature of any country (Ipsos, 2019). In addition to that, as a result of the intensified competition and globalisation, countries are now more than ever evaluated and compared according to their economic development, political stability, the morality of their policies, and attractiveness of their culture, which are all factors of the country image (Buhmann, 2016; Ipsos, 2019).

The image of a nation is defined as the set of impressions and attitudes that a single individual or a group has towards a country. It can be divided into outside-perception when referred to the perception of foreigners, and self-perception when referred to as the perception of the nation’s citizens and which can also be called country identity (Barich & Kotler, 1991; Buhmann, 2016). On top of that, the image of a country can be considered a form of soft power in that it can be leveraged by governments and politicians to reach the desired positioning compared to other actors in the international competitive scenario (White, 2012). The country image construct comprises cognitive components, which regard what individuals know about the nation, and an affective component, which relates to feeling people have towards a country, and they can be grouped in four dimensions, as already mentioned in paragraph 2.6.1; functional, normative and aesthetic dimensions fall into the category of cognitive components, while the emotional dimension is the representation of the affective component (Buhmann, 2016). These dimensions result from the different qualities measured when a social object is being evaluated; in the case of a nation, functional qualities refer to political competencies and economic success, normative qualities include integrity and values, while emotional qualities refer to the feeling evoked in individuals by the country (ibid). The fourth dimension of aesthetics was added later as attributes such as culture and landscapes did not fall into any of the previous dimensions, even though their importance is relevant when it comes to the influence they have on the emotional appeal of a country (Buhmann, 2016). All these components are tightly correlated to each other; according to the Theory of Reasoned Action developed by Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), individuals' behaviours are outcomes of cognitions and affects. Following this stream of thought, Buhmann (2016) concluded not only that the functional and normative dimensions have a direct impact on intended behaviours but also that the affective component of the emotional dimension has a mediating effect between the cognitive components and behavioural outcomes. On top of that, the emotional dimension is considered to be a direct result of cognitions individuals have towards a country (Buhmann, 2016).

The four-dimensions model developed by Buhmann (2016) is used to evaluate and measure the image of a country and can be employed to compare countries with each other, but it can also be used to underline any discrepancies between the country's self-perception and the perception held by foreigners.
A positive country image is believed to have a favourable influence on the behaviour of consumers and their intentions towards a specific country (Herz et al., 2018).

3.3.1.1 Impact of Events on the Image of the Country

Events can be classified into different categories based on either their size, form or content (Bowdin et al., 2012). Events are classified according to their size and scale, meaning according to the number of participants, media coverage, or organisational costs, can be local, major, hallmark, and mega (ibid). *Local* events are organised by small communities and target local audiences, *major* events attract a large number of visitors and are highly publicised on media channels, *hallmark* events are recurring events that take place in a specific city or region and become part of the spirit of the place, and *mega-events* are termed so as their magnitude is such that they can influence the world economy and as they have broad and intense media coverage (Bowdin et al., 2012). Events can also be categorised on the basis of their form or content into cultural, sports, and business (ibid). *Cultural* events, such as arts or music festivals, allow host communities to promote business activities and generate income through their positive influence on tourism in those areas. *Sports* events, such as the Olympics Games, are able to bring benefits not only to host countries or regions in the forms of positive economic impact and increased touristic activities but also to participants in terms of rewards and pride. Eventually, *business* events can take the form of i.e., conferences and meetings and can have different topics according to which industry sector they focus on (Bowdin et al., 2012).

Large-scale events, in particular, have been found to have a great impact on the hosting country both directly, in terms of increased tourist activities and investments, and international funding, and indirectly in the forms of enhanced image driven by favourable and broad media coverage (Herz et al., 2018). The perception of the countries held by consumers is influenced especially by the wide media coverage of the event, which has the effect of indirectly putting the host country in the spotlight (ibid). Specifically, in the study of Herz et al. (2018), it was shown that both the knowledge about the nation, the affective image, which comprises the feeling individuals have towards the country, and the intention to visit boosted in the period before and right after the event. In the long term, these variables undergo a decreasing trend, but still, the level reached years after the event was in general higher than the pre-event starting level (Herz et al., 2018). Hosting large-scale events offer the possibility for the host country to create lasting changes and benefit from positive externalities (Deloitte, 2010). These changes and benefits can be grouped in four macro-categories, namely global image, economic development, government and politics, and society and behaviours (ibid). For what concerns the global image, the hosting of major events leads to an enhanced credibility in the international markets and will result in increased tourist activities, as mentioned before. Regarding economic development, the high investments and activities required for hosting the event will have a positive impact on local communities in terms of more employment opportunities and of improved infrastructures, which will draw new companies to the region (Deloitte, 2010). With regards to government and politics, the image of politicians and leaders that make the event possible will also be enhanced. In addition, the success of the event will require both political parties and the private and public sectors to improve their collaboration during the organisation. Eventually, in connection with society and behaviour, these mega-events will lead to a heightened sense of pride among citizens and local communities, and given the many investments, part of these can be used to redevelop the areas and improve the quality of life of inhabitants (ibid). Even if these positive externalities are mainly perceived and exploited by the host nations, benefits such as an enhanced international recognition and local pride can be experienced by those countries that manage to excel in these events as well, especially when it comes to sports ones (Grix, 2013).

Not only the success of the event can impact on the perception individuals have of the host country, but also the image of the nation has an influence on the image and perception of the event; it can be considered a two-way influence (Florek & Insch, 2011). In the same way as there should be a fit between products and their country of origin in order for consumers to associate them with determined features, as has been discussed in the following paragraph (see paragraph 3.3.2), the match between the country image elements and the components characterising an event is crucial in enhancing the perception held by the individuals towards both the host nation and the events themselves (ibid). A *favourable match* occurs when both the host country and the event are seen positively by individuals and when the event attributes are aligned with the image of the nation, while *unfavourable matches* occur when the host country is perceived as lacking in those areas that represent crucial features for the event (Florek & Insch, 2011). In case of favourable matches, both the image of the host nation will be improved, and the event attractiveness will enhance when adequately promote. On the other hand, in situations of unfavourable matches, the adverse perception of the nation will negatively impact the image of the event, lowering its attractiveness (Florek & Insch, 2011).

3.3.2 Country of Origin

In the last decades, international marketing literature has focused increasing attention on the effect that country image has on consumer purchasing decisions. Country of origin research findings demonstrate that the image of a country influences significantly the consumer perception of foreign products and brands, and, thus, their willingness to purchase (Pegan et al., 2020). The Country of Origin (COO) effect has been defined by Aronczyk (2013) as the set of metaphors and stereotypes associated with the products and services manufactured and delivered by a determined country. Specifically, the COO is concerned about how the reputation, or image, of a nation influences the perceptions of products manufactured in that country and it can be used to measure customers' perceptions of products or services and their intentions to purchase (White, 2012). It has been demonstrated that the COO has a great effect on the way consumers evaluate products and on their decision-making process when it comes to purchasing behaviours; this is the reason why many companies started adopting the label "Made in" when commercialising their products or services (Al-Aali et al., 2015). The COO can be decomposed into three subcomponents: country of design, country of assembly, and country of parts (ibid). The *country of design* is the country in which the product was invented and developed. The *country of assembly* refers to the country in which the product has been manufactured or its parts assembled. Eventually, the *country of parts* refers to the origins of the materials or components of a product (Al-Aali et al., 2015).

An important finding of Al-Aali et al.'s (2015) work is that consumers often use the COO as an indication of a product's quality, which is considered as the most important variable in the purchasing decision.

The country-of-origin image can be analysed at different levels, namely country, industry and firm levels (Suter et al., 2020). At the firm level, the image of the COO is seen as an extrinsic feature of the products or brands originating in that country that has an influence on consumers' purchasing decisions both in the B2C and B2B sectors. It is the result of the beliefs consumers have towards products coming from a determined country and can be measured by analysing the image of products or services. (ibid). At the country level, the impact of the COO image is measured by investigating both what is the image conveyed by the country brand and variables such as foreign direct investment and export levels (Suter et al., 2020). Eventually, at the industry level, the COO image effect on consumers' behaviours can vary across product categories according to what customers consider to be the typical industries and products of the country (ibid). Thus, the COO bias is stronger for those industries whose association with the country of origin is solid (ibid). The main consequence of this is that, when a firm operates in an industry believed to be strongly connected to the country of origin, the management can leverage the COO image to add value to the products or services offered and differentiate them from the offerings of competitors (Suter et al., 2020). In addition to that, the image of the COO has proved to have a strong influence not only on the way customers evaluate the quality of goods but also on the likelihood of purchase (Laroche et al., 2005).

3.3.2.1 Country of Origin Effect on Consumer Behaviour

According to international marketing literature, the COO effect triggers in the mind of consumers positive or negative associations, which in turn influence their inclination to purchase goods from that COO (Pegan et al., 2020). It is mainly through the country image that the COO effect is exercised, indeed both the country and the brand image attribute some specific meanings to the COO (ibid). One of the consequences of globalization is the arising of new and better chances for comparison of products and cultures from all around the world, with the result that there is a high degree of variation in the purchasing behaviour of consumers depending on both the product category in question and its COO (Tseng & Balabanis, 2011). Indeed, while certain imported products, such as French wine, benefit from a markedly positive COO image, others (e.g., Chinese goods) suffer from a negative country perception which results in customers' lower intention to purchase them (Pegan et al, 2020). Moreover, some products are intensely associated with a specific COO, as in the case of German cars or French wine (Kotler & Gertner, 2002).

A stream of literature on COO has identified three factors, the interaction of which establishes the foundation of the relation between consumer behaviour and the COO effect (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1989). The first of these components is the cognitive one, according to which consumers link a product to its COO to determine its quality given that they lack relevant information about it. In this case, COO is deemed as an interpretative tool that, together with other factors such as brand and price, facilitates consumers' decision-making processes. (Han, 1989; Oberecker & Diamantopoulos, 2011; Pastore et al., 2011). Another component is the affective one, which consists in the COO of a product eliciting a symbolic or/and affective value. The last component to consider is the normative one, in which a consumer's inclination to buy a certain product is guided by their wish to support the economy of its COO. The vast majority of the literature has defined COO as a multidimensional concept. Three different dimensions have been highlighted by Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) in order to further comprehend the influence that COO has on consumers' purchasing behaviour: firstly, the general country image (CI), which identifies the overall perception that people have of a specific country’s cultural, economic and political assets; secondly comes the country product image (CPI), which defines the reputation and quality of a country’s manufacturing production in general; lastly, there is the country-related product image (CRPI), which concerns the fame of a given product originated in a certain country, which reflects the position, reliability and technical features of the product (ibid). Moreover, as discussed by some scholars, in purchasing decisions, these COO dimensions might interrelate in a way that is not linear (Bursi et al., 2012). Indeed, the general image of a country (CI) influences consumer behaviour only indirectly, with the effect being mediated by the perception of that country’s manufacturing production (CPI) and by the reputation of a particular product originating in that specific country (CRPI) (ibid).

3.3.2.2 The Evolution of the Country of Origin Concept

The increasing global competition, which features the use of outsourcing, manufacturing decentralization and the arising of hybrid products (i.e., products manufactured, designed and/or branded in different countries), has increased the difficulty in identifying the real origin of a product (Li et al., 2000; Phau & Chao, 2008). For this reason, even though the construct of COO initially identified exclusively the country of production, it has been enlarged to include other factors such as the origin of the design, of the parts, and of the assembly (Chao, 2001; Insch & McBride, 2004; Quester et al., 2000). This approach in particular has been named as the deconstruction strategy and it aims to recognize different factors that separately affect consumers’ perception of quality in their purchasing decisions of a product based on its origin. In this sense, a distinction has been drawn between the country of manufacture (COM) and country of brand (COB) and country of design (Chen, 2004; Thakor & Lavack, 2003; Ulgado, 2002; Leila & Merunka, 2006).

Another approach is the association strategy, which shifts the focus on the linkages that consumers establish between a product, its brand and its COO (Andehn & Berg, 2011). According to this view, the relevance of the country of production or design diminishes in favour of that of the country of association, i.e., consumers’ perception of the COO. While this second view, which deems the country of a brand as more relevant than that of production, has been receiving increasing attention from scholars, the economic crisis has incentivized consumers to buy local products (i.e., domestically produced), thus highlighting again the relevance of country of manufacture (Dimitrovic & Vida, 2010).

3.3.2.3 Theoretical Frameworks to Understand the Country of Origin Effect

With the COO effect being a highly discussed and controversial topic, the complexity of understanding the way it influences consumer behaviour can be reduced by considering three main theoretical frameworks that arose from the literature (Reardon et al., 2017).

Firstly, cue utilization theory argues that individuals, when making purchasing decisions, obtain relevant product information from both intrinsic (i.e., strictly connected to the product) and extrinsic cues, namely COO, price or brand, for example (Olson & Jacoby, 1972). The extrinsic cues, such as the COO, make consumers' decision-making processes faster by reducing the cognitive effort individuals have to make when not enough information is available (Pegan et al., 2020). Thus, even the unconscious exposure to a COO label influences product judgements by evoking country-specific stereotypes and linkages already present in an individual's memory (Hertz & Diamantopoulos, 2013; Liu & Johnson, 2005).

Secondly, the revision by Bloemer et al. (2009) of the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) also contributes to the understanding of the COO effect. The original ELM theory by Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann (1983) features two ways in which a person can elaborate information: on one side, one can process information in an intentional and accurate way, with the individual possessing the motivation to elaborate the information; on the other side, there is an automatic, superficial, peripheral way of processing information that relies on stereotypes, habits and emotions. In this latter case, the consumer is less engaged in information processing and, thus, less interested in making any cognitive attempt (Petty et al., 1983). Revising such theory, Bloemer et al. (2009) suggest that insufficient product information determines a weak COO effect, which, in turn, provokes a halo mechanism. This cognitive result generates a central elaboration of information which is defined by the authors as a summary construct. In practical terms, previous exposure to the products of a specific country and to the country itself evokes a summary construct for cue selection (Bloemer et al., 2009).

The last theoretical contribution to the COO effect literature that sheds light on its mechanism is the categorization theory (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Cohen & Basu, 1987). Categorization is here defined as the cognitive process through which consumers organize external inputs (Block et al., 1981). In order to distinguish between products and brands, indeed, consumers make use of categories in which they have previously organized their knowledge of specific product alternatives (Gutman, 1982; Punj & Moon, 2002). According to this theoretical framework, companies should focus on product typicality if they wish to strengthen the effect of COO on consumers' purchasing intentions

(Loken & Ward, 1990; Tseng & Balabanis, 2011). The main contribution of the categorization theory to the literature on COO is indeed the concept of national typicality, which arises when a certain product is generally regarded as typical of a specific country. Indeed, it is possible to improve the evaluation of a product and increase its likelihood of being purchased by bringing said product closer to the country-specific stereotypes of its COO (Tseng & Balabanis, 2011).

3.3.2.4 Companies' Perspective on Country of Origin as a Value Creation Strategy

Even though it represents a relatively small proportion of COO literature, a highly relevant discussion has been opened by some authors on the perspective of companies regarding the COO effect. More clearly, a stream of literature focused on the way organizations can use some COOs as value creation drivers in their international marketing strategies (Bertoli & Resciniti, 2012; Mattarazzo, 2012; Vianelli et al., 2012).

Companies that offer products which are characterized by powerful connections to a specific territory, which for a long time was deemed as linked with these specific products, can exploit the COO as a value creation tool in multiple markets (De Nisco, 2017; Golinelli, 2012; Marino & Mainolfi, 2013; Sims, 2009). However, some other authors have emphasized that firms, in order to obtain the best outcome abroad, should still mostly focus on the attributes that are associated with a certain COO in order to differentiate their brand positioning (Busacca et al., 2006; Pastore et al., 2011), bringing the focus to the brand of origin. The perception individuals have of certain products can change according to the location of their production and the place manufacturing companies are located in (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2008; Samiee, 2010; Samiee et al., 2005). Factors such as consumers' ignorance or lack of interest in the product's origin raise some doubts about the extent to which marketing managers should invest in marketing communication (Pegan et al., 2020). Such investment should indeed provoke in customers positive linkages between the brand perception and quality of the product, in order to decrease the impact of (negatively perceived) manufacturing countries. The construct of brand of origin has been further developed by the literature to be defined as the linguistic and cultural features to be included in the brand to trigger positive opinions in consumers' minds (Harun et al., 2011; Lim & O'Cass, 2001; Usunier, 2006, 2011) as well as indicating the product origin (Li & Shooshtari, 2003). The work by Diamantopoulos et al. (2011) evaluates the effect of both country and brand image on consumers' willingness to purchase and investigates individuals' perception of the COO. The findings of these authors highlight how the COO has indirect strong effects on purchase intention through its own (i.e., CI and PCI) influence on brand perception.

Moreover, given that consumers judge a country by both its ability to generate strong brands and its capabilities in a specific industry, managers should focus their attention on both the brand and the product image (Diamantopoulos et al., 2011). An example of a COO with both a positive product and brand image is Germany: indeed, the country holds a very good reputation for car production in general, and it also possesses strong car manufacturing brands such as Mercedes, BMW or Volkswagen (ibid). Moreover, Pegan et al. (2020) show in their book how, especially in the case of highly typical products, associations to countries with a positive image (e.g., Italy) facilitate the effective penetration of international markets. In the case of Italy, indeed, the perception that foreigners have of the country is a major explicator of the competitive advantage that Made in Italy products possess internationally (ibid). Factors such as the general culture, artistic endowments, touristic attractions, and aesthetics of the country contribute to the creation of functional and emotional meanings that increase consumers' willingness to purchase Italian products (Pegan et al., 2020).

3.3.2.5 The Brand Made in Italy and the Origin Label

According to Temperini et al. (2016) the concept of "Made in Italy" can assume different definitions according to which perspective is taken into consideration; the legal, the firm's and the consumers' one. Specifically, for what concerns the legal perspective, the Italian legislation states that, for a product to be commercialised with the indication *Made in Italy*, the design, planning, processing and packaging phases must necessarily take place exclusively on Italian territory (Art. 16, DL 135/2009). On top of that, the European regulations in the field of origin labels, such as the one of Made in Italy, specify that in order to determine the origin of certain products, two criteria can be used, the wholly obtained and the last substantial transformation criterion (European Commission, n.d.a). A product can be easily labelled and marketed as "Made in..." when all the phases of the design and production processes have been carried out in one country (ibid), in line with the Italian laws. On the other hand, when a product has been manufactured in two or more countries, the principle of the last substantial transformation comes into effect and the origin label must indicate the country in which the product "[…] underwent the last, substantial, economically justified processing or working, in an undertaking equipped for that purpose, resulting in the manufacture of a new product or representing an important stage of manufacture" (European Commission, n.d.a).

The Made in Italy label appeared to be particularly attractive when it comes to specific industries, namely the Food & Beverages, Fashion, Furniture, and Design, whose products are strongly associated with the idea of uniqueness and with the country image (Temperini et al., 2016). As a consequence, the Italian origin of these products tends to have a great influence on the perception customers have of them (ibid). The brand Made in Italy has become, over the years, a synonym for excellent production skills, and is considered a heritage for the Italian industry, and the perception consumers around the world have of it is particularly positive (Temperini et al., 2016). According to a report published last year by Confindustria (2021), the representative organisation of Italian manufacturing and service companies, consumers attribute a greater value to Italian products compared to other items in the same product classification and are eager to pay a premium price for them. The reasons behind this are the characteristics associated with Made in Italy products, namely the high quality of the materials they are composed of, the excellent design, the precision of the manufacturing and the attention to details (ibid).

As Italian products are the most sought-after, given the brand's power of attraction, they are among the most imitated (Confindustria, 2021). For this reason, the main obstacle to the growth of Made in Italy is the phenomenon of counterfeiting, which has reached considerable levels in recent years, and the one of Italian sounding, which is defined as the imitation of a product obtained through a reference, in the name or packaging, to its supposed Italian character and aiming at giving the product a false Italian identity (Confindustria, 2021; Temperini et al., 2016). The main outcome of the counterfeiting is the perceived reduction in quality due to the unconscious purchase of non-original and inferior quality products. This change in perception leads to the disregard of consumers' expectations of Made in Italy products and to a reduction in consumer loyalty, which ultimately results in a deterioration of the Made in Italy brand image (Temperini et al., 2016).

In conclusion, the above summarised academic sources were employed in the discussion chapter to make informed inferences about the findings.

4. Findings

In the following paragraphs, first the results of the questionnaire and then the ones of the two focus groups have been reported and analysed in depth. Eventually, the findings of secondary data have been presented.

4.1 Results of Questionnaire

The questionnaire was published on the 14th of March and remained open for responses for about 4 weeks, with the last response collected on the 7th of April. The survey was distributed via an anonymous link, generated on Qualtrics, both on social media, i.e., LinkedIn, and through direct messages to friends and relatives.
In total there were 286 participants, of which 243 completed the survey, while the remaining participants left it partially completed. Answers from people who did not complete the questionnaire have not been taken into consideration in the analysis of the results.
For the sake of the analysis, three reports have been inspected: the total answers, the Italians' answers and the foreigners' answers reports. Data and graphs regarding the responses to the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3 and 4.

4.1.1 Demographics of Participants

The largest share of respondents, accounting for 62,14% of the total was Italian. The second most common nationality was Danish, representing 11,93% of the sample, followed by German, which represented 6,17% of the total.

For what concerns the age group of participants, the 18-24 age group was the one in which most of the people fell and it represented 38,27% of the overall sample, followed by the 25-34 age group, to which 25,93% of the participants belonged. Looking specifically at the distinction between Italians and foreigners, Italians had more people falling in the 18-24 age group (39,74%), but fewer in the 25-34 group (21,85%). What can be noticed, is that the percentage of Italians belonging to the 35-44 age group was lower than the total, while the opposite is valid for the age groups 45-54 and 55-64. On the other hand, concerning foreigners, the percentage of people falling into the 18-24 age group was lower than the total (35,87%), but it was higher for participants belonging to the 25-34 age group (32,61%). Comparing Italians and foreigners directly, it was possible to notice that foreign respondents have a lower average age than Italians, as the distribution in the 18-24 and 25-34 brackets was greater than that of Italian respondents.

With regards to the occupational status, the majority of the participants fell into the category of full-time workers, which represented 45,27% of the sample, followed by the student group, which constituted 34,98% of total participants. Especially, when it comes to Italian participants, the percentage of full-time workers was slightly higher (46,36%) while the one of student was almost the same, compared to the total sample. The opposite applied to foreign participants as the percentage of full-time workers was lower than the total (43,48%) and the one of student higher (35,87%). The distribution of respondents in the remaining categories was equally enough both at the total level and for Italians and foreigners.

Eventually, most of the participants were female, representing 58,02% of the sample, while 41,15% were male. The percentage of Italian females taking part in the survey was almost the same as the total sample, while the male percentage was slightly lower (40,40%). On the other hand, foreign female respondents were less compared to the total number, accounting for 56,52%, while the percentage of male foreign respondents was slightly higher (42,39%) compared to the one of the total sample.
The graphs representing the demographic data of participants can be found in Appendix 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

4.1.2 Perceived Image of Italy

In order to investigate the perception held by both Italians and foreigners of Italy, as already mentioned, the 4-dimension model by Bhumann (2016) was employed. The functional, normative and aesthetic dimensions were composed of three attributes each, while to study the emotional dimension, three statements regarding how people might feel about Italy were presented to the participants to evaluate their emotional attachment to the country. Attributes were evaluated by participants on a scale ranging from "very low" to "very high", valued 1 and 5 respectively, while regarding the emotional dimension, participants could express their level of agreement with the statements on a scale from "completely disagree" to "completely agree", also valued 1 and 5. In order to evaluate the perception of each dimension and attribute or statement, the weighted average was calculated by adding up the multiplications between the total number of responses for each possible answer (i.e., very low) and the value attributed to each individual answer, as explained in paragraph 2.6.1, and then dividing the result by the total responses collected, 243 in this case.

On a general level, the emotional and aesthetic dimensions were the ones best perceived by participants, both being evaluated between high and very high; the aesthetic dimension was evaluated by participants 4,83 out of 5 on average, while the emotional dimension was evaluated 4,55. The functional dimension presented the lowest average of 2,65, meaning that respondents evaluated it as medium-low. Eventually, the normative dimension was considered as mediumly associated with Italy by participants, with an average of 3,02 out of 5 (Figure 3).

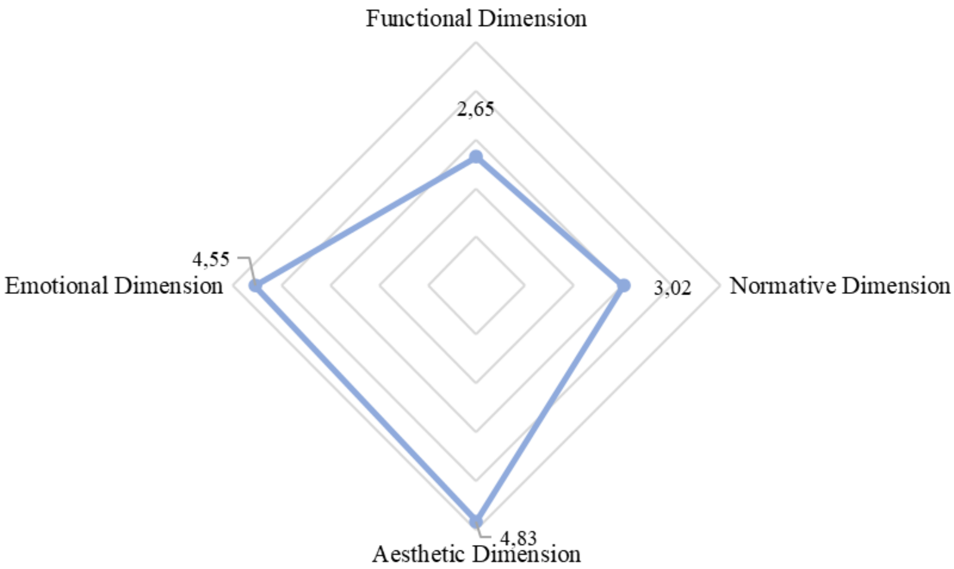

Figure 3: *Perceived Image of Italy (4 dimensions).* Source: own creation.

Looking specifically at the several attributes and statements composing the different dimensions, it emerged that political stability was considered as the weakest attribute, with an average of 2,33 out of 5, followed by environmental protection policies, which showed an average of 2,67. On the other hand, the attributes perceived by respondents as the strongest when thinking about Italy as a country were beautiful scenery and rich culinary tradition, presenting an average of 4,88 and 4,86 respectively (Appendix 4.4, Figure 1).

Generally speaking, the majority of the participants, accounting for 64,61%, showed to have a positive image of Italy, and the 15,23% stated to have an incredibly positive image of the country. Only 8 people, representing 3,29% of the total sample, admitted having a negative perception of Italy (Appendix 4.4, Figure 2).

Of the 243 respondents to the questionnaire, 91,77% were aware of the successes and achievements of Italy in 2021, while only 8,23% were not. In general, the awareness of these events did change the perceived image of Italy to the 24,69% of the sample, while the vast majority of the respondents, 183 out of 243 (representing the 75,31%) answered that these events did not change the way they perceived the country. Specifically, of the respondents admitting their perception changed, 58,33% answered that it changed positively, and 40% answered it changed very positively. Only one participant claimed that their perception changed in negative. Out of the 60 respondents who admitted their perception changed as a consequence of the Italian achievements in 2021, 78,33% was represented by Italian respondents.

As only few respondents admitted their perception of Italy changed, in order to compute the change in perception and the new average for each attribute and dimension, the remaining 183 were considered in the "Not Affected" answer when computing the weighted average. The change in perception was calculated in the same way as for the weighted average, with the only difference that the individual answers were given a value between –2 and +2, to better capture the direction of the change, whether it was negative or positive, while the "Not Affected" answer had a value of 0, showing that the perception was not altered. Notwithstanding the fact that only a fourth of the participants responded they had noticed a change in the way they perceived Italy, all four dimensions of the country image theorised by Buhmann (2016) showed an improvement. In more detail, the emotional and aesthetic dimensions experienced a remarkable growth reaching an average of 4,83 and 5,05 respectively. The dimension that underwent the smallest change was the normative one (Figure 4).

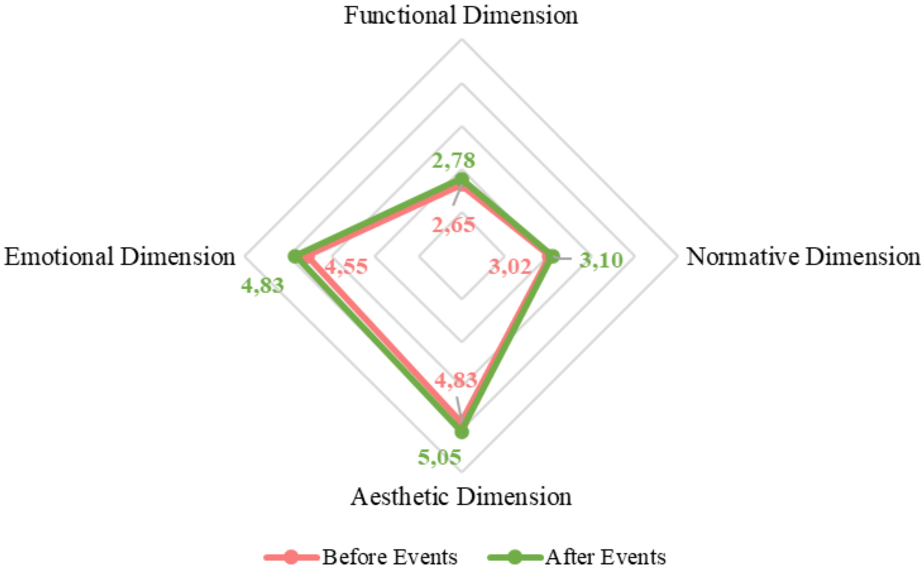

Figure 4: *Change in Image Perception (4 dimensions).* Source: own creation

Looking more specifically at each attribute and statement composing the different dimensions, it was noticeable that the three statements in which the emotional dimension is divided, “I like Italy as a country”, “Italy is a fascinating country” and “I fell attracted to Italy as a country”, went through the major changes; the three statements improved by 0,27, 0,29, and 0,28 respectively. In addition, the attribute of “Rich Culture and Traditions”, belonging to the aesthetic dimension, experienced a change of 0,27. On the other hand, the functional attributes of “Infrastructures Efficiency” and the ones of “Environmental Protection Policies” and “Civil Rights Protection”, part of the normative dimension, showed the minimum improvement, equivalent to 0,08 (Figure 5).

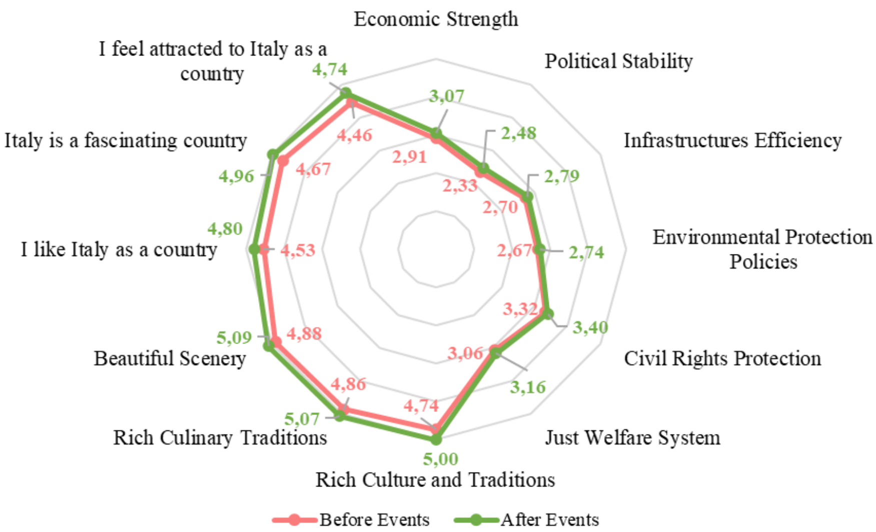

Figure 5: *Change in Image Perception (attributes).* Source: own creation.

When investigating the difference in the perceived image of Italy held by Italians and foreigners before the Italian success in 2021, it became clear that foreigners had a better perception of the country’s normative dimension and, especially, of the functional dimension. Almost half of the Italian respondents, the 49,44%, considered the functional dimension to be weakly associated with Italy, while only the 30,43% of foreigners perceived this dimension in the same way. For what concerns the normative dimension, 28,70% of the Italians evaluated it as very low and low, while only 19,20% of the foreigners shared the same opinion. The functional dimension was evaluated by foreigners with an average of 2,88, while Italians evaluated it with an average of 2,50 out of 5, while the normative dimension reached an average of 3,12 and 2,95 out of 5 for foreigners and Italians respectively. With regards to the aesthetic dimension, there was not a strong difference between its perception by Italian and foreign respondents and had an average of 4,83 and 4,82 for the respective groups. On the other hand, the emotional dimension was better perceived by Italians than by foreigners, with an average of 4,60 and 4,48 out of 5 respectively; the percentage of Italians perceiving this dimension as highly and very highly associated with the country was 94,26%, while the percentage of foreigners was slightly lower and accounting for 93,12% of the foreign respondents. On a general level, it was observed that the initial perceived image of Italy held by foreigners was slightly better than the one held by Italians (Figure 6).

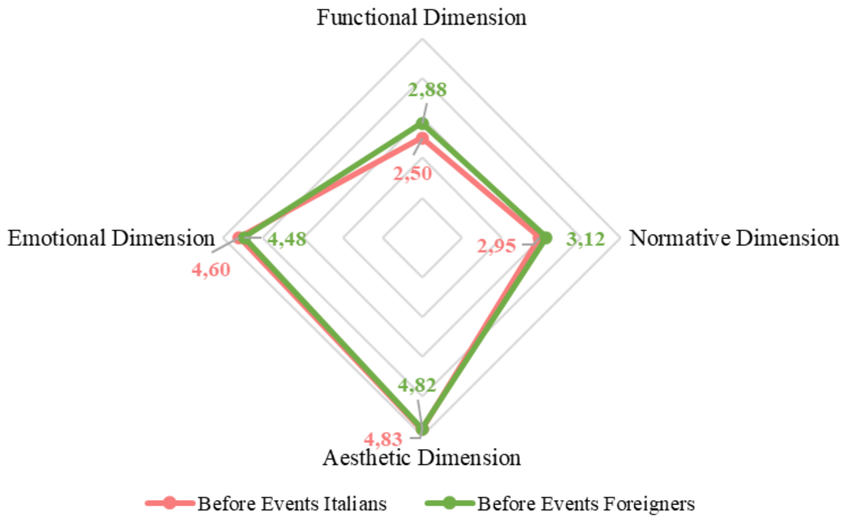

Figure 6: *Perceived Image of Italy by Italians and foreigners (4 dimensions).* Source: own creation.

Going into greater detail and analysing the individual attributes and statements, it was evident that the greatest difference in perception between Italians and foreigners was in relation to the attributes of "Political Stability" and "Infrastructures Efficiency"; Italians appeared to have a worse perception of these attributes as the average was 2,09 and 2,52 respectively, which were the lowest averages, while foreigners evaluated them with an average of 2,73 and 3 respectively. Another gap in perception that has been noted was that of the statement "Italy is a fascinating country", belonging to the emotional dimension, which was evaluated very positively both by Italians and foreigners, but the average for Italians was 4,77 while the one for foreigners was 4,50 (Appendix 4.4, Figure 3).

Following the achievements and successes of Italy in 2021, a change was recognised in the image of Italy as perceived by both foreigners and Italians, but it is also true that the change perceived by foreigners was smaller than the change in the perception of Italians. All the four dimensions experienced an improvement, but the emotional dimension in particular: this dimension reached an average of 4,94 for Italians and 4,65 for foreigners, with a change of 0,34 and 0,17 respectively compared to the starting levels. The second significant change was noted in the aesthetic dimension, whose average levels reached 5,13 for Italians and 4,94 for foreigners, improving by 0,30 and 0,12 respectively. The smallest change, on the other hand, was recorded in the normative dimension, whose new average levels were 3,07 for Italians and 3,15 for foreigners, but with a change of only 0,12 and 0,03 respectively. In spite of the change in perception that occurred for both Italians and foreigners, it was possible to note that the change in the perception of Italy by Italian respondents was of greater depth. This conclusion can be drawn as the gap between their perception and that of the foreigners before and after the aforementioned events was reduced in the functional and normative dimensions, while the gap between the aesthetic and emotional dimensions, in which Italians had a higher perception, increased (Figure 7).

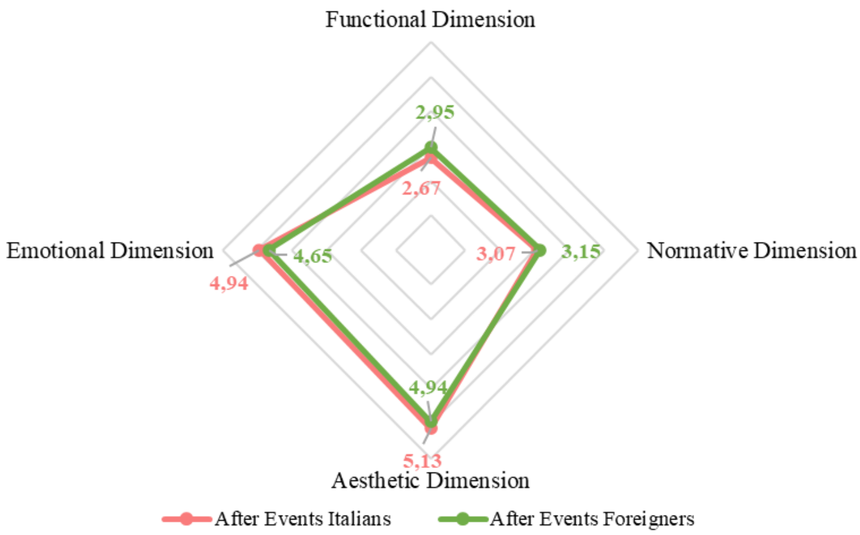

Figure 7: *Change in image perception by Italians and foreigners (4 dimensions).* Source: own creation.

Looking more closely at each attribute and statement, it was possible to conclude that, for what concerns foreigners' perception, the biggest change was noticed in the three statements belonging to the emotional dimension, "I like Italy as a country", "Italy is a fascinating country", and "I feel attracted to Italy as a country", which experienced a change of 0,17 each. On the other side, the attributes "Environmental Protection Policies" and "Civil Rights Protection" underwent a minimum change equal to 0,01 and 0,02 respectively. With regards to Italians' perception, the greatest change was observed in the statement "Italy is a fascinating country" and it measured 0,36. The attribute "Rich Culture and Traditions" and the statement "I feel attracted to Italy as a country" followed with a change of 0,34 each. On the opposite, the smallest changes were noticed in the attributes

"Infrastructures Efficiency" and "Civil Rights Protection", which improved only by 0,12 compared to the starting levels. In the same way as there had been a change in the perception of the dimensions into which the country's image is divided, the change in the perception of individual attributes and statements by Italians was also more extensive. This was particularly noticeable in the statements of "Economic Strength", "Environmental Protection Policies" and "Rich Culture and Traditions", as well as in the statement "I like Italy as a country", whose initial average levels of perception were lower than those of foreigners, but with the change in perception they cancelled this gap and surpassed the new average levels of foreigners' perception (Figure 8).

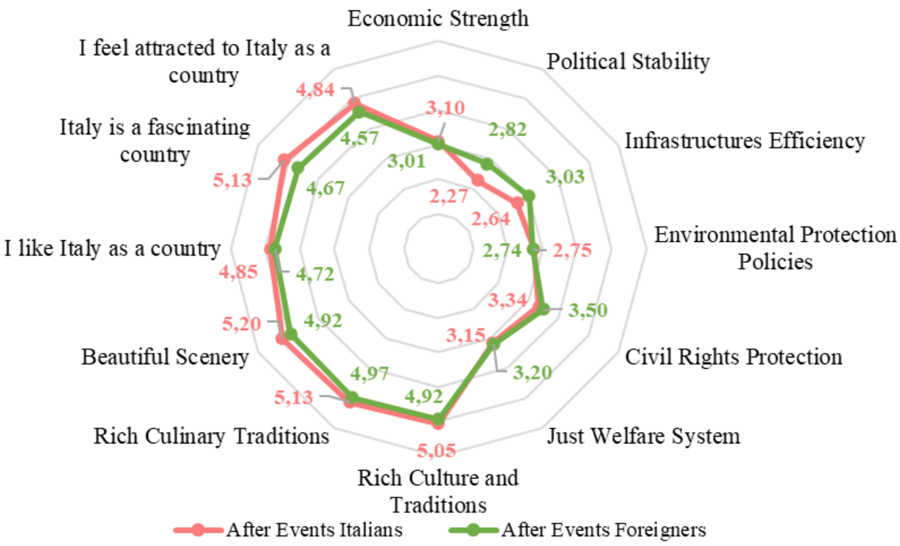

Figure 8: *Change in image perception by Italians and foreigners (attributes and statements).* Source: own creation.

4.1.3 Italian Industries and Made in Italy Products

When investigating which industries were mostly associated with the idea of Made in Italy, it was possible to observe that respondents relate Italian products mainly to the Fashion and the Food & Beverages industries, each representing 15,95% of the total. The Tourism, the Arts, Entertainment & Recreation, and the Automotive industries followed closely and represented 15,53%, 13,66%, and 11,65% respectively (Figure 9).

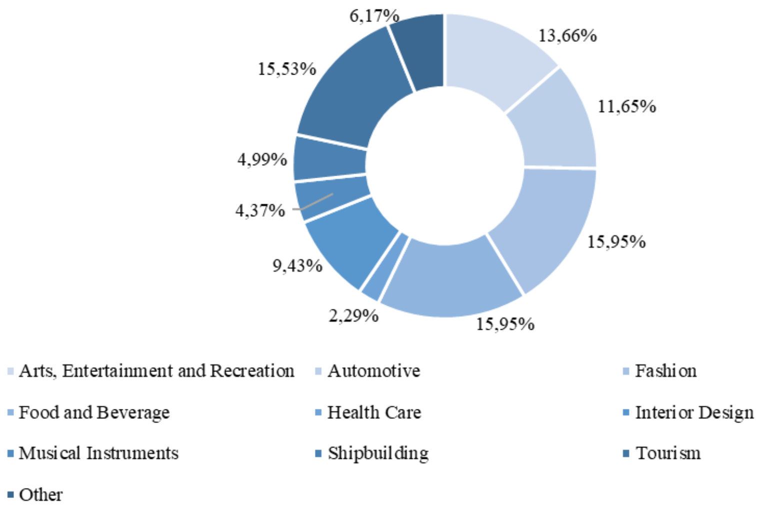

Figure 9: *Industries associated with Made in Italy by all respondents.* Source: own creation.

When looking specifically at the distinction between industries related to Made in Italy by Italians and foreigners, it was possible to notice that foreigners associated the idea of Made in Italy and Italian products with the Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation, Automotive, Fashion, Food & Beverages, and Tourism industries more, as the proportions of these industries were higher for foreign respondents than the percentages of these same industries calculated on the total number of participants (Appendix 4.5, Figure 1). On the other hand, when analysing the Italians' answers, it was observed that the distributions of the industries were more varied; lower shares could be seen in the aforementioned industries, while slightly higher percentages were noticed for industries such as the Health Care and Shipbuilding ones (Appendix 4.5, Figure 2).

When asked about their willingness to purchase Made in Italy products, 121 respondents out of 243, representing the 49,79% of the sample, replied that their eagerness to purchase was high, and 72 participants, accounting for 29,63% of the total, said their willingness to buy was very high. Regarding the remaining 50 respondents, only 5 of them admitted that their willingness to purchase Italian products was low, while the remaining answered that they were moderately keen to acquire Made in Italy products (Figure 10). On a general level, the willingness of the participants to buy Italian products appeared to be high, with an average of 4,07 out of 5; the minimum level was 1, representing the “Very Low” option, while the maximum level was 5, represented by the “Very High” option.

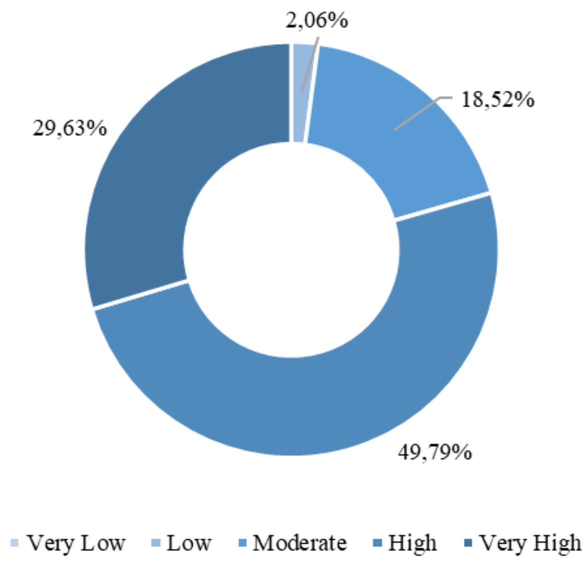

Figure 10: *Willingness to purchase Made in Italy by total respondents.* Source: own creation.

Specifically, investigating the difference in the eagerness to buy Italian products between foreign and Italian respondents, it was observed that foreigners tended to be less inclined to purchase Italian products compared to Italians, even though both groups demonstrated high intentions to buy Made in Italy goods; the average levels of participants' willingness to purchase Made in Italy were 4,11 and 4 for Italians and foreigners respectively. Indeed, half of foreign participants admitted having a strong willingness to buy Italian products, and 26,09% of them answered that their intention to buy was very high. Only 2,17% of foreigners said their eagerness to buy Italian goods was low (Appendix 4.5, Figure 3). On the other hand, 49,67% of the Italian respondents said to have a high willingness to purchase, similar to the percentage of foreigners. The percentage of Italians admitting that their intentions to buy Made in Italy products was very strong was higher than the one of foreigners, reaching the 31,79%, and the percentage of Italian participants answering that they had a low willingness to purchase Italian goods was lower than the one of foreign respondents, settling down at 1,99% (Appendix 4.5, Figure 4).

Participants were also asked to express to what extent they associate Made in Italy products with determined products' attributes from a scale ranging from "Not at all", equivalent to 1, and to "Extremely", equivalent to 5. The attribute of "Excellent Design" showed the highest average of 4,39 out of 5; almost half of the participants, accounting for 49,38% of the sample, admitted that they extremely associate Italian products with an excellent design, while the 41,56% considerably associate them with supreme design.

Another of the reasons why participants showed to be willing to purchase a Made in Italy products was the status symbol these goods represent and thus the image that the owner of such items succeeds in giving of themselves. The attribute of "Status Symbol" had an average of 4,16 and 81,07% of the respondents associated Italian products with it both considerably and extremely.

Eventually, Italian products were also associated with the idea of craftsmanship, with an average of 4,15 out of 5. Among the respondents, 48,15% considerably related Made in Italy goods to craftmanship, and 34,98% extremely related this attribute to Italian products. It is also worth mentioning that Italian products, according to respondents, are recognised for the high quality of their workmanship and materials. The attributes of "High Quality" had an average of 4,14 out of 5 and 81,07% of the respondents answered that they associate Made in Italy products with high quality considerably and extremely. On the other hand, Italian products were not recognised for their convenience, according to participants; indeed, the attribute of "Affordability" was the one least associated with Made in Italy goods, with an average of 2,81. Of the whole sample, 34,98% admitted that Italian products are slightly or not at all affordable, while 47,33% said they are moderately affordable. On top of that, as claimed by participants, Italian products lack advanced technologies; the average reached by this attribute was 2,91 out of 5 and 30,04% of participants do not relate it with Italian products at all or they do so only slightly, while 44,03% associated cutting-edge technologies moderately with Made in Italy goods. Eventually, participants did not reckon Italian products to be sustainable, as 27,16% stated that sustainability is not associated with Made in Italy at all, or it is only slightly, while 51,03% said Italian products are only moderately sustainable (Figure 11).

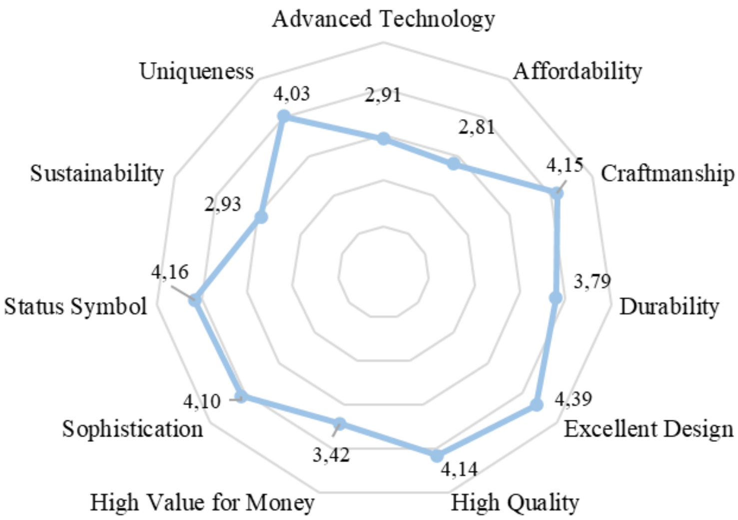

Figure 11: *Attributes associated with Made in Italy products.* Source: own creation.

Looking in more detail at the differences in the perception of Made in Italy products by Italian and foreign respondents, it was possible to note that Italian participants had, in general, a better perception and associated certain attributes to products more than foreigners did. This was particularly visible for attributes such as “Uniqueness”, “Advanced Technology”, and “Craftsmanship”, for which the perception gap was particularly large. For what concerns the uniqueness of products, 84,77% of the Italian respondents associated it with Made in Italy goods both considerably and extremely, while the same can be said about 59,78% of foreign participants; Italians evaluated this attribute 4,26 on average, while foreigners evaluated it with an average of 3,66. Regarding the attribute of “Advanced Technology”, only 20,65% of foreign participants related it both considerably and extremely to Italian products, against 29,14% of the Italians; the average for foreigners was 2,59 while the one for Italian participants was 3,11 out of 5. Eventually, with regards to the craftsmanship of the products, 88,74% of Italian participants related it to Made in Italy goods both considerably and extremely and it recorded an average of 4,32. As of foreigners, 73,91% of them associated craftsmanship with Italian goods considerably and extremely, evaluating it with an average of 3,87.

On top of that, it is worth mentioning that another large perception gap could be observed in correlation with the attributes of “Durability”; Italian respondents evaluated it with an average of 3,95 and foreigners with 3,51. Of the foreign participants, 59,78% related it both considerably and extremely to Made in Italy products, while the same can be said of 75,50% of the Italian respondents. On the other hand, for some product attributes such as “High Value for Money”, “Status Symbol”, and “Affordability” almost no perception gap was recorded. Both Italians and foreign participants considered the value for money as being moderately high associated with Made in Italy goods, with an average of 3,42. For what concerns the attribute of “Status Symbol”, the difference in perception was minimal, with the Italians evaluating it with an average of 4,19 and foreigners with an average of 4,13. Eventually, when it comes to the affordability of Italian goods, foreigners showed to have a slightly better perception of it and evaluated it 2,83 on average, while Italians evaluated it 2,80.

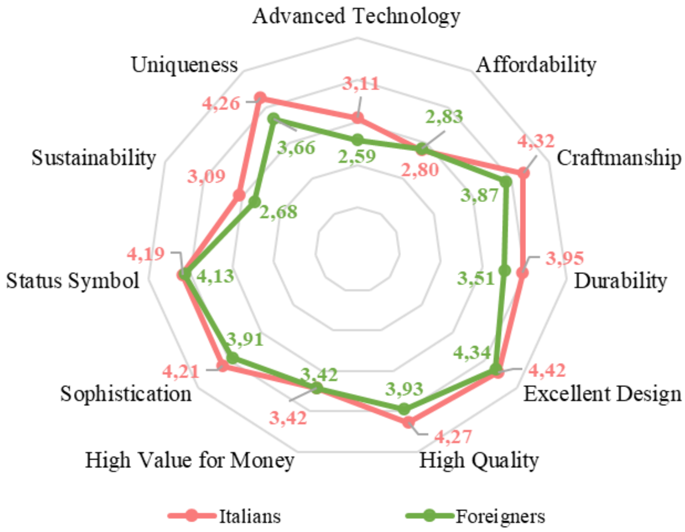

Figure 12: *Attributes associated with Made in Italy products by Italians and foreigners.* Source: own creation.

Ultimately, respondents were asked whether or not the Italian achievements and successes in 2021 changed their perception of Made in Italy and Italian products. Out of the 243 total participants, only 31, representing the 12,76%, admitted that these events changed their perception of Made in Italy products. Specifically, 24 out of 31 respondents who declared that their perception of Made in Italy products changed were Italian and they accounted for the 77,42%, while the remaining 7 were foreigners. In general, the perception has changed in a positive way, with 8 people out of 31, accounting for the 25,81%, answering that their perception of Italian products changed very positively, and the remaining 23, representing the 74,19%, said their perception changed positively.

4.2 Results of Focus Groups

The following paragraph will present the findings resulting from the conduction of two focus groups revolving around the perception and consumption of Made in Italy products. The results of the focus groups will first be described separately, and then general results will be highlighted.

4.2.1 First Focus Group

The group of participants for the first focus group consisted of four female university students, two male university students, and a male young graduate and worker, all of them being below 30 years of age. Moreover, two of them were Italian and the remaining five were foreigners from Europe. The respondents were asked by the moderator nine open-ended questions, the answers to which will be presented singularly in the subparagraphs that follow.

4.2.1.1 Q1: Which factors do you consider as most important when purchasing a product?

When asked on a general level about the factors they take into consideration when buying a product, 3 out of 7 participants agreed that the answer highly depends on the type of product involved. Indeed, their responses varied between quality and price as the two main factors to look at. Another popular answer to the question was that key factors change according to the expected lifetime of the product: in particular, quality was regarded as the most important factor to consider when purchasing an item that is expected to last for a relatively long period. Price was, instead, defined as the determining aspect when the product to purchase is not expected to be long lasting. Other factors mentioned by participants on a general level were the quality of the product, independently from the category of product or its durability, and social sustainability aspects linked to its production, such as the presence or lack thereof child labour.

Three sub-questions were then asked relating specifically to the factors taken into consideration when purchasing food products, fashion products, and cars, respectively. In the case of food products, four were the factors most mentioned by respondents, namely COO, environmental sustainability with regards to the plastic content present in food packaging, price, as some participants admitted being quite price-sensitive when it comes to food, and expiry date. Each of these points was discussed by 3 out of 7 participants. Another important aspect brought upon twice by respondents was the quality of the food, while other factors cited were food appearance, brand, and availability. For what concerns, instead, the purchasing decision around fashion products, the first and most popular answer was quality, highlighted by 3 out of 7 participants, more specifically referring to the fabrics of the clothing, its durability, and appearance. Secondly, respondents mentioned that the factors to examine when buying clothing items depend on the type of product, with price and quality being the first aspects to reflect on when it comes to less and more durable products, respectively. The last three factors highlighted were brand loyalty, social sustainability, and appearance. Finally, for what concerns aspects involved in a car purchasing decision, participants mostly underlined the features of the car and services included and the fuel prices connected to its use. Another interesting factor discussed was the COO associated with the idea of quality, indeed one participant explicitly said "*It has to be a German car. That would be because of quality*" (Participant 2, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 158). Eventually, other themes that arose were the desire to support one's native country's economy, when it comes to the origin of the product, and environmental sustainability, the latter specifically referring to the use of electric cars.

4.2.1.2 Q2: In the past two years, given the many changes brought upon by the pandemic, have you noticed any changes in your consumption habits?

Out of the 7 participants in the focus group, 4 declared to have seen a difference in their general consumption habits. Of these, the most frequent answers to the question denoted an increased share of online purchases over the same total consumption level and a lower travel consumption. Other recorded answers were an increased level of general consumption, due to the fact that more time for comparison between products was available during the lockdown period, and a healthier food consumption. 2 respondents claimed to have experienced no change in their consumption patterns.

In a related sub-question, respondents who had noticed changes in their consumption habits were asked whether they also noticed a variation regarding the factors considered to purchase a certain product. The result was that only one participant noticed a change, that being the availability of additional time for the comparison of different items.

In another, more specific, sub-question, the same respondents were demanded to elaborate on the possibility of having experienced an alteration in their consumption of Made in Italy products. Two themes arose, namely the necessity to buy these products online, given the impossibility to travel, and an increased consumption of food ones, due to the more time spent at home and, thus, available for cooking.

4.2.1.3 Q3: How would you define Made in Italy?

With the question at hand being very broad in nature, participants were able to associate variable types of meanings to the concept of Made in Italy. The most popular answer was high quality alongside high prices, mentioned by 6 out of 7 respondents, referring to some specific industries, namely fashion, food, automotive and interior design. Another frequently cited definition was high quality alone, referring again to food and fashion products, but also to healthcare services. Also, to be noted is the good reputation of Made in Italy products associated with Italy as a COO, as highlighted by 3 out of 7 participants. A frequent theme, though belonging to the negative side of the spectrum, is identified by 5 respondents out of 7 as the perceived poor quality of Italian politics, general services (especially transport), and TV entertainment. To counteract the negative feelings towards the Italian political scenario, 2 out of 7 participants admitted that their own perception of it improved with the advent of Mario Draghi as the Italian Prime Minister. The same number of respondents mentioned a perceived markedly difference in service quality between Northern and

Southern Italy. Another theme worth to be cited is the negative perception that Italians abroad have of their own country.

4.2.1.4 Q4: What do you think are the requirements that products need to have to be labelled Made in Italy?

The question about which requirements were deemed by respondents to be sufficient for a product to be labelled Made in Italy shed light on the fact that there is a diffused level of confusion with regards to the meaning of the label itself, as expressed by 3 out of 7 participants. The most frequent interpretation of the label, as regarded by 2 out of 7 respondents, saw the majority of the assembling process taking part in Italy, for those products requiring a high degree of assembling. Other participants hypothesized Made in Italy products to be produced in Italy, assembled in Italy, having their full production chain in Italy (at least for food and small fashion enterprises), and to be produced following strict high-quality standards. Another point that was made by 2 participants out of 7 was the likelihood of raw materials involved in the manufacturing process to be imported from developing countries, given their scarcity in the Italian territory.

4.2.1.5 Q5: In your everyday life, do you purchase any Made in Italy products?

When asked whether they bought any Made in Italy products as part of their habitual lifestyle, most respondents, i.e., 4 out of 7, agreed that they do, and specified that the purchased products usually belong to the food category. Other answers pointed at specific products such as pasta, coffee, wine, shoes, and domestic appliances.

4.2.1.6 Q6: For which reasons do you purchase Made in Italy products?

3 out of 7 participants indicated taste as the main motive for which they buy Made in Italy products, representing the most popular answer. Other two frequent answers, both mentioned by 2 out of 7 respondents, featured factors such as brand reputation and quality as main drivers for consumption of these goods. One respondent cited habit as a driver, as growing up in Italy got him used to that type of food.

4.2.1.7 Q7: What would incentivize you to increase your consumption of Made in Italy products?

Reflecting on some potential drivers of increased Made in Italy consumption, the majority of participants, specifically 4 out of 7, pointed at a higher availability of Italian products in Denmark, being it the country where they currently reside. Among these 4 respondents, 2 indicated a product in particular that they would certainly purchase, if made available in Denmark, while the remaining 2 cited, in general, the low availability of Italian products as an issue. To be noted as a factor which could also motivate participants to boost their consumption of Made in Italy is lower prices, as cited by 3 out of 7 of them. It is interesting to mention that 2 out of these 3 respondents brought the attention to the fact that prices of Made in Italy products abroad, i.e., outside of the Italian territory, are especially high, which could also result from expensive shipping costs, as specifically outlined by one of them. The same person thus pointed to lower delivery prices as another factor which would foster his online purchases of Italian products.

4.2.1.8 Q8: Do you purchase Made in Italy products in your native country?

The question at hand was directed only at foreigner participants, none of which of Danish nationality. When asked if they purchased Made in Italy products also in their own countries, 3 out of 5 foreigner participants agreed on doing so. Specifically, 2 of them indicated the food product category only, while the other respondent mentioned both Italian food and drinks. One participant, on the contrary, declared not to buy any Made in Italy product in her native country. As a reason for this, she mentioned the scarce availability of Italian products in Spain, given that, according to her, the products originating in the two countries tend to overlap because of their similarity in nature.

4.2.1.9 Q9: Did you notice any difference in your consumption of Made in Italy products between Denmark and your native countries?

This question about access to Made in Italy products was also directed solely at non-Italian respondents, as the setting intended for the question was their native countries. Comparing the availability of said products to the one in Denmark, 2 out of 5 foreigner participants recognized better access, and thus, higher consumption of Made in Italy in their native countries. More specifically, one of them mentioned the fact that in her native country, Germany, every supermarket possesses a corner entirely dedicated to Italian products, while the other admitted that in Polish supermarkets there is a larger variety of products in general, which, according to her, makes it easier to find Made in Italy products. Contrary to the above-mentioned answers, another respondent claimed that the availability of Italian products in her native country, Norway, is much lower compared to Denmark. She added that a possible motive behind this scarcity is the fact that importing Made in Italy goods to Norway is extremely expensive given that her home country is not a member of the EU.

4.2.1.10 Additional themes

Before concluding the focus group, participants were asked to reflect on additional thoughts related to the topic, if they had any. A frequent theme, cited by 3 out of 7 participants, was the perceived decreasing competitiveness of Italy as a touristic destination. Indeed, these respondents highlighted the fact that they think people are switching their travel preferences towards other and new attractive countries, such as Spain, Croatia, and Albania, where prices are perceived to be lower. Another relevant point was made by 2 out of 7 participants, who declared they believe Italians, especially in the most touristic cities, are becoming less and less welcoming towards tourists, as opposed to what happens in the smaller and less renowned areas. Nevertheless, the same 2 participants specified that they still perceive Italy to be a very popular destination for tourism. Other answers mentioned referred to the poor quality of some hotel infrastructure facilities and the excessive reliance of Italians on their country's existing reputation, which, in the long term, could hinder its popularity among international tourists, as speculated by one respondent.

4.2.2 Second Focus Group

For what concerns the second focus group, the sample of participants was made of two male university students and four female university students, all their ages being under 30. With regards to the distribution of nationalities, two respondents were Italian, and the remaining four came from other European countries. As in the first focus group, the moderator asked participants nine open-ended questions, which have been described separately in the following subparagraphs.

4.2.2.1 Q1: Which factors do you consider as most important when purchasing a product?

When asked to reflect upon the factors they deemed to be most relevant in their general purchasing decisions, respondents pointed out multiple elements. Out of 6 total participants, 2 agreed on price as the first factor to look at, followed by quality and sustainability. The same number of respondents identified word of mouth as an important aspect they considered when buying a product, as explained by one participant: "*Whenever I get a referral from a person that I know I can trust, maybe I feel like it's better for me to spend money on that thing because it will cost even more to buy different things that are going to add up to that amount of money anyway*" (Participant 3, Focus Group 2, Appendix 6.2 pg. 169). Other answers that emerged were availability of products, brand reputation, sustainability alone, and the fact that the elements to consider, i.e., either quality or price, depended on the expected lifetime of the product to be purchased. The latter is elaborated by one respondent (Participant 2, Focus Group 2, Appendix 6.2 pg. 169) as follows: "*It really depends on the product you have to buy, of course. I mean, with some products you focus more on the quality of the product because it has to last more and with food, for example for bread, you look for the cheapest one*".

In the same way as in the first focus group, the aforementioned question was explored further by the moderator, who asked participants through three sub-questions which factors they considered most important when purchasing specifically goods belonging to the food, fashion, and automotive categories. For what concerns food, the most frequently mentioned answer among respondents (4 out of 6) was sustainability, expressed in terms of preference towards organic products, a general tendency towards buying seasonal goods, and intention to purchase as local as possible. Another popular answer, cited by 3 out of 6 participants, was quality as the first factor to take into account when buying food. Availability of products also emerged as an influential aspect, as stated by 2 out of 6 respondents. Other themes that were touched upon were price, convenience, and preference for products originating in one's own COO, as stated by one participant: "*When I'm in Italy, I always check if the product I'm buying is Made in Italy. For example, if I go and buy some vegetables or fruit, I always check if it is from Italy. And so, of course, you can decide whether you want to buy fruit from Spain or from Italy, for example, and I choose the Italian one*" (Participant 2, Focus Group 2, Appendix 6.2 pg. 170).

With respect to the purchase of goods belonging to the fashion sector, 3 out of 6 respondents pointed out quality as the principal factor they considered. Quality was here expressed in terms of materials used in cloth manufacturing and the durability of the product. Another frequent answer, cited by 2 out of 6 participants, was the appearance of the product, which, according to one respondent, wouldn't instead affect her food purchasing decisions. Other factors that emerged, mentioned by one respondent each, were price alone, social sustainability, uniqueness, locality of production and, depending on the product type, either brand or price.

Finally, when asked which elements they would consider if they had to buy a car, respondents brought upon highly varied answers. The most popular themes, each discussed by 2 out of 6 participants, were the relevance of the COO for reasons of quality and national pride, environmental sustainability expressed by the wish to purchase an electric car, the social status related to a specific brand, and the necessity to consider where one lives before purchasing a car, as it might not be as useful in a bigger city with good public transportation. Other elements discussed singularly by respondents were the appearance of the car, functionalities of the car, price, any type of price support (for example, when buying an electric car), and brand.

4.2.2.2 Q2: In the past two years, given the many changes brought upon by the pandemic, have you noticed any changes in your consumption habits?

To the question of whether they had noticed any change in their consumption patterns due to the pandemic, 4 out of 6 participants stated that they lowered their consumption levels. More specifically, 3 out of these 4 declared they consumed fewer fashion products, while the remaining one mentioned a lower consumption in general. On the other hand, a higher consumption level was claimed by 4 out of 6 participants. In particular, 2 of them noticed they increased their purchases of both food products and subscriptions to streaming services, one of them only specified an increased consumption of food, as she had more time to cook at home given the lockdown, and one of them declared she took more flights since the loosening of travel restrictions. Other less popular points, that were made by one respondent each, were the switch to online shopping and an increased share of home clothes consumption over total clothes purchases, with the level of general fashion consumption being equal.

In a related sub-question, the moderator asked participants whether the mentioned alterations in purchasing behaviour affected their Made in Italy consumption as well. The vast majority of respondents, that is 5 out of 6, agreed on having increased their consumption of Italian products. Specifically, 2 of them admitted that the reason was an increased focus on quality, 2 of them declared they did it both because of national pride and to support their country’s economy, and the remaining one mentioned a larger consumption of pasta in particular. Only one participant claimed not to have noticed any modification in her consumption of Italian goods.

4.2.2.3 Q3: How would you define Made in Italy?

As in the case of the first focus group, the question about how they would define Made in Italy products was asked to respondents in a broad way, in order to allow them to freely express any association that came to their mind. As a result, a multitude of interesting themes emerged. As the most frequently mentioned answer, 3 out of 6 participants related Italian products to the concept of quality, expressed both on a general level and with regards to specific industries, such as food, fashion and automotive tradition. Other popular associations to Made in Italy were the idea of tradition, cited by 3 out of 6 respondents, and of craftmanship, brought upon by 2 out of 6 participants. An interesting theme that emerged during the discussion was the trustworthiness of the label Made in Italy. On one side, indeed, 2 out 6 respondents claimed to have enough trust in the label, given that it is established according to both Italian and European regulations. On the other side, 2 other respondents disagreed with respect to this idea, admitting not to trust any label in general due to the lack of transparency surrounding them. This concept was expressed by one participant in the following way: "*Actually, sometimes I see the label Made in Italy or made it Denmark or whatever and I don't trust it. This is just like the butter cookies labelled Made in Denmark just because they have a factory or a store in Denmark, while they're actually produced somewhere else*" (Participant 6, Focus Group 2, Appendix 6.2 pg. 175). Other aspects that were mentioned single-handedly by participants were attributes such as homemade, passion, and authenticity, as well as the association between quality and COO and specific product locations, such as lemons typical of Sorrento.

4.2.2.4 Q4: What do you think are the requirements that products need to have to be labelled Made in Italy?

As respondents were asked to reflect on the requirements they deemed to be necessary for products to be labelled Made in Italy, a general level of confusion emerged, as specifically expressed by 3 out of 6 of them. The same number of participants hypothesised that it would be sufficient for products to be processed in Italy in order to be eligible for the label. Other suppositions, each mentioned by one respondent out of 6, featured the whole production chain to take place in Italy, 50% of it being carried out in the country, the main ingredients/parts of the product originating in Italy, and the fact that 100% Made in Italy should also include raw materials. Finally, other considerations that arose regarding the topic were the distinction between the nationality of the brand and the label "Made in", the recognition of frauds happening with regards to labels in general, and the fact that, according to one participant (Participant 6, Focus Group 2), it was acceptable if the raw materials did not originate in Italy, as long as the design and craftsmanship involved in the production were Italian.

4.2.2.5 Q5: In your everyday life, do you purchase any Made in Italy products?

To the question of whether respondents purchased any Italian products in their daily routines, the majority of them, i.e., 5 out of 6, agreed on doing that. Among them, specifically, 2 declared they purchased both Italian food and drinks, other 2 claimed to consume only Italian food products, and the remaining one mentioned purchasing solely Italian wine.

4.2.2.6 Q6: For which reasons do you purchase Made in Italy products?

To understand more deeply their Italian consumption patterns, the moderator asked participants to discuss the reasons behind their purchases of Made in Italy. The most frequent answer was exposure to Italian products, cited by 2 out of six participants, as one of them grew up in Italy and the other spent there a period of six months. The latter elaborates the concept as follows: "*For me* [the reason] *is exposure, actually. Because I have been in Italy for the last 6 months and I discovered my love for some Italian products, so I also want to buy them here because I just know that they are good and I like them*" (Participant 5, Focus Group 2, Appendix 6.2 pg. 181). Other answers to the question, each cited by 1 respondent out of 6, were habit, individual taste, quality, homesickness (mentioned by an Italian participant), and Italian pride, as one participant declared: "*I'm proud of Italy, so* [I do]" (Participant 2, Focus Group 2, Appendix 6.2 pg. 180).

4.2.2.7 Q7: What would incentivize you to increase your consumption of Made in Italy products?

When asked about some factors that they thought could possibly boost their consumption of Italian products, 3 out of 6 participants referred to a higher availability of Made in Italy goods. Another popular answer, also mentioned by 3 out of 6 respondents, was lower prices. Moreover, 2 participants pointed to a higher exposure to Italian products as a possible driver to increase their level of purchases of Made in Italy.

4.2.2.8 Q8: Do you purchase Made in Italy products in your native country?

As in the case of the first focus group, the question of whether they purchased Made in Italy in their own countries was only asked non-Italian respondents who grew up outside of Denmark. Given that one participant was Danish in nationality, but spent some years of her life in Taiwan, she was also given the chance to answer the question. Out of the 3 participants eligible for this question, 2 agreed on purchasing Italian products and specified that the products consumed belonged to the food and drinks categories.

4.2.2.9 Q9: Did you notice any difference in your consumption of Made in Italy products between Denmark and your native countries?

The same set of respondents as the previous question was also asked by the moderator whether they noticed any difference in their purchases of Italian products between Denmark and their native countries. 2 out of 3 participants detected a change in consumption, with both of them declaring to buy more Made in Italy in their respective countries. Specifically, one of them explained that the reason for this was a lower price level and a higher availability of Italian products in Germany, which made her more exposed to them, and, thus, more willing to purchase. The other participant, instead, pointed to her low trust in local products in her native country of Taiwan as the main motive for her greater consumption of Made in Italy goods. The latter respondent, indeed, states: "*If I were in*

Taiwan, I would go for Italian products because I wouldn't trust the Chinese ones" (Participant 6, Focus Group 2, Appendix 6.2 pg. 183).

4.2.2.10 Additional themes

Two additional themes emerged during the focus group from the discussion of 2 participants. Regarding the first one, these respondents mentioned how the concepts of *Bel Paese* and *Dolce Vita*, respectively referring to the aesthetic appeal of Italy and its relaxed lifestyle, were given international exposure through social media such as Instagram. They also mentioned how the media, through the spread of the aforementioned positive ideas related to Italy, helped strengthen the association between Made in Italy and quality. The additional point brought up by the same 2 participants was the fact that consuming an Italian product in Denmark, and in general abroad, did not produce the same feeling as doing so in Italy, given that consuming, for example, a food product in Italy provided a whole eating experience.

4.2.3 General Focus Group Results

In this paragraph, the results from both focus groups have been compared in order to identify common patterns across the entirety of participants.

To begin with, with regards to the factors taken into consideration when purchasing a product in general, the common ones across the two focus groups were quality or price, depending on the expected lifetime of the product to be consumed. When narrowing the focus on the factors to consider with regards to the purchasing of food products, respondents across the two samples agreed on elements such as COO, quality, environmental sustainability, availability, and price. With respect to fashion goods, instead, the factors shared by the two groups were quality, appearance, price, and social sustainability. Finally, when it came to the elements to take into account when buying a car, the commonly cited ones were the functions included in the car itself, COO, environmental sustainability, expressed by the willingness to purchase an electric car, and the dimension of the city of residence.

When asked about the possibility of having experienced a change in consumption habits as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, a common theme that was shared by the two focus groups was an increased consumption of food products, as well as a lower level of clothing purchases and a general switch towards online shopping. After reflecting on whether said changes affected their Made in Italy consumption as well, participants from both focus groups mentioned an increase in consumption of Italian food products.

With respect to the question of what Made in Italy meant to respondents, the answers that emerged across both groups were high quality, high prices, and the good reputation of the label given the association of Italy (COO) to quality.

A high level of confusion with regards to the product requirements for the label Made in Italy to be used was common in the two groups, who hypothesised a number of different options, like the full production chain to take place in Italy or the assembling process to be held within the Italian territory.

Respondents from both groups agreed on purchasing Made in Italy products in their daily routines, specifying that said products pertained mostly to the categories of food and drinks. The common reasons for the consumption of Italian products were quality, individual taste, and, to a lower extent, habit. Concerning, instead, the possible incentives to increase their purchase level of Italian products, participants from both focus groups frequently mentioned higher availability and lower prices.

Non-Italian respondents across the two groups agreed on purchasing Italian goods in their native countries as well and specified to do so mainly with respect to food and drinks. To conclude, when asked about any difference in consumption of Italian products between Denmark and their native countries, non-Italian respondents admitted purchasing more of them in their home countries due to a higher availability of Made in Italy.

4.3 Secondary Data Analysis

4.3.1 The Nation Brand Index and Value

In October last year, the 2021 Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index was published (Ipsos, 2021b). The study had been developed in order to provide governments, organisations and businesses with a guide to comprehend, measure and build a powerful national image and reputation (Ipsos, 2019). In 2021, to bring together the 2021 Nations Brand Index, 60.000 interviews were carried out online between July and the end of August and the sample consisted of adults aged 18+ living in 20 panel countries; in order to ensure that the data was as accurate as possible, it was weighted to reflect the demographic characteristics, including age and gender, of each panel country (Ipsos, 2021b).

The year 2021, according to Ipsos (2021b), was characterised by a general improvement in the perception held by people of the nations taken into consideration for the study. Italy's nation brand ranking jumped from the sixth position to the fourth place, confirming a growing trend that had already taken Italy from the seventh place in 2019 to the sixth position in 2020 (Ipsos, 2020; Ipsos, 2021b). The country's ranking exhibited one of the highest jumps, alongside the United States, showing a progress of two positions in the rankings (Figure 13) (Ipsos, 2021b), and it reached the highest position since 2008 (Appendix 5, Figure 1) (Ipsos, 2021a). The reason behind the Italian remarkable improvement in the Nation Brand Index ranking could be found in the stronger opinions the general public had on the dimensions of Tourism, Culture and People (Ipsos, 2021b). For what concerns tourism in general, given the answers provided by participants in the Ipsos study, it was possible to notice a higher and stronger desire to visit countries all over the world, which reached its highest level in 2021 (ibid). Looking back at the Italian situation, the total Nation Brand Index of the country grew from 67,11 in 2020 to 70, 23 in 2021 (Ipsos, 2021b).

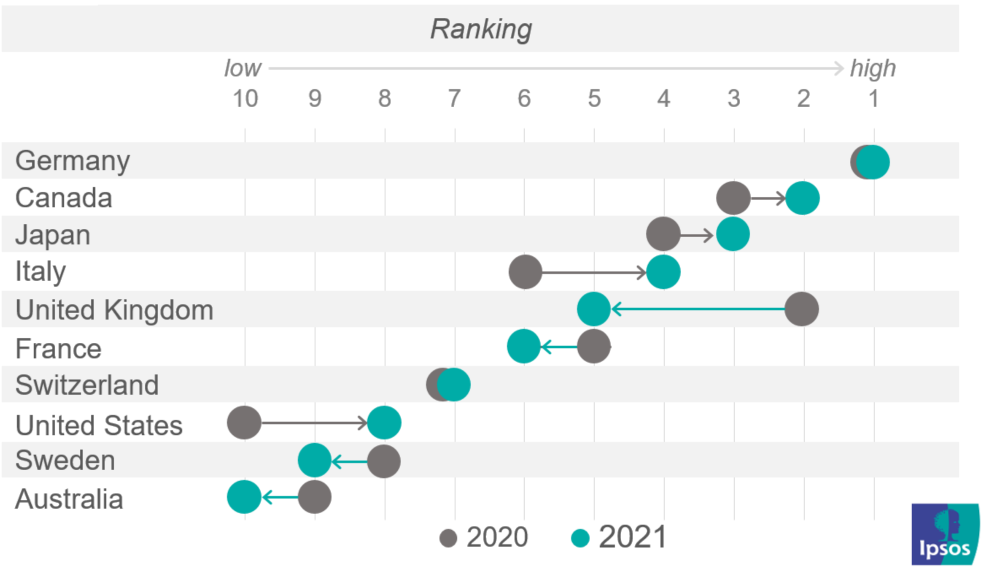

Figure 13: *The Nation Brand Index 2021 Rankings.* Source: Ipsos (2021b).

On top of that, Italy as a Nation Brand had a value of $1.985 billion in 2021, equivalent to €1.675 billion, while in 2020 it was valued $1.776 billion, equivalent to €1.604 billion; the country was ranked 9th in the most valuable nation brands chart (Brand Finance, 2021; Brand Finance, 2022a). The value of the brand showed an improvement of the 11,80% calculated on the values expressed in USD (Figure 14) (Brand Finance, 2021). The difference in the gap between values in USD and EUR is probably due to the depreciation the USD underwent in 2021 or due to an appreciation of the EUR. In 2020 the conversion rate of EUR:USD was 1,11 while in 2021 it was 1,18 (Brand Finance, 2022a).

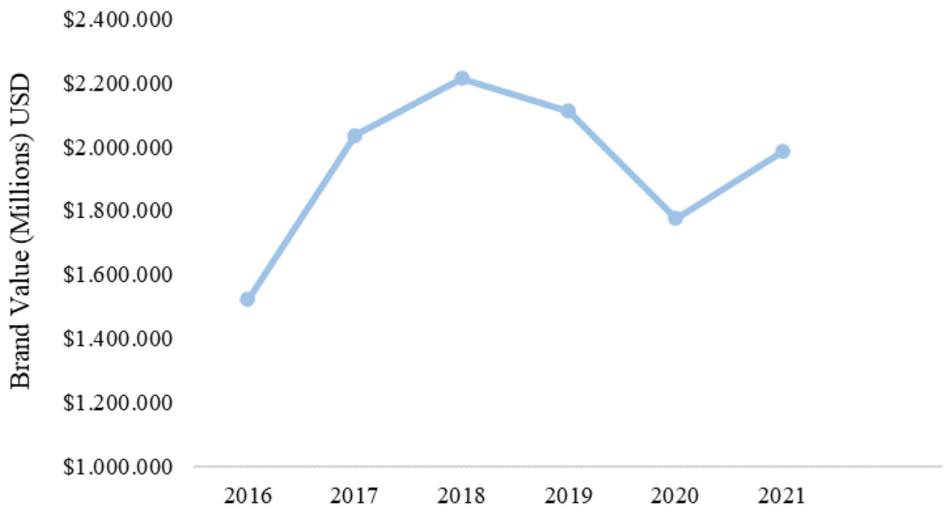

Figure 14: *Italy Brand Value Over the Years.* Source: own creation based on Brand Finance (2022b).

4.3.2 Economic Growth

In 2020, due to the worldwide health crisis brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, the global goods trade shrank by 7,5% compared to 2019's levels (Istat, 2021). The year 2021 was a year of change. The slowdown of the pandemic and the easing of restrictive measures have allowed the world economy to grow, both in terms of GDP and international trade (International Monetary Fund, 2022; OECD, 2022). Regarding the latter, countries belonging to the G20 experienced a remarkable growth both in their merchandise imports and exports, which boosted by 26,1% and 25,9% respectively, and which exceeded the 2019 pre-pandemic levels by 16% (OECD, 2022). With respect to GDP growth, while 2020 saw a worldwide reduction in GDP of 3,1%, 2021 was characterised by a strengthening of the world economy, as evidenced by a 6,1% increase in GDP, the highest growth recorded in 40 years (Figure 15) (Appendix 5, Figure 2) (International Monetary Fund, 2022).

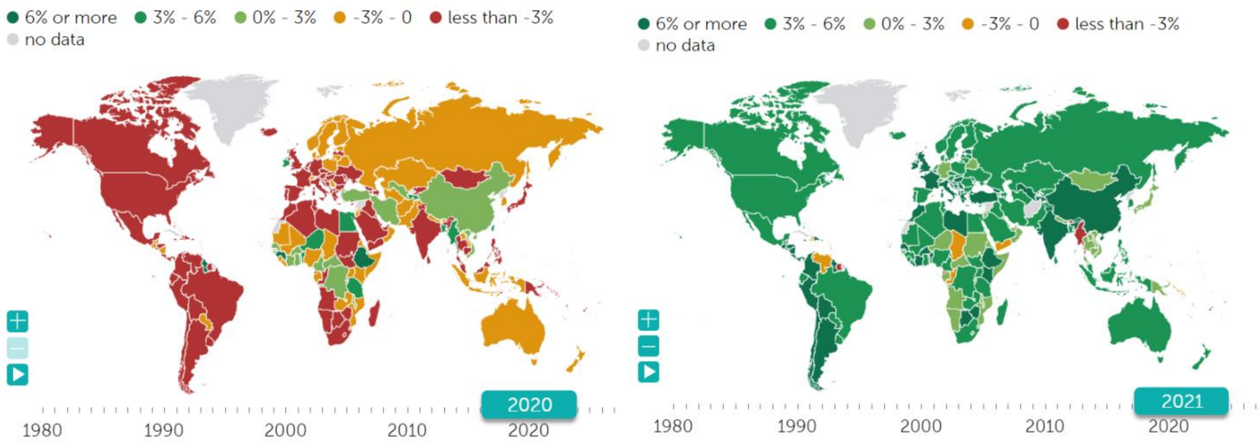

Figure 15: *Annual Percentage Change in GDP in 2020 and 2021.* Source: International Monetary Fund (2022).

For what concerns the international trade, Italy was strongly damaged and recorded a 9,7% decrease in exported goods in 2020 (Istat, 2021). The country's market share in world merchandise exports, measured in USD, was 2,85% in 2020, slightly lower than the level of 2019, which amounted to 2,87% (ibid). On a general level, in 2021 exports increased by 18,2% compared to the previous year; the exports toward European countries grew by 20%, while the ones toward non-European countries grew by 16,30% (Istat, 2022a). Specifically, the exports of Made in Italy in the food sector reached an all-time high of €17 billion in 2021, recording a growth of 8,9% (Coldiretti, 2021).

Furthermore, another improvement in the national accounts was given by the decrease in the public debt; in 2020 it amounted to 155,30% of the GDP, while in 2021 it decreased to 150,40% of the GDP (Ansa, 2022).

On top of that, it has been observed that in 2021 the Italian economic went through an exceptional growth (Ansa, 2022; Istat, 2022b). In 2021, the GDP at current prices improved by 7,5% compared to 2020, while the GDP in volume increased by 6,6% (Istat, 2022b); overall, the GDP at current prices reached €1.775.436 million (Eurostat, 2022). The level of GDP at current prices decreased considerably in 2020, to a large extent due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting health crisis (AGI, 2021), but with the increase recorded in 2021, the GDP almost reached the pre-pandemic level (Figure 16) (Eurostat, 2022). The increase in GDP in volume was to be attributed mainly to the domestic demand, which contributed to a growth of 6,2%, while the contribution of foreign demand was smaller, equivalent to an increase of 0,2% (Istat, 2022b).

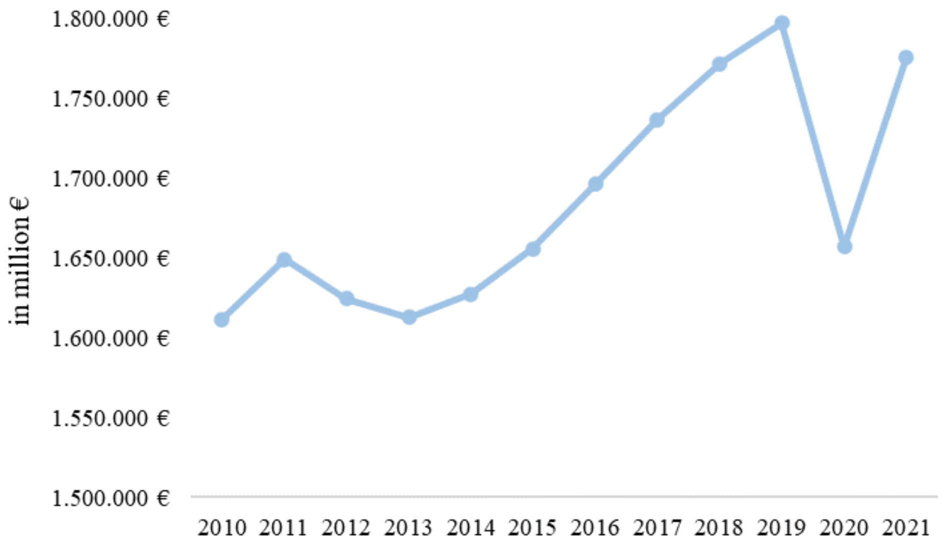

Figure 16: *Italian GDP at Current Prices.* Source: own creation based on Eurostat (2022).

Eventually, it is expected that the victory at the UEFA 2020 games in July 2021, given the prestige brought to the image of Made in Italy, had a positive impact both on the export of Italian products and on the general economic growth of the country (Coldiretti, 2021a; 2021b). The same had happened as a result of the victory in the 2006 World Cup, after which, in the following year, the Italian GDP grew by 4,1%, a record at the time for the country, and the exports increased by 10%, due to the enhanced image of the country and of Made in Italy products (Coldiretti, 2021a). In addition, it is worth mentioning that, in 2007, it was recorded a 3,5% increase in the number of foreigners who came to Italy on holiday (ibid). Generally speaking, after all the World Football Cup editions held between 1986 and 2014, the winning nations always experienced an improvement in their national economies (Caccavello, 2018).

4.3.3 Issuer Default Rating and Bond Spread

Fitch Ratings, a credit rating agency, takes care of publishing credit ratings, which represent opinions on the ability of an obligation or entity to fulfil its financial commitments (Fitch Ratings, 2022). Issuer default ratings (IDRs) are usually assigned to corporations and financial institutions, as well as to public finance entities such as governments (ibid). These ratings are an indication of the likelihood that the entity will repay its debt in accordance with the terms of the agreement, meaning it is an assessment of the company's credit risk profile (Fitch Ratings, 2022). The agency, after downgrading Italy’s Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating to BBB- in 2020, upgraded it to BBB in 2021 (MEF, 2021; Fitch Ratings, 2021). This upgrade was based on a forecast of 6,2% growth of the

Italian economy in 2021, following the growth in 2Q21 and 3Q21 of 2,7% and 2,6%, respectively, above the overall Eurozone average (ibid).

The bond spread is the difference between the yields of two government bonds, in the Italian case it represents the difference between the Italian and German bonds (Borsa Italiana, 2018). Given the many government bonds existing, to compute the spread between two countries, the 10-years bonds are usually taken into consideration, in the Italian case they take the name of BTP and in the German case they are called Bund (ibid). The higher the level of the BTP-Bund spread, the greater the risk of investing in Italian bonds; when the BTP-Bund spread grows, it means that the yield demanded by investors in Italian bonds has increased compared to that demanded on the German ones as they perceive Italy as a riskier country to invest in (Borsa Italiana, 2018). On the other hand, when the BTP-Bund spread decreases, it means that the risk profiles of the two countries have come closer together (ibid). It is possible to notice, in Figure 17, that the BTP-Bund in February 2021 reached its lowest level in the last two years, equivalent to 89 (Borsa Italiana, 2022), following the appointment of Mario Draghi as Prime Minister on the 13th of February.

Figure 17: *Levels of Spread over the last two years.* Source: Borsa Italiana (2022).

5. Discussion

In the following paragraphs, the authors have drawn several general implications through the combination of both questionnaire and focus groups' findings, as well as those resulting from secondary data. Afterwards, some managerial implications were identified with the aim of providing companies with practical recommendations of measures to undertake in the short term. Then, the theoretical contribution of this research study to the academic literature has been outlined. Eventually, the limitations of the investigation at hand have been acknowledged and critically discussed, and cues for future research, some of which aimed at counteracting said limitations, have been presented.

5.1 General Implications

First of all, one of the main findings of this research paper was that both Italians and foreigners showed to have a positive perception of Italy, with foreigners showing an initial slightly better impression of the country. In particular, the highly positive perception of the aesthetic dimension can be the result of the concept of *Bel Paese* promoted by the media, as some of the participants in the focus group pointed out. Specifically, a participant in the second focus group said: "*... I think with the Instagram reels and so on, Italy and the Dolce Vita* [its internationally renowned lifestyle], *are very exposed to the international audience*" (Participant 3, Focus Group 2, Appendix 6.2 pg. 181).

The vast majority of the participants in the questionnaire were aware of the successes of Italy in 2021. It is thus possible to infer that large scale events, such as the Eurovision Song Contest 2021 and the UEFA Euro 2020, brought great exposure to Italy thanks to an intense media coverage (Bowdin et al., 2012). However, few respondents declared to have changed their perception of the country in a positive or very positive manner. Among the dimensions that were affected, it was possible to notice that those already exhibiting a high score further improved their position, while, on the contrary, the dimensions characterized by a low score from the beginning only showed a minor growth. This can mean that people's perception was affected only for what concerns the physical beauty of the country and the feelings it can evoke in people. The image did not experience a relevant change from the point of view of the functional and normative aspects. Eventually, given the positive externalities in terms of economic growth experienced by the countries excelling at large-scale sports events, such as the World Football Cup (Grix, 2013; Caccavello, 2018), it is possible to assert that, after the victory in the UEFA Euro 2020, Italy will undergo a similar economic expansion.

Comparing the perceived image of Italy by Italians and foreigners, it was observed that Italians had a worse feeling toward the normative and functional dimensions than foreigners. The reason behind this is probably that Italian citizens are more aware of the political, economic, and managerial scenario of their own country, and, thus, they have a more critical opinion toward Italy. This has been particularly highlighted by a participant in the first focus group, who said "*... but then if you think, for example, about politics or general services like transportation and such, it automatically goes down* [the opinion] *because you know that they are not that good. Especially regarding transportation, we have a joke that our trains are always late*" (Participant 7, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 161). On the other hand, the perception of the aesthetic and emotional dimensions did not vary much between the two groups.

At a general level, notwithstanding the fact that only few respondents to the questionnaire admitted having changed their perception as a consequence of the Italian achievements in 2021, the vast majority was represented by Italians. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the change in perception by Italian respondents was of such a magnitude, in terms of both the attributes and the dimensions of the image of the country, as to reduce the gap in perception between the two groups. In those cases where the initial levels of perception held by Italians were already greater than those of foreigners, the gap was further accentuated. This observed difference in feeling is in line with the distinction already made by Buhmann (2016) between the outside-perception held by foreigners and self-perception held by citizens, also known as country identity.

In spite of the fact that, generally speaking, the perceived functional image of Italy did not change remarkably, two participants in the focus group (Participant 5 and 6, Focus Group 1) said specifically that, with the advent of Mario Draghi, the political situation of the country improved, meaning that it is possible to assert that the perceived government stability and strength increased. In particular, one participant stated: "*I have the impression that it* [the political scenario] *quite improved since then* [the appointment of Draghi]" (Participant 5, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 161). Precisely the appointment of Mario Draghi as Prime Minister at the beginning of 2021 was cited by The Economist (2021) as the main reason for which Italy was chosen by the same magazine as the country of the year for 2021. Mario Draghi has, indeed, positively altered the overall perception of the Italian political scenario by providing a more stable image of the country and its politics (The Economist, 2021).

From a financial point of view, also the investors' perception changed: they started perceiving Italy as a stronger nation and as a lower risk country to invest in (Fitch Ratings, 2021), possibly allowing for a higher inflow of FDI to sustain the country's economy and future growth. This fact was reflected by a strong decrease in the bond spread, which reached the minimum registered level in the last around mid-February 2021 (Borsa Italiana, 2022), the period in which Mario Draghi was appointed as PM. Overall, it is possible to state that the political aspect is highly relevant because it is employed not only to measure the image of a country in Buhmann's (2016) model but also by Ipsos, with the name of Governance, to establish the Nation Brand Index ranking (Ipsos, 2019; Ipsos, 2021a). With reference to the latter, the improvement in the way Italy was perceived by the general public was recorded in the 2021 NBI ranking by Ipsos (2021b), which showed Italy's jump in position from the sixth to the fourth place.

Eventually, the country grew also from the economic stance, as evidenced by the growth of its GDP and export levels. However, it is important to note that the GDP levels increased all over the world with an average of 6,1%, while the general merchandise imports and exports in G20 countries grew considerably (International Monetary Fund, 2021; OECD, 2022). Despite this fact, it is worth mentioning that the Italian GDP experienced a stronger growth compared to the worldwide level, while the country's exports increased by a lower percentage than the overall growth (Istat, 2022a; Istat, 2022b). Specifically, such a growth in the Italian economy is to be associated mainly with internal demand (Istat, 2022b).

With regards to the Italian industrial scenario, from both the questionnaire and the focus groups, it emerged that the industries most associated with Italy and Made in Italy were Food and Beverages, Fashion, Tourism and Automotive. The correlation between industries and their country of origin was investigated by Suter et al. (2020), who claimed that companies operating in the industries mostly related to their COO should leverage the country's image to add value to their offerings. Thus, it is possible to deduce that organizations active in the aforementioned industries should exploit the image of Italy to differentiate their products from the competition. On top of that, it was observed that the distribution of the industries associated by Italians with Made in Italy was more varied than that of foreigners, including also i.e., the Healthcare and the Arts & Entertainment sectors. For example, one participant (Participant 7, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 161) pointed out: "*Maybe another area that we did not discuss so far is healthcare services. If I have to choose between Made in Italy or anything else, I would go for the Italian ones* [healthcare services] *anytime. It is just because they* [Italian healthcare services] *have a better reputation*". It is thus possible to infer that Italians have a deeper knowledge of the Italian industrial scenario.

Out of the total respondents to the questionnaire, more than three quarters declared to be strongly and very strongly keen to purchase Italian products. It was noticed that, compared to foreigners, Italians were more willing to purchase Made in Italy products. The reasons behind this might be national pride, familiarity with the products, or other reasons, especially for Italians abroad as they tend to look for and buy Italian products due to homesickness and habits. Indeed, two participants pointed out: "*I do not like change. I spent years, decades of my life, going with that food and I am not going to change now*" and "I *want to say habit because I grew up with those* [Italian products]" (Participant 7, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 165; Participant 4, Focus Group 2, Appendix 6.2 pg. 180). Overall, participants in the focus groups admitted that the reasons why they purchased Made in Italy products were mainly the brand reputation and high quality, as also expressed in the questionnaire. In addition, participants admitted that their consumption of Made in Italy products might be a result of exposure to Italian products which, if protracted for an extended period of time, could turn into a habit, as previously mentioned by Italian participants. Specifically, for what concerns products in the Food and Beverages category, which resulted to be the most purchased product category by participants, the primary reason identified as a driver for Made in Italy consumption was the exquisite taste.

On a general level, when asked about the factors they considered the most in their purchase decision process, participants attributed significant importance to price and quality as the main factors affecting their purchasing decisions. Another aspect frequently mentioned was sustainability, both environmental and social. In particular, in environmental terms, participants cited the importance of buying seasonal and local products, and of the reduction in the usage of plastic packages. On the other hand, the social aspect of sustainability was reflected in the intention of participants to avoid purchasing products involving child labour or exploitation in their manufacturing process. This was directly mentioned by multiple participants in the focus groups, i.e., "... *hopefully they do not use any child labour. You never know that. I would never buy on Shein, for example*" (Participant 2, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 158).

On top of that, it was possible to notice, among the participants, the tendency to buy products originating in their native countries, out of national pride and to sustain their own countries' economies, as evidenced by the quote "*... for me, it depends on the country that the food comes from. Like, I'm Spanish, so, for example, if I see veggies that are from Spain, I tend to buy those"* (Participant 4, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 157). Eventually, participants mentioned the importance of familiarity with certain brands, whose quality was already known. It is also worth mentioning that price was one of the factors that emerged the most. Thus, it is possible to assert that participants were particularly price-sensitive, regardless of the product category considered. This consideration was especially true with respect to foreign participants, as they pointed out that prices abroad were higher, mainly due to high delivery fees and taxation for non-EU countries.

Looking specifically at products' features, from the questionnaire it resulted that the attributes most associated with Made in Italy goods by both Italians and foreigners were those of *excellent design*, *status symbol*, *craftsmanship*, and *high quality*. On the other hand, the attributes that were related the least to Made in Italy by the two groups were *affordability*, *advanced technology*, and *sustainability*. From the results of the focus groups, which were in line with the previously mentioned survey answers, the association of Made in Italy with tradition also emerged. Overall, the themes of high quality and high price were mostly mentioned together in the focus groups, as evidenced by the quote: "*... In my case, I associate Made in Italy with high prices and high quality*" (Participant 4, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 160). Thus, it is possible to infer that the attributes of quality and price are positively correlated.
It is interesting to look at how the factors considered by participants in their purchasing process fit with the attributes associated with Made in Italy. To begin with, it was noticeable that quality was one of the principal factors for participants when purchasing a product, and it was also one of the most associated attributes with Made in Italy. Given this result, it is possible to assert that people are more inclined to buy an Italian product, compared to others, precisely because of its quality. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that participants also referred to price as a determining factor in their buying process, but affordability was not perceived as a strong characteristic of Made in Italy. Thus, this mismatch could hinder the willingness of purchasing Italian products. On top of that, even though this was true on a general level, participants admitted focusing more on the quality rather than on the price when acquiring long-lasting goods. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that, when it comes to enduring products, people are less price sensitive, and probably more eager to purchase Made in Italy. Eventually, the topic of sustainability emerged multiple times during both focus groups as expected, given the fact that it is a highly current theme. Unfortunately, Made in Italy was not perceived as sustainable by respondents, a fact that could damage the reputation of the products and thus consumers' willingness to buy them.

What is more, respondents to the questionnaire were asked whether or not, and to what extent, their perception of Made in Italy products changed as a consequence of the Italian achievements in 2021.

It was observed that only 12,76% of the total sample noticed an alteration in the way they perceived Italian goods. On the other hand, the authors noticed that, out of the few participants that declared to have changed their perception of Made in Italy products, 77% were represented by Italians. Thus, it is plausible to hypothesise that Italians have been influenced more by the successes of their country out of national pride and a higher emotional attachment. These two factors have been also theorised by many scholars contributing to the stream of literature on COO as drivers that led people to purchase products originating from their native countries (Han, 1989; Oberecker & Diamantopoulos, 2011; Pastore, Ricotta & Giraldi, 2011).

When asked what could incentivise participants to purchase more Italian products, the factor deemed as most important was the availability of Made in Italy goods abroad. Another topic that was pointed out during the focus groups was that lower prices would have fostered Italian product acquisition among the young-adults population. Generally speaking, this problem is understandable given the young age of participants, to which a lower purchasing power is expectedly associated. Eventually, exposure was also mentioned as a factor which could possibly motivate the consumption of Made in Italy, especially since participants highlighted the scarce availability of Italian products in Denmark, the country in which all the participants resided at the time of the focus groups. Given that, for the aim of this investigation the authors intended to analyse Made in Italy purchasing habits not only within the context of Denmark but also on a general level, foreign participants were asked directly whether the consumption of Italian goods differed in their home countries. Several participants pointed out that the availability of Made in Italy, and their consequent exposure to it, was higher in their native countries, thus leading to an increase in the consumption level. For example, a participant stated: "*... but, I would say, in Germany every supermarket has a corner for Italian products. And also, there are a lot of smaller* [Italian] *local shops*" (Participant 2, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 166).

Additionally, given that one of the topics touched upon in this investigation was the COO, it is interesting to analyse the correlation between the consumers' perception of a product and its country of origin. As many academic works show, the COO has an important effect on the way consumers perceive products originating from a certain country and on their willingness to purchase them (Pegan et al., 2020). When the correlation between the COO and a specific product is favourable, companies can not only adopt the "Made in..." label as a way to attract more consumers, and lead them to purchase, but also leverage the image of the COO to increase the value of their offerings (Al-Aali et

al., 2015; Suter et al., 2020). In particular, the COO is used by consumers as an indicator of a product's quality, especially when not enough information is available, to facilitate their decision-making process (Al-Aali et al., 2015; Han, 1989; Oberecker & Diamantopoulos, 2011; Pastore, Ricotta & Giraldi, 2011).
Following on this topic, it is crucial to mention that participants highlighted the good reputation of Made in Italy products associated with their country of origin. This statement is evidenced by the quote: "*...and then you have this perception that when things are produced in Italy, and not in China or in Cambodia, then they are of high quality*" (Participant 6, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 160). Moreover, as underlined in the first focus group, this correlation between Made in Italy and quality is "*... a product of reputation*" (ibid), which makes it possible to assert that it represents an intangible asset difficult to replicate. An interesting theme that unfolded in the second focus group was the concept of *Dolce Vita*, the Italian lifestyle, which, according to participants, positively influenced the perception of Made in Italy and "*... conveys the quality of Italian products through media*" (Participant 4, Focus Group 2, Appendix 6.2 pg. 181).

A highly important matter that emerged during the focus groups was the great confusion around the regulations and requirements that must be met in order for products to be labelled as Made in Italy, of which participants were not aware. The authors believe that this issue is noteworthy because consumers, especially foreigners, who may be less informed about Italian brands, might fall victim to counterfeiting. Specifically, one participant admitted: "*Probably a lot of people misuse the label. I would also be attracted to the flag"* (Participant 2, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 165). The behaviour just described in the quote, namely associating the flag with Made in Italy, could potentially lead consumers to be deceived by the phenomenon of Italian sounding. This is a technique involving the use of symbols or writings referring to Italy to provide the product with a fallacious Italian identity (Confindustria, 2021; Temperini et al., 2016). During the focus groups, contrasting opinions regarding the trustworthiness of the Made in Italy label emerged. On one side, some participants expressed their trust in the labels, in particular as representative of the Italian and European legislation. On the other hand, other participants stated their lack of trust in general labels, as they did not perceive them as authentic. This lack of confidence in labels may be a consequence of a perceived shortage of information by companies about the origin of products and raw materials. It is also possible that such confusion may be a consequence of the initial misinformation regarding what Made in Italy is or is not.

In the past two years, the everyday life of people has been deeply affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which also affected consumers' purchasing behaviours as retrieved from the focus groups. Thus, the authors believed that such a matter could not be ignored.

From the results of the focus groups, the authors observed an alteration in general patterns of consumption. Specifically, the consumption of clothes decreased, while that of food products grew, as more time was spent at home and people were forced to cook more. This concept was expressed by one respondent as follows: "*I maybe cooked more Italian pasta for lunch, since I was more at home and not somewhere else*" (Participant 5, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 159). Furthermore, a change in the purchasing methods was also observed. Indeed, participants noticed an increase in their online purchase levels. On the other hand, what did not change were the factors considered in the purchasing process.

Participants were also asked whether the aforementioned changes influenced their consumption of Made in Italy products. In both focus groups, an increased consumption of Italian products was frequently cited. On one side, Italian respondents specifically mentioned national pride as the reason for this higher consumption, as they felt closer to their nation and wished to support their native country's economy. On the other hand, foreigners pointed out a stronger focus on quality during the pandemic, which led them to boost their purchases of Italian products. From this claim, it is possible to assert that foreigners associate Made in Italy with the idea of quality as well, as expressed by one participant, who stated: "*Yeah, I also feel like, for grocery shopping, I looked more into the quality and, for me, Made in Italy is connected to quality, so I think this* [factor] *made me purchase more*" (Participant 7, Focus Group 2, Appendix 6.2 pg. 173).

Eventually, another theme raised by participants, when asked if they had any further comments on the topic, was the touristic perception of the country. Even if only few participants pointed it out, Italian citizens were not perceived as welcoming toward foreign tourists, a fact which, in the long run, the authors believe could hinder Italy's popularity as a travel destination. This issue was referred to by a foreign participant in the following way: "*... and also, in Norway, Italy has gotten a reputation that they do not like tourists*" (Participant 3, Focus Group 1, Appendix 6.1 pg. 167). In the short term, it looked like this problem would not excessively impact the touristic reputation of Italy, as mentioned by one participant (Participant 7, Focus Group 1). However, in the long term, the authors hypothesise it could lead to the downgrading of the country image, negatively affecting the willingness of tourists, especially foreigners, to visit Italy. Moreover, respondents admitted that they generally perceived

Italy’s attractiveness to be shrinking especially when compared to other travel destinations, such as Croatia or Albania, whose popularity is increasing.

5.2 Managerial Implications

In this paragraph, the authors have attempted to give some managerial recommendations, based on the findings of this research study, to companies manufacturing and selling authentic Made in Italy products and to touristic bodies. Some examples of the latter are the Italian National Tourism Institute (known, in Italian, as ENIT), tourism promotion organizations, tourist information and reception offices, and regional agencies for touristic promotion.

The first proposed suggestion towards companies is aimed at improving their sales performance through the strategy of market penetration. This strategy has the objective to increase the market share of a company within the markets it is already present in and with its existing product offering; to do so, new marketing campaigns can be launched (Pidun, 2019). These marketing actions can provide organizations with growth in the short term (ibid). In general, given our findings, the authors deem that companies should exploit the positive attributes assigned to Made in Italy products when commercialising them. Indeed, as it was found that both Italians and foreigners related to Italian products’ characteristics such as quality and craftsmanship, in their marketing campaigns, companies should leverage those attributes.

In addition to that, the authors believe companies should perform a market segmentation to separately address Italian and foreign consumers. As a matter of fact, it was observed that among those respondents who admitted having changed their perception towards Italy, more than three quarters were Italian. Thus, when targeting Italians, organizations’ marketing departments or external marketing agencies should exploit the better perception that Italian people have of the country compared to that held by foreigners, as the former group showed to possess a strong national pride. Moreover, we speculate that this behaviour of natives is explained by the deeper emotional attachment to their own country compared to that of foreigners. On the other hand, when addressing foreigners, companies should bring the focus to those positive aspects linked to Made in Italy, such as quality and craftsmanship, which underline the uniqueness of Italian products. Moreover, given that quality was mentioned as one of the most important factors in focus groups participants’ purchasing decisions, this attribute should be highlighted as much as possible.

Another recommendation the authors have identified regarded the scarce availability of Italian products abroad, especially in the food category, as it was one of the themes that participants touched upon the most during the focus groups. Given the setting of the focus groups, respondents referred to the specific case of Denmark, but it is plausible to suppose that this is true also with regards to other nations. The solution provided to address this problem could be for companies to create partnerships and alliances, which allow for a deeper penetration of the market (Grant, 2018; Pidun, 2019). Through partnerships, indeed, an organization is able to share the financial risk and gain access to the partner's resources (Pidun, 2019). To successfully enable such penetration, an alliance should be established with companies that are already present in the territory.

For this specific case, a possible ally for Italian companies, as identified also by one participant (Participant 7, Focus Group 1), is the online retailer MammaPack. This e-commerce platform, specialized in groceries, makes it possible for consumers to access a wide catalogue of Italian products abroad. On top of that, from the organizational side, small-medium companies, which are characteristic of the Italian scenario and are the source of employment for 80% of the Italian employed population (European Investment Bank, 2021), can particularly benefit from these alliances as they can access the knowledge and competencies of an experienced partner. Alliances with companies present in local markets will allow more Made in Italy products to be easily available abroad.

Additionally, companies using authentic Made in Italy labels should launch educational campaigns on what the label really means, as there was a general confusion among participants on its definition and the requirements products need to have in order to be labelled Made in Italy. Moreover, educational campaigns should be conducted on the Italian sounding effect. Such campaigns would have the aim of informing consumers about this phenomenon and of enabling them to recognize imitations of Italian products.

The last recommendation directed at companies is aimed at mitigating the problem of lack of trust towards the label Made in Italy. The solution would be for organizations legitimately employing the label to adopt a production tracking system to allow their consumers to trace the origin of each product (European Commission, n.d.b). This implementation would likely result in improved customer trust, as a consequence of the higher transparency achieved, both towards the label Made in Italy and towards the brand itself, thus boosting its overall reputation. This tracking system is already in place in the EU with regard to the food industry and with the aim of safeguarding the health of final consumers (ibid), but the authors believe that it can be extended to other industries as well.

Eventually, reflecting on the theme of tourism that emerged during the focus groups, the authors have identified a feasible solution that government and touristic entities should embrace. This proposal consists of developing and launching wide-scale touristic marketing campaigns, especially through social media platforms. This solution has already been implemented by several nations, such as Qatar, wishing to encourage their incoming tourist flow (Qatar Tourism, 2021). Given that, among the dimensions composing the country image (Buhmann, 2016), the aesthetic one was the best perceived by both Italians and foreigners, the advised campaigns should leverage the charm of Italy. Thus, to attract tourism, the authors suggest using a slogan such as "Experience il Bel Paese", which we deem would convey both the aesthetic appeal of Italy and its lifestyle, typically renowned as *Dolce Vita*. The aforementioned campaigns can be also aimed at counteracting one of the phenomena mentioned in the focus group: the loss of touristic competitiveness of Italy in favour of other countries, whose popularity is rising as touristic destinations. Moreover, these marketing actions could be strategically employed ahead of the 2026 Winter Olympic Games to be held in Milan and Cortina, to both increase the visibility of the event and attract tourists to the country.

5.3 Research Implications

This study belonged to the stream of literature around the social impacts of events, alongside with many other academic publications. To begin with, Herz et al. (2018) investigated the long-term effects of hosting the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest on Azerbaijan's economy and, more generally, its country image. Furthermore, Heslop et al. (2013) explored how the reputation of mega-events is reflected in the perceived image of the hosting countries, and vice versa, by analysing the 2008 and 2010 Olympics Games hosted in Bejing and Vancouver respectively. Eventually, Florek & Insch (2011) built a model for exploring the level of uniformity between the image of the host country and the one of the events being hosted, with the final aim of either leveraging on positive associations between the two or acting upon the negative ones.

The research at hand mainly contributed to this literature stream by investigating whether and how the perceived image of Italy was affected as a consequence of certain occurrences, namely the appointment of Mario Draghi as the Prime Minister, the victory at the 2021 Eurovision Song Contest, and the triumph of the Azzurri at the UEFA Euro 2020. Given the scarcity of academic works focusing on the advantages a country may experience as a result of succeeding at certain events and achieving recognition, this study added on to the literature by investigating this phenomenon and, more specifically, by focusing on the Italian case.

5.4 Limitations

The following paragraph had the aim of describing the limitations of the study that the authors have identified during the course of the investigation.

The first shortcoming had to do with the economic scenario characterizing the year 2021. While, on one side, it is true that Italy experienced a strong GDP and export level growth, this improvement is to be considered within the context of the global economic recovery. Indeed, following the slowdown of the Covid-19 pandemic and the loosening of restrictions, the global GDP increased, and the international trade boosted (International Monetary Fund, 2022; OECD, 2022).

Another drawback is concerned with the methodological approach to the collection of primary data through focus groups. As a qualitative data collection method, interviews, the category to which focus groups belong, suffer from two potential issues: the phenomenon of double hermeneutics and the social desirability bias (Markovic, 2021b). On one hand, the former consists in the fact that respondents first interpret questions within their social context, and then the researchers interpret their answers. The consequence of this phenomenon is a potential misinterpretation by participants of the questions presented, and the erroneous interpretation of the findings by researchers. This can ultimately result in possibly inaccurate considerations (ibid). On the other hand, respondents might have been affected by the social desirability bias. This effect leads them, on one side, to attempt to look as competent as possible in their speeches, while, on the other, to answer in a way that is perceived to meet social expectations. The potential outcome of this tendency is the collection of unreliable answers (Markovic, 2021b). In addition to that, participants in the focus groups were people known by the authors, which might have led them to answer in a way they perceived was favourable to the research project objectives.

Remaining within the category of methodological concerns, the representativeness of findings might be a matter of discussion. Indeed, 64,2% of respondents to the survey belonged to the age group 18-34. In addition to that, participants in the focus groups were all aged below 30. Thus, the study might not be representative of the population belonging to the older age group. This consideration could be relevant also with respect to purchasing power, as it is expected that a younger age group might be characterized by a lower level of it. However, given that 45% of the observed sample was composed of full-time workers, it is possible to hypothesize that their purchasing power is medium-high.

Nevertheless, given that the final aim of the investigation at hand was not to explore the changing perception across age groups and occupational status, this issue did not hinder the completion of the research study. In the same way, to be mentioned is the fact that the percentage of Italian respondents over the total was 62,14%. However, the authors did not consider this difference to be highly significant for the overall objective of the study.

Another drawback regarding the data collection stage of the work deals with the generalizability of findings (Markovic, 2021b). Indeed, the geographical setting in which the focus groups were conducted was Copenhagen, Denmark, where participants resided at the time of the interview. Thus, many of the considerations that emerged during the focus groups were related to the Danish market. Respondents especially highlighted the fact that in the country prices were extremely high and that there was a scarce availability of Italian brands and products in general. Having taken into consideration the potential issue from the start, the authors tried to overcome it by posing direct questions to foreign participants aimed at identifying any eventual difference in consumption between their native countries and Denmark.

As the last limitation within the sphere of methodology, it is worth mentioning a point of concern with respect to the time frame in which primary data was collected. The authors had the objective to explore a potential change of perception towards Italy and Made in Italy products as a consequence of the country's achievements in 2021. However, at the time of the primary data collection, the events under study had already occurred, and thus it was not possible to collect the answers in a longitudinal way, i.e., before and after these occurrences. Therefore, the data collected, aimed at representing participants' change in perception, might not be entirely accurate, as respondents' answers might had already been unconsciously affected by the aforementioned events. In an attempt of overcoming this limitation, respondents to the questionnaire were asked twice to evaluate their perception of Italy; the first time they were requested to assess their general perception of the country, while the second time, later on in the questionnaire, they were asked whether or not and to what extent such perception changed as a consequence of the previously mentioned Italian achievements (Appendix 2).

Eventually, what the authors deem as the last shortcoming of the study is the relative novelty, in academic terms, of the positive correlation between the performance of a country at an international event and the consequent change in its perception by the general public. Indeed, many academic sources have shown the positive effect on the economy of the country hosting the events, while very few sources, especially journalistic ones, focused on the potential benefits a country could obtain after succeeding in large-scale competitions. Notwithstanding this fact, the researchers decided to further explore this topic by directly interviewing the general public, consisting of participants in the questionnaire and focus groups in our case, as we considered the theme to be appealing, specifically given its novelty.

5.5. Suggestions for Future Research

In this paragraph, cues for further research have been presented, not only as a consequence of and to overcome some of the previously mentioned limitations but also to further explore the topic of the study at hand.

The first suggestions deal with the group of limitations belonging to the sphere of methodology. Leaving aside the fact that the problematics of double hermeneutics and social desirability are typical of qualitative primary data collection methods, such as focus groups, the authors believe that replicating the study, with different moderators and participants, will increase the reliability of the findings. In addition, it is also worth mentioning that, for results to be as unbiased as possible, it would be advisable to select focus group participants that are not too familiar with the moderators.

When it comes to the demographic data of the questionnaire's respondents, to overcome their unequal distribution in the different age groups, the authors suggest two different approaches. As a possible solution, it would be advisable to replicate the survey with a pre-determined sample to ensure a uniform distribution across age groups. Alternatively, future researchers could resort to the Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE) to overcome unbalanced datasets. This technique consists in creating synthetic samples for the least represented class while ensuring that there is not much difference between the real data and the synthetic samples (Brownlee, 2020).

With the aim of providing a resolution to the issue of the generalisability of findings, the authors deem that further analysis on the same topic should be carried out in different environments and/or countries. This stems from the fact that the investigation at hand was conducted in Denmark and, thus, took into consideration the perspectives of people residing in the country. It is reasonable to believe that these further studies will allow for either a confirmation or confutation of the data.

For what concerns the timeframe problematic, the authors identified one potential solution, namely the replication of this investigation to analyse the impact of feature events on the perception of Italy. Indeed, it was not feasible for the authors to conduct a longitudinal study about the change in perception of Italy and Made in Italy products as a consequence of the 2021 achievements, which took place before the beginning of the study. Thus, it is suggested to conduct such type of study before and after an upcoming event which will be held in Italy, such as the 2026 Winter Olympic Games taking place in Milan and Cortina.

During the drafting of the project, the authors noticed a scarcity of academic literature on the potential benefits, especially in terms of the perceived image of the nation, that countries could gain as a consequence of winning international competitions. Thus, it would be relevant, from a theoretical point of view, for researchers to conduct further investigations on the topic. Indeed, despite the existence of journalistic sources about the theme, there is a lack, as far as the authors are concerned, of scientific studies on this correlation.

Eventually, the research study at hand focused primarily on the difference in perception between Italians and foreigners, without taking into consideration neither the age groups they belong to, nor their level of education. Reflecting upon directions for future research, the authors deem as a potential and relevant topic the investigation of differing perceptions across various age groups and levels of education. This suggestion is derived specifically from the hypothesis that a customer might have a different purchasing power depending on their age and/or level of education. Thus, we believe that this further analysis will confirm or reject the aforementioned hypothesis.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, the authors have drawn general conclusions to the research project by providing answers to the research sub-questions and, thus, to the main research question.

SQ1: Can specific events have positive externalities on the perception of a country?

With regards to this theme, academic literature has shown that events, in particular large-scale ones, have positive impacts on both hosting and participating countries. For what concerns the hosting nation, these benefits can relate to different spheres, namely its image, economy, politics and society (Deloitte, 2010). To begin with, the intense media coverage of the events leads to a higher visibility of the country and an enhanced perception of it held by people, resulting in increased incoming tourist flows (Deloitte, 2010; Hertz et al., 2018). Regarding the economic sphere, on one side the events attract foreign investment and international fundings. On the other side, the preparation activities necessary to host these events create new employment opportunities for the local communities (ibid). For what concerns the political aspects, the organization of the events creates cohesion both among the political parties and between the private and public sectors. Additionally, politicians involved in the realization of the events can profit from a better public image (Deloitte, 2010). Eventually, when it comes to societal matters, on one hand, a strengthened national pride can be observed among citizens. On the other hand, the high investment involved can be exploited for the redevelopment of the country's urban areas, thus improving locals' living conditions (ibid). With respect to participating countries, specifically those excelling in the events, they can gain international appreciation and a widespread feeling of national pride among their citizens (Grix, 2013).

SQ2: How is the perception of a country connected to the perception of a product manufactured in that country?

The existing literature around the COO effect has proven how the image people have of a country affects their perception of products originating in that country and thus influencing their eagerness to purchase such products (Pegan et al, 2020). According to the relevant literature, the relation between the COO bias and consumer behaviours can be understood through the consideration of three alternative components. Firstly, in the case of the cognitive component, the COO is used as an indicator of products' quality, especially when there is not enough information available about the product for customers to make a purchasing decision (Han, 1989; Oberecker & Diamantopoulos, 2011; Pastore, Ricotta & Giraldi, 2011). Then, another aspect is the affective one, according to which the COO of a product evokes a symbolic meaning in the consumer. Eventually, with the normative component, it is the desire to support one native's country economy that drives a consumer's propensity to purchase a product originating in that country (Pegan et al., 2020).

SQ3: Are there specific industries that can benefit more from these positive externalities resulting from certain events?

The literature on country of origin has also observed how certain product categories and, more broadly, some industries are strongly associated with a specific COO; when the association between an industry and its country of origin is perceived as strong, the result is an even stronger COO bias towards that product category (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Suter et al., 2020). The conclusion is that companies operating in the sectors mostly associated with their country of origin can exploit the way consumers perceive it to increase the value-added to their offerings (Suter et al., 2020). Specifically referring to the research at hand, the industries most related to Italy are Food & Beverages, Automotive, Tourism, and Fashion. Thus, the authors deem that these are the industries that can benefit the most from the advantages generated by the Italian successes in 2021.

SQ4: How is Italy perceived, both domestically and abroad after the occurrences in 2021?

The main theme of this study was the investigation of the way in which both Italians and foreigners perceived Italy following the achievements of 2021. On a general level, Italy was positively perceived by both respondents to the questionnaire and participants in the focus groups. Referring to the model to measure the image of a country theorised by Buhman (2016), the best perceived dimensions of the image of Italy were the aesthetic ad the emotional ones, while the worst perceived dimension was the normative one. Specifically, Italy was mostly recognised by participants for the beauty of its landscape and for its rich cuisine. On the other hand, the general public perceived the country as not particularly stable at a political level and lacking adequate policies with respect to environmental protection.

Going into greater detail, Italians demonstrated to have a better perception of Italy from an aesthetic point of view and a stronger emotional attachment to the country in comparison with foreigners. On the other hand, foreign respondents showed to have a better image of the country with respect to the functional and normative dimensions. Precisely, compared to foreigners, Italians declared to have a worse feeling towards Italy when it came to its political stability and the efficiency of its infrastructures. On the other side of the spectrum, Italians expressed their positive impression of its beautiful scenery and on the fact that the country was fascinating more than foreigners did.

SQ5: How are Made in Italy products perceived, both domestically and abroad?

Concerning the image Italian products have, participants have recognised Made in Italy products to be characterised by high quality, craftsmanship, and tradition and they agreed that Italian goods conveyed the idea of a high status symbol. On the other hand, it resulted that Made in Italy products were considered particularly expensive and lacking high technological and engineering features, as well as not being sustainable. On top of that, it emerged that the products' high quality was positively correlated by participants to high prices.

Specifically, Italian respondents demonstrated to have a general better perception of the characteristics of Made in Italy products compared to foreign participants. However, foreigners showed to have an overall positive image of Italian products, as the gap observed between Italians' and foreigners' perception was narrow.

SQ6: What effect does COO bias have on Made in Italy products?

Both from the questionnaires and the two focus groups it was observed that the good reputation of the country was reflected in the image that Italian products and brands had. Specifically, participants have admitted that, even without knowing it for sure, they automatically associated products originating from Italy with superior quality when compared to products originating from different countries. On top of that, some respondents admitted their perception of Made in Italy products changed as a consequence of the Italian successes in 2021.

SQ7: Can these positive externalities be exploited by companies to increase sales?

As already mentioned, a country can benefit from positive externalities resulting from certain events. These advantages could be exploited by those companies operating in the sectors mostly associated with that specific country, as investigated by Suter et al. (2020), to increase their sales. Thus, in this specific case, the Italian companies operating in the Food & Beverages, Automotive, Fashion, and Tourism could exploit the positive externalities resulting from the Italian achievements in 2021, as these were the sectors mostly related to Made in Italy.

The above-mentioned research sub-questions were aimed at providing a final answer to this study's main research question, namely:

How can Italian companies leverage the perception of Italy to improve their sales performance?

Notwithstanding the fact that foreigners had an overall positive opinion of Italy and its products, in the findings, it emerged that the perception of Italians towards the country and Made in Italy was better. Thus, the authors believe that Italian companies should implement a customer segmentation to differentiate the marketing campaigns addressing Italian and foreign consumers. Specifically, when it comes to foreigners, these marketing campaigns should keep the focus on the positive attributes that make Made in Italy unique and different from the competitors' ones. On the other hand, when targeting Italian consumers, aside from focusing on the positive features linked to Italian products, organisations should also leverage the perception Italian citizens have of their country, also known as country identity (Buhmann, 2016). This solution stems from the fact that Italians showed to possess a widespread national pride and a strong emotional attachment to their native country.

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8. Appendix

Appendix 1: Unstructured Interviews

Participant 1 (25 y.o., Female, Spanish): Clothes, Cars, Food.

Participant 2 (64 y.o., Male, Italian): Food, Fashion, Supercar, Aviation, Aerospace, Shipbuilding, Steel Industry.

Participant 3 (23 y.o., Male, Italian): Fashion, Automotive, Food, Interior Design.

Participant 4 (23 y.o., Female, Italian): Packaging, Arms Industry, Musical Instruments, Households' Goods.

Participant 5 (23 y.o., Female, Italian): Chemical, Furniture, Cosmetic, Marble, Sunglasses, Interior Design, Fashion.

Participant 6 (24 y.o., Female, Danish): Fashion, Food.

Participant 7 (19 y.o., Female, Danish): Food, Automotive, Music.

Participant 8 (27 y.o., Male, Italian): Fashion, Forniture, Design.

Participant 9 (26 y.o., Male Italian): Healthcare, Fashion, Automotive, Shipbuilding, Food.

Participant 10 (23 y.o., Female, Polish): Food, Fashion, Tourism.

Participant 11 (26 y.o., Female, German): Food, Fashion, Automotive.

Participant 12 (55 y.o., Female, Italian): Car, Fashion, Craftsmanship (I.e., ceramics).

Participant 13 (56 y.o., Male, Italian): Fashion, Food, Supercar, Precision Mechanics.

Participant 14 (26 y.o., Male, German): Fashion, Food, Car.

Participant 15 (25 y.o., Female, German): Food, Fashion Car.

Participant 15 (25 y.o., Female, Norwegian): Fashion.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Q1 When thinking of Italy as a country, how do you rate the following parameters in absolute terms?

	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Economic Strength	○	○	○	○	○
Political Stability	○	○	○	○	○
Infrastructures Efficiency	○	○	○	○	○
Environmental Protection Policies	○	○	○	○	○
Civil Rights Protection	○	○	○	○	○
Just Welfare System	○	○	○	○	○
Rich Culture and Traditions	○	○	○	○	○
Rich Culinary Traditions	○	○	○	○	○
Beautiful Scenery	○	○	○	○	○

Q2 How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Completely Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Completely Agree
I like Italy as a country	○	○	○	○	○
Italy is a fascinating country	○	○	○	○	○
I feel attracted to Italy as a country	○	○	○	○	○

Q3 How is your overall perception of Italy as a country?

- Very Negative
- Negative
- Neither Negative Nor Positive
- Positive
- Very Positive

Q4 Which industries do you associate to Made in Italy?

- Aerospace
- Arms
- Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (i.e., museums, live performances, sports, historical sites)
- Automotive
- Chemical
- Fashion (i.e., clothing and accessories)
- Food and Beverage
- Health Care
- Interior Design (i.e., furniture manufacturing and design)
- Musical Instruments
- Shipbuilding
- Steel
- Tourism
- Other ____

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Aerospace

Q5 Give one or two examples of Italian companies operating in the Aerospace industry.

____

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Arms

Q6 Give one or two examples of Italian companies operating in the Arms industry.

____

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Automotive

Q7 Give one or two examples of Italian companies operating in the Automotive industry.

____

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Chemical

Q8 Give one or two examples of Italian companies operating in the Chemical industry.

____

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Fashion (i.e., clothing and accessories)

Q9 Give one or two examples of Italian companies operating in the Fashion industry.

____

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Food and Beverage

Q10 Give one or two examples of Italian companies operating in the Food & Beverage industry.

____

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Interior Design (i.e., furniture manufacturing and design)

Q11 Give one or two examples of Italian companies operating in the Interior Design industry.

____

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Musical Instruments

Q12 Give one or two examples of Italian companies operating in the Musical Instruments industry.

____

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Shipbuilding

Q13 Give one or two examples of Italian companies operating in the Shipbuilding industry.

____

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Steel

Q14 Give one or two examples of Italian companies operating in the Steel industry.

____

Q15 To what extent do you associate the following attributes to Made in Italy products?

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Considerably	Extremely
Advanced Technology	○	○	○	○	○
Affordability	○	○	○	○	○
Craftmanship	○	○	○	○	○
Durability	○	○	○	○	○
Excellent Design	○	○	○	○	○
High Quality	○	○	○	○	○
High Value for Money	○	○	○	○	○
Sophistication	○	○	○	○	○
Status Symbol	○	○	○	○	○
Sustainability	○	○	○	○	○
Uniqueness	○	○	○	○	○

Q16 Considering your perception of Made in Italy products related to the above-mentioned attributes, how willing are you to purchase Made in Italy products?

- Very Low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

Preface The Economist has chosen Italy as the "Country of the Year" for 2021 following several achievements reached by the country. First and foremost, the appointment of Mario Draghi as the Prime Minister. Secondly, the Italian national football team's victory at the UEFA 2020. Finally, the Italian rock band Måneskin's triumph at the 2021 Eurovision Song Contest.

Q17 Were you aware of at least one of these Italian achievements?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Q17 = Yes

Q18 Do you think this awareness changed your perception of Italy as a country?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Q17 = No

Q19 Now that you are aware of these events, has your perception of Italy as a country changed?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Q18 = Yes

Or Q19 = Yes

Q20 How was your overall perception of Italy as a country affected?

- Very Negatively
- Negatively
- Positively
- Very Positively

Display This Question:

If Q18 = Yes

Or Q19 = Yes

Q21 How was your perception of each of the following parameters affected?

	Very Negatively	Negatively	Not Affected	Positively	Very Positively
Economic Strength	○	○	○	○	○
Political Stability	○	○	○	○	○
Infrastructures Efficiency	○	○	○	○	○
Environmental Protection Policies	○	○	○	○	○
Civil Rights Protection	○	○	○	○	○
Just Welfare System	○	○	○	○	○
Rich Culture and Traditions	○	○	○	○	○
Rich Culinary Traditions	○	○	○	○	○
Beautiful Scenery	○	○	○	○	○

Display This Question:

If Q18 = Yes

Or Q19 = Yes

Q22 How was your level of agreement with the following statements affected?

	Very Negatively	Negatively	Not Affected	Positively	Very Positively
I like Italy as a country	○	○	○	○	○
Italy is a fascinating country	○	○	○	○	○
I feel attracted to Italy as a country	○	○	○	○	○

Display This Question:

If Q17 = Yes

Q23 Do you think this awareness changed your perception of Made in Italy products?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Display This Question:

If Q17 = No

Q24 Now that you are aware of these events, has your perception of Made in Italy products changed?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Display This Question:

If Q23 = Yes

Or Q24 = Yes

Q25 How was your perception of Made in Italy products affected?

- ○ Very Negatively
- ○ Negatively
- ○ Positively
- ○ Very Positively

Q26 What is your nationality?

▼ Afghanistan (1) ... Zimbabwe (1357)

Q27 How old are you?

- Under 18
- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65+ years old

Q28 What best describes your employment status over the last three months?

- Working full-time
- Working part-time
- Self-employed
- Unemployed and looking for work
- A homemaker or stay-at-home parent
- Student
- Retired
- Other

Q29 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

Appendix 3: Report Questionnaire

Appendix 3.1: Total Report

Q1 - When thinking of Italy as a country, how do you rate the following parameters in absolute terms?

#	Question	Very Low		Low		Medium		High		Very High		Total
1	Economic Strength	3.29%	8	25.10%	61	50.62%	123	19.34%	47	1.65%	4	243
2	Political Stability	18.52%	45	40.33%	98	31.69%	77	8.64%	21	0.82%	2	243
3	Infrastructures Efficiency	4.94%	12	34.57%	84	46.91%	114	12.35%	30	1.23%	3	243
4	Environmental Protection Policies	8.23%	20	30.86%	75	47.33%	115	13.17%	32	0.41%	1	243
5	Civil Rights Protection	1.23%	3	11.93%	29	45.27%	110	36.63%	89	4.94%	12	243
6	Just Welfare System	2.88%	7	20.16%	49	48.56%	118	24.69%	60	3.70%	9	243
7	Rich Culture and Traditions	0.00%	0	0.41%	1	2.06%	5	20.99%	51	76.54%	186	243
8	Rich Culinary Traditions	0.00%	0	0.41%	1	0.82%	2	10.70%	26	88.07%	214	243
9	Beautiful Scenery	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	12.35%	30	87.65%	213	243

Q2 - How much do you agree with the following statements?

#	Question	Completely Disagree		Disagree		Neither Disagree Nor Agree		Agree		Completely Agree		Total
1	I like Italy as a country	0.00%	0	0.41%	1	3.70%	9	38.27%	93	57.61%	140	243
2	Italy is a fascinating country	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	2.88%	7	27.57%	67	69.55%	169	243
3	I feel attracted to Italy as a country	0.00%	0	2.47%	6	9.05%	22	28.40%	69	60.08%	146	243

Q3 - How is your overall perception of Italy as a country?

#	Answer	%	Count
4	4	64.61%	157
3	3	16.87%	41
5	5	15.23%	37
2	2	3.29%	8
	Total	100%	243

Q4 - Which industries do you associate to Made in Italy?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Aerospace	1.73%	25
2	Arms	1.66%	24
3	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (i.e., museums, live performances, sports, historical sites)	13.66%	197
4	Automotive	11.65%	168
5	Chemical	0.97%	14
6	Fashion (i.e., clothing and accessories)	15.95%	230
7	Food and Beverage	15.95%	230
8	Health Care	2.29%	33
9	Interior Design (i.e., furniture manufacturing and design)	9.43%	136
11	Musical Instruments	4.37%	63
14	Shipbuilding	4.99%	72
15	Steel	1.53%	22
16	Tourism	15.53%	224
17	Other	0.28%	4
	Total	100%	1442

Other - Text
Tiles for walls and Floor
locomotive

Q15 - To what extent do you associate the following attributes to Made in Italy products?

#	Question	Not at all		Moderately		Extremely		Slightly		Considerably		Total
1	Advanced Technology	8.23%	20	44.03%	107	3.29%	8	21.81%	53	22.63%	55	243
2	Affordability	5.35%	13	47.33%	115	3.70%	9	29.63%	72	13.99%	34	243
3	Craftmanship	0.00%	0	13.58%	33	34.98%	85	3.29%	8	48.15%	117	243
4	Durability	2.06%	5	23.87%	58	17.70%	43	4.53%	11	51.85%	126	243
5	Excellent Design	0.00%	0	7.82%	19	49.38%	120	1.23%	3	41.56%	101	243
6	High Quality	0.00%	0	16.87%	41	35.39%	86	2.06%	5	45.68%	111	243
7	High Value for Money	0.82%	2	47.74%	116	10.70%	26	9.05%	22	31.69%	77	243
8	Sophistication	0.00%	0	18.11%	44	32.92%	80	2.47%	6	46.50%	113	243
9	Status Symbol	0.00%	0	14.81%	36	39.51%	96	4.12%	10	41.56%	101	243
10	Sustainability	5.35%	13	51.03%	124	4.12%	10	21.81%	53	17.70%	43	243
11	Uniqueness	1.23%	3	20.16%	49	33.74%	82	3.29%	8	41.56%	101	243

Q16 - Considering your perception of Made in Italy products related to the above-mentioned attributes, how willing are you to purchase Made in Italy products?

#	Answer	%	Count
2	2	2.06%	5
3	3	18.52%	45
4	4	49.79%	121
5	5	29.63%	72
	Total	100%	243

Q17 - Were you aware of at least one of these Italian achievements?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	91.77%	223
2	No	8.23%	20
	Total	100%	243

Q18 - Do you think this awareness changed your perception of Italy as a country?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	26.01%	58
2	No	73.99%	165
	Total	100%	223

Q19 - Now that you are aware of these events, has your perception of Italy as a country changed?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	10.00%	2
2	No	90.00%	18
	Total	100%	20

Q20 - How was your overall perception of Italy as a country affected?

#	Answer	%	Count
2	2	1.67%	1
3	3	58.33%	35
4	4	40.00%	24
	Total	100%	60

Q21 - How was your perception of each of the following parameters affected?

#	Question	Not Affected		Very Negatively		Negatively		Positively		Very Positively		Total
1	Economic Strength	38.33%	23	0.00%	0	1.67%	1	55.00%	33	5.00%	3	60
2	Political Stability	45.00%	27	0.00%	0	1.67%	1	45.00%	27	8.33%	5	60
3	Infrastructures Efficiency	70.00%	42	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	26.67%	16	3.33%	2	60
4	Environmental Protection Policies	68.33%	41	0.00%	0	1.67%	1	26.67%	16	3.33%	2	60
5	Civil Rights Protection	56.67%	34	1.67%	1	5.00%	3	33.33%	20	3.33%	2	60
6	Just Welfare System	61.67%	37	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	35.00%	21	3.33%	2	60
7	Rich Culture and Traditions	30.00%	18	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	31.67%	19	38.33%	23	60
8	Rich Culinary Traditions	45.00%	27	0.00%	0	1.67%	1	23.33%	14	30.00%	18	60
9	Beautiful Scenery	46.67%	28	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	18.33%	11	35.00%	21	60

Q22 - How was your level of agreement with the following statements affected?

#	Question	Not Affected		Very Negatively		Negatively		Positively		Very Positively		Total
1	I like Italy as a country	23.33%	14	0.00%	0	1.67%	1	40.00%	24	35.00%	21	60
2	Italy is a fascinating country	25.00%	15	0.00%	0	1.67%	1	26.67%	16	46.67%	28	60
3	I feel attracted to Italy as a country	25.00%	15	0.00%	0	1.67%	1	33.33%	20	40.00%	24	60

Q23 - Do you think this awareness changed your perception of Made in Italy products?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	13.90%	31
2	No	86.10%	192
	Total	100%	223

Q24 - Now that you are aware of these events, has your perception of Made in Italy products changed?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	0.00%	0
2	No	100.00%	20
	Total	100%	20

Q25 - How was your perception of Made in Italy products affected?

#	Answer	%	Count
3	3	74.19%	23
4	4	25.81%	8
	Total	100%	31

Q26 – What is your Nationality?

#	Answer	%	Count
2	Albania	0.41%	1
17	Belgium	0.41%	1
24	Brazil	0.82%	2
26	Bulgaria	0.41%	1
36	China	0.41%	1
48	Denmark	11.93%	29
57	Estonia	0.41%	1
60	Finland	1.23%	3
61	France	0.82%	2
65	Germany	6.17%	15
67	Greece	0.41%	1
82	Ireland	0.41%	1
84	Italy	62.14%	151
111	Mexico	0.41%	1
113	Monaco	0.41%	1
122	Netherlands	1.23%	3

128	Norway	1.65%	4
137	Poland	0.82%	2
142	Romania	2.47%	6
143	Russian Federation	1.23%	3
156	Singapore	0.41%	1
163	Spain	4.12%	10
168	Sweden	0.41%	1
169	Switzerland	0.41%	1
185	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	0.41%	1
	Total	100%	243

Q27 - How old are you?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Under 18	0.00%	0
2	18-24 years old	38.27%	93
3	25-34 years old	25.93%	63
4	35-44 years old	8.64%	21
5	45-54 years old	13.17%	32
6	55-64 years old	12.76%	31
7	65+ years old	1.23%	3
	Total	100%	243

Q28 - What best describes your employment status over the last three months?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Working full-time	45.27%	110
2	Working part-time	5.76%	14
3	Unemployed and looking for work	2.06%	5
4	A homemaker or stay-at-home parent	0.00%	0
5	Student	34.98%	85

6	Retired	2.06%	5
7	Self-employed	8.23%	20
8	Other	1.65%	4
	Total	100%	243

Q29- What is your gender?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	41.15%	100
2	Female	58.02%	141
3	Non-binary / third gender	0.41%	1
4	Prefer not to say	0.41%	1
	Total	100%	243

Appendix 3.2: Italians Report

Q1 - When thinking of Italy as a country, how do you rate the following parameters in absolute terms?

#	Question	Very Low		Low		Medium		High		Very High		Total
1	Economic Strength	3.97%	6	24.50%	37	50.99%	77	18.54%	28	1.99%	3	151
2	Political Stability	24.50%	37	47.68%	72	23.18%	35	3.97%	6	0.66%	1	151
3	Infrastructures Efficiency	6.62%	10	41.06%	62	45.70%	69	6.62%	10	0.00%	0	151
4	Environmental Protection Policies	8.61%	13	33.77%	51	44.37%	67	12.58%	19	0.66%	1	151
5	Civil Rights Protection	1.99%	3	15.23%	23	46.36%	70	31.13%	47	5.30%	8	151
6	Just Welfare System	3.97%	6	22.52%	34	45.70%	69	24.50%	37	3.31%	5	151
7	Rich Culture and Traditions	0.00%	0	0.66%	1	1.99%	3	23.18%	35	74.17%	112	151
8	Rich Culinary Traditions	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	13.25%	20	86.75%	131	151
9	Beautiful Scenery	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	9.27%	14	90.73%	137	151

Q2 - How much do you agree with the following statements?

#	Question	Completely Disagree		Disagree		Neither Disagree Nor Agree		Agree		Completely Agree		Total
1	I like Italy as a country	0.00%	0	0.66%	1	3.31%	5	39.07%	59	56.95%	86	151
2	Italy is a fascinating country	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	1.99%	3	19.21%	29	78.81%	119	151
3	I feel attracted to Italy as a country	0.00%	0	1.99%	3	9.27%	14	25.17%	38	63.58%	96	151

Q3 - How is your overall perception of Italy as a country?

#	Answer	%	Count
4	4	60.93%	92
3	3	23.18%	35
5	5	11.26%	17
2	2	4.64%	7
	Total	100%	151

Q4 - Which industries do you associate to Made in Italy?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Aerospace	2.40%	23
2	Arms	2.29%	22
3	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (i.e., museums, live performances, sports, historical sites)	13.23%	127
4	Automotive	11.35%	109
5	Chemical	1.15%	11
6	Fashion (i.e., clothing and accessories)	14.69%	141
7	Food and Beverage	14.58%	140
8	Health Care	2.81%	27
9	Interior Design (i.e., furniture manufacturing and design)	9.58%	92

11	Musical Instruments	4.69%	45
14	Shipbuilding	6.77%	65
15	Steel	1.98%	19
16	Tourism	14.37%	138
17	Other	0.10%	1
	Total	100%	960

Q15 - To what extent do you associate the following attributes to Made in Italy products?

#	Question	Not at all		Moderately		Extremely		Slightly		Considerably		Total
1	Advanced Technology	0.66%	1	48.34%	73	4.64%	7	21.85%	33	24.50%	37	151
2	Affordability	2.65%	4	50.33%	76	3.31%	5	32.45%	49	11.26%	17	151
3	Craftmanship	0.00%	0	11.26%	17	43.05%	65	0.00%	0	45.70%	69	151
4	Durability	0.66%	1	23.84%	36	21.19%	32	0.00%	0	54.30%	82	151
5	Excellent Design	0.00%	0	7.95%	12	51.66%	78	0.66%	1	39.74%	60	151
6	High Quality	0.00%	0	15.23%	23	42.38%	64	0.00%	0	42.38%	64	151
7	High Value for Money	0.66%	1	51.66%	78	9.27%	14	6.62%	10	31.79%	48	151
8	Sophistication	0.00%	0	12.58%	19	37.75%	57	1.99%	3	47.68%	72	151
9	Status Symbol	0.00%	0	13.91%	21	41.72%	63	4.64%	7	39.74%	60	151
10	Sustainability	1.32%	2	55.63%	84	3.97%	6	17.88%	27	21.19%	32	151
11	Uniqueness	0.00%	0	13.91%	21	42.38%	64	1.32%	2	42.38%	64	151

Q16 - Considering your perception of Made in Italy products related to the above-mentioned attributes, how willing are you to purchase Made in Italy products?

#	Answer	%	Count
2	2	1.99%	3
3	3	16.56%	25
4	4	49.67%	75
5	5	31.79%	48
	Total	100%	151

Q17 - Were you aware of at least one of these Italian achievements?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	96.03%	145
2	No	3.97%	6
	Total	100%	151

Q18 - Do you think this awareness changed your perception of Italy as a country?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	32.41%	47
2	No	67.59%	98
	Total	100%	145

Q19 - Now that you are aware of these events, has your perception of Italy as a country changed?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	0.00%	0
2	No	100.00%	6
	Total	100%	6

Q20 - How was your overall perception of Italy as a country affected?

#	Answer	%	Count
2	2	2.13%	1
3	3	53.19%	25
4	4	44.68%	21
	Total	100%	47

Q21 - How was your perception of each of the following parameters affected?

#	Question	Not Affected		Very Negatively		Negatively		Positively		Very Positively		Total
1	Economic Strength	42.55%	20	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	51.06%	24	6.38%	3	47
2	Political Stability	44.68%	21	0.00%	0	2.13%	1	44.68%	21	8.51%	4	47
3	Infrastructures Efficiency	68.09%	32	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	27.66%	13	4.26%	2	47
4	Environmental Protection Policies	65.96%	31	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	29.79%	14	4.26%	2	47
5	Civil Rights Protection	48.94%	23	2.13%	1	6.38%	3	38.30%	18	4.26%	2	47
6	Just Welfare System	59.57%	28	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	36.17%	17	4.26%	2	47
7	Rich Culture and Traditions	29.79%	14	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	29.79%	14	40.43%	19	47
8	Rich Culinary Traditions	44.68%	21	0.00%	0	2.13%	1	21.28%	10	31.91%	15	47
9	Beautiful Scenery	44.68%	21	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	17.02%	8	38.30%	18	47

Q22 - How was your level of agreement with the following statements affected?

#	Question	Not Affected		Very Negatively		Negatively		Positively		Very Positively		Total
1	I like Italy as a country	25.53%	12	0.00%	0	2.13%	1	38.30%	18	34.04%	16	47
2	Italy is a fascinating country	25.53%	12	0.00%	0	2.13%	1	25.53%	12	46.81%	22	47
3	I feel attracted to Italy as a country	27.66%	13	0.00%	0	2.13%	1	29.79%	14	40.43%	19	47

Q23 - Do you think this awareness changed your perception of Made in Italy products?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	16.55%	24
2	No	83.45%	121
	Total	100%	145

Q24 - Now that you are aware of these events, has your perception of Made in Italy products changed?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	0.00%	0
2	No	100.00%	6
	Total	100%	6

Q25 - How was your perception of Made in Italy products affected?

#	Answer	%	Count
3	3	70.83%	17
4	4	29.17%	7
	Total	100%	24

Q26 – What is your Nationality?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Italy	100.00%	151
	Total	100%	151

Q27 - How old are you?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Under 18	0.00%	0
2	18-24 years old	39.74%	60
3	25-34 years old	21.85%	33
4	35-44 years old	2.65%	4
5	45-54 years old	17.88%	27
6	55-64 years old	15.89%	24
7	65+ years old	1.99%	3
	Total	100%	151

Q28 - What best describes your employment status over the last three months?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Working full-time	46.36%	70
2	Working part-time	3.97%	6
3	Unemployed and looking for work	0.66%	1
4	A homemaker or stay-at-home parent	0.00%	0
5	Student	34.44%	52
6	Retired	2.65%	4
7	Self-employed	9.93%	15
8	Other	1.99%	3
	Total	100%	151

Q29 - What is your gender?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	40.40%	61
2	Female	58.94%	89
3	Non-binary / third gender	0.00%	0
4	Prefer not to say	0.66%	1
	Total	100%	151

Appendix 3.3: Foreigners Report

Q1 - When thinking of Italy as a country, how do you rate the following parameters in absolute terms?

#	Question	Very Low		Low		Medium		High		Very High		Total
1	Economic Strength	2.17%	2	26.09%	24	50.00%	46	20.65%	19	1.09%	1	92
2	Political Stability	8.70%	8	28.26%	26	45.65%	42	16.30%	15	1.09%	1	92
3	Infrastructures Efficiency	2.17%	2	23.91%	22	48.91%	45	21.74%	20	3.26%	3	92
4	Environmental Protection Policies	7.61%	7	26.09%	24	52.17%	48	14.13%	13	0.00%	0	92
5	Civil Rights Protection	0.00%	0	6.52%	6	43.48%	40	45.65%	42	4.35%	4	92

6	Just Welfare System	1.09%	1	16.30%	15	53.26%	49	25.00%	23	4.35%	4	92
7	Rich Culture and Traditions	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	2.17%	2	17.39%	16	80.43%	74	92
8	Rich Culinary Traditions	0.00%	0	1.09%	1	2.17%	2	6.52%	6	90.22%	83	92
9	Beautiful Scenery	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	17.39%	16	82.61%	76	92

Q2 - How much do you agree with the following statements?

#	Question	Completely Disagree		Disagree		Neither Disagree Nor Agree		Agree		Completely Agree		Total
1	I like Italy as a country	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.35%	4	36.96%	34	58.70%	54	92
2	Italy is a fascinating country	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.35%	4	41.30%	38	54.35%	50	92
3	I feel attracted to Italy as a country	0.00%	0	3.26%	3	8.70%	8	33.70%	31	54.35%	50	92

Q3 - How is your overall perception of Italy as a country?

#	Answer	%	Count
4	4	70.65%	65
5	5	21.74%	20
3	3	6.52%	6
2	2	1.09%	1
	Total	100%	92

Q4 - Which industries do you associate to Made in Italy?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Aerospace	0.41%	2
2	Arms	0.41%	2
3	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (i.e., museums, live performances, sports, historical sites)	14.52%	70
4	Automotive	12.24%	59
5	Chemical	0.62%	3

6	Fashion (i.e., clothing and accessories)	18.46%	89
7	Food and Beverage	18.67%	90
8	Health Care	1.24%	6
9	Interior Design (i.e., furniture manufacturing and design)	9.13%	44
11	Musical Instruments	3.73%	18
14	Shipbuilding	1.45%	7
15	Steel	0.62%	3
16	Tourism	17.84%	86
17	Other	0.62%	3
	Total	100%	482

Other - Text
Tiles for walls and Floor
Locomotive

Q15 - To what extent do you associate the following attributes to Made in Italy products?

#	Question	Not at all		Moderately		Extremely		Slightly		Considerably		Total
1	Advanced Technology	20.65%	19	36.96%	34	1.09%	1	21.74%	20	19.57%	18	92
2	Affordability	9.78%	9	42.39%	39	4.35%	4	25.00%	23	18.48%	17	92
3	Craftmanship	0.00%	0	17.39%	16	21.74%	20	8.70%	8	52.17%	48	92
4	Durability	4.35%	4	23.91%	22	11.96%	11	11.96%	11	47.83%	44	92
5	Excellent Design	0.00%	0	7.61%	7	45.65%	42	2.17%	2	44.57%	41	92
6	High Quality	0.00%	0	19.57%	18	23.91%	22	5.43%	5	51.09%	47	92
7	High Value for Money	1.09%	1	41.30%	38	13.04%	12	13.04%	12	31.52%	29	92
8	Sophistication	0.00%	0	27.17%	25	25.00%	23	3.26%	3	44.57%	41	92
9	Status Symbol	0.00%	0	16.30%	15	35.87%	33	3.26%	3	44.57%	41	92
10	Sustainability	11.96%	11	43.48%	40	4.35%	4	28.26%	26	11.96%	11	92
11	Uniqueness	3.26%	3	30.43%	28	19.57%	18	6.52%	6	40.22%	37	92

Q16 - Considering your perception of Made in Italy products related to the above-mentioned attributes, how willing are you to purchase Made in Italy products?

#	Answer	%	Count
2	2	2.17%	2
3	3	21.74%	20
4	4	50.00%	46
5	5	26.09%	24
	Total	100%	92

Q17 - Were you aware of at least one of these Italian achievements?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	84.78%	78
2	No	15.22%	14
	Total	100%	92

Q18 - Do you think this awareness changed your perception of Italy as a country?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	14.10%	11
2	No	85.90%	67
	Total	100%	78

Q19 - Now that you are aware of these events, has your perception of Italy as a country changed?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	14.29%	2
2	No	85.71%	12
	Total	100%	14

Q20 - How was your overall perception of Italy as a country affected?

#	Answer	%	Count
3	3	76.92%	10
4	4	23.08%	3
	Total	100%	13

Q21 - How was your perception of each of the following parameters affected?

#	Question	Not Affected		Very Negatively		Negatively		Positively		Very Positively		Total
1	Economic Strength	23.08%	3	0.00%	0	7.69%	1	69.23%	9	0.00%	0	13
2	Political Stability	46.15%	6	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	46.15%	6	7.69%	1	13
3	Infrastructures Efficiency	76.92%	10	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	23.08%	3	0.00%	0	13
4	Environmental Protection Policies	76.92%	10	0.00%	0	7.69%	1	15.38%	2	0.00%	0	13
5	Civil Rights Protection	84.62%	11	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	15.38%	2	0.00%	0	13
6	Just Welfare System	69.23%	9	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	30.77%	4	0.00%	0	13
7	Rich Culture and Traditions	30.77%	4	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	38.46%	5	30.77%	4	13
8	Rich Culinary Traditions	46.15%	6	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	30.77%	4	23.08%	3	13
9	Beautiful Scenery	53.85%	7	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	23.08%	3	23.08%	3	13

Q22 - How was your level of agreement with the following statements affected?

#	Question	Not Affected		Very Negatively		Negatively		Positively		Very Positively		Total
1	I like Italy as a country	15.38%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	46.15%	6	38.46%	5	13
2	Italy is a fascinating country	23.08%	3	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	30.77%	4	46.15%	6	13
3	I feel attracted to Italy as a country	15.38%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	46.15%	6	38.46%	5	13

Q23 - Do you think this awareness changed your perception of Made in Italy products?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	8.97%	7
2	No	91.03%	71
	Total	100%	78

Q24 - Now that you are aware of these events, has your perception of Made in Italy products changed?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	0.00%	0
2	No	100.00%	14
	Total	100%	14

Q25 - How was your perception of Made in Italy products affected?

#	Answer	%	Count
3	3	85.71%	6
4	4	14.29%	1
	Total	100%	7

Q26 – What is you Nationality?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Albania	1.09%	1
2	Belgium	1.09%	1
3	Brazil	2.17%	2
4	Bulgaria	1.09%	1
5	China	1.09%	1
6	Denmark	31.52%	29
7	Estonia	1.09%	1
8	Finland	3.26%	3

9	France	2.17%	2
10	Germany	16.30%	15
11	Greece	1.09%	1
12	Ireland	1.09%	1
13	Mexico	1.09%	1
14	Monaco	1.09%	1
15	Netherlands	3.26%	3
16	Norway	4.35%	4
17	Poland	2.17%	2
18	Romania	6.52%	6
19	Russian Federation	3.26%	3
20	Singapore	1.09%	1
21	Spain	10.87%	10
22	Sweden	1.09%	1
23	Switzerland	1.09%	1
24	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1.09%	1
	Total	100%	92

Q27 - How old are you?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Under 18	0.00%	0
2	18-24 years old	35.87%	33
3	25-34 years old	32.61%	30
4	35-44 years old	18.48%	17
5	45-54 years old	5.43%	5
6	55-64 years old	7.61%	7
7	65+ years old	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	92

Q28 - What best describes your employment status over the last three months?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Working full-time	43.48%	40
2	Working part-time	8.70%	8
3	Unemployed and looking for work	4.35%	4
4	A homemaker or stay-at-home parent	0.00%	0
5	Student	35.87%	33
6	Retired	1.09%	1
7	Self-employed	5.43%	5
8	Other	1.09%	1
	Total	100%	92

Q29 - What is your gender?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	42.39%	39
2	Female	56.52%	52
3	Non-binary / third gender	1.09%	1
4	Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	92

Appendix 4: Graphs from the Questionnaire

All the graphs in the Appendices 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 were created by the authors based on the results of the questionnaire.

Appendix 4.1: Demographic of Total Respondents

Figure 1: Nationality of Respondents

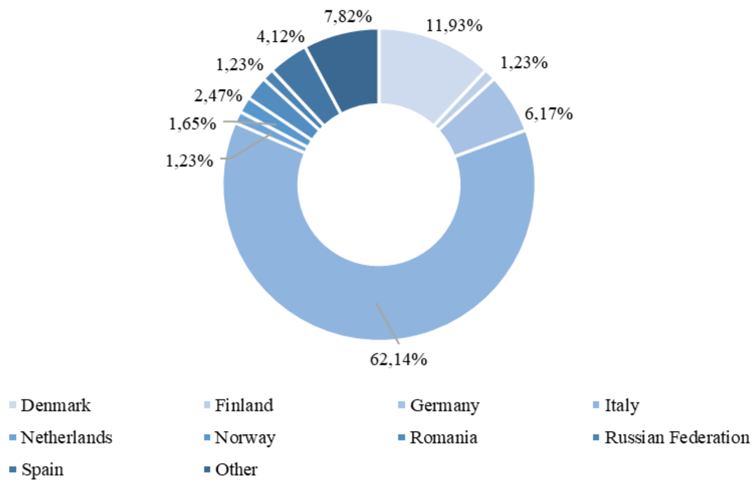


Figure 2: Occupation of Respondents

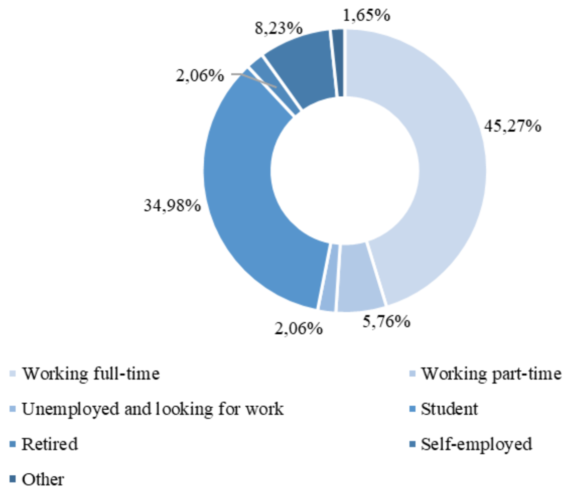


Figure 3: Gender of Respondents

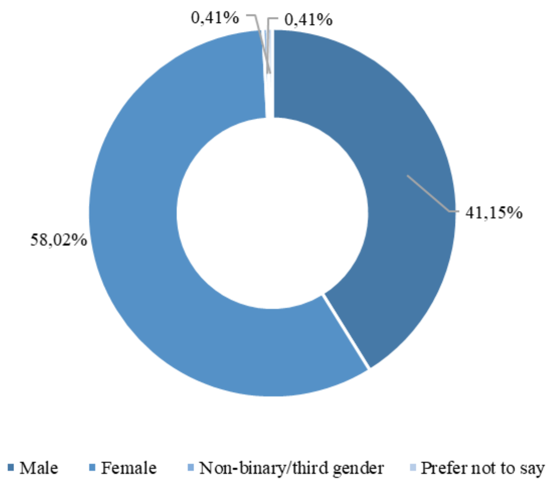
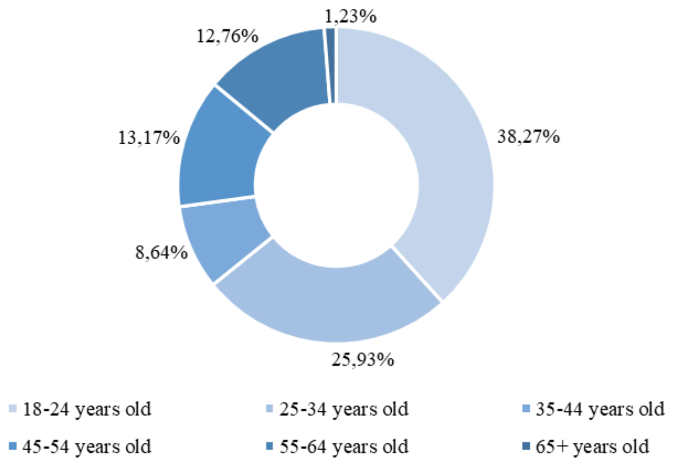


Figure 4: Age of Respondents



Appendix 4.2: Demographics of Italian Respondents

Figure 1: Age of Italian Respondents

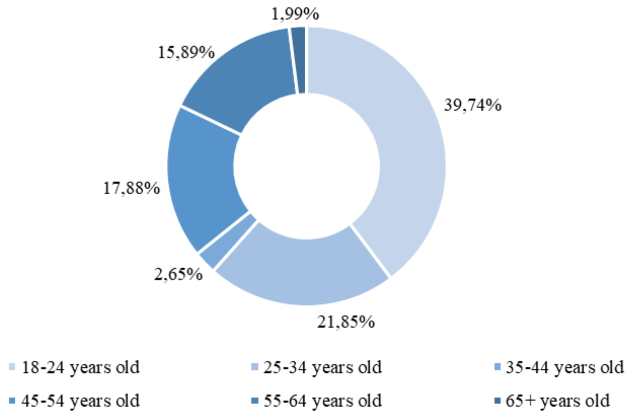


Figure 2: Occupation of Italian Respondents

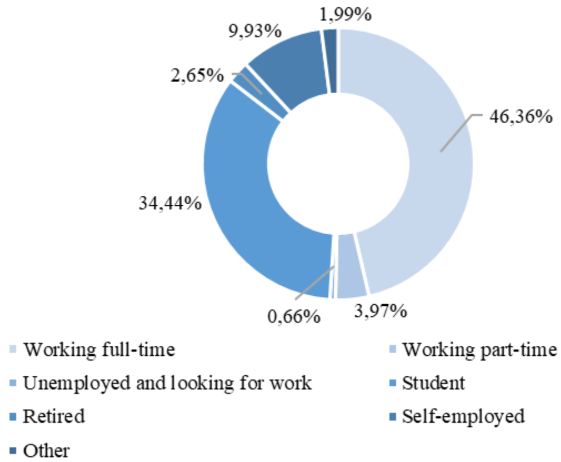
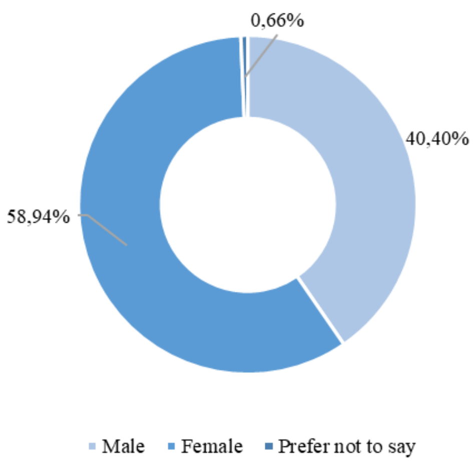


Figure 3: Gender of Italian Respondents



Appendix 4.3: Demographic of Foreigners

Figure 1: Age of Foreign Respondents

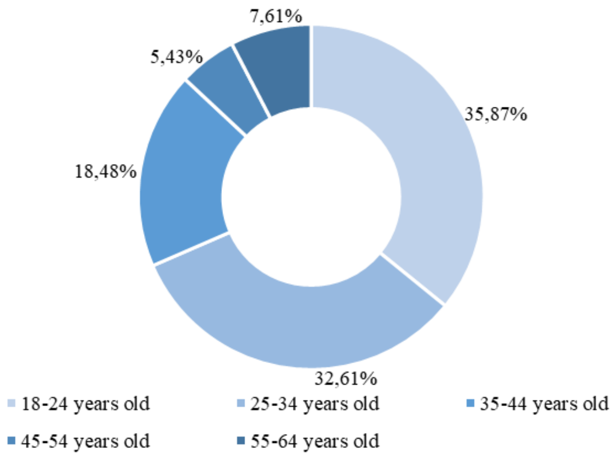


Figure 2: Occupation of Foreign Respondents

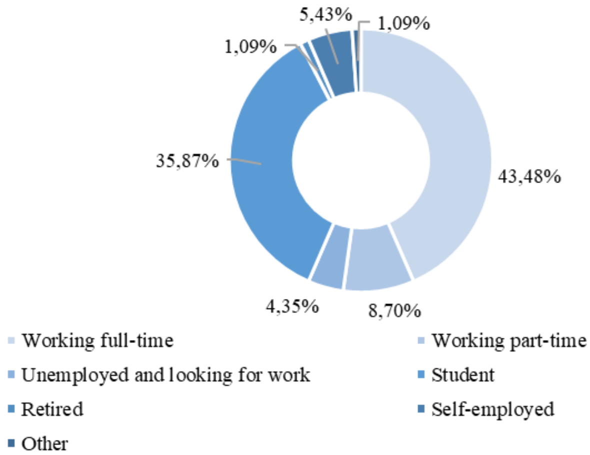
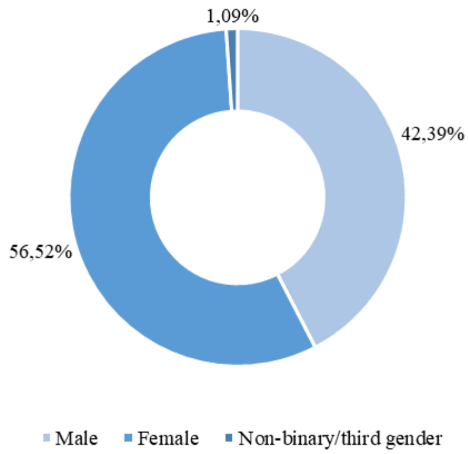


Figure 3: Gender of Foreign Respondents



Appendix 4.4: Perception of Italy

Figure 1: Perceived Image of Italy (Attributes and Statements) by all Respondents

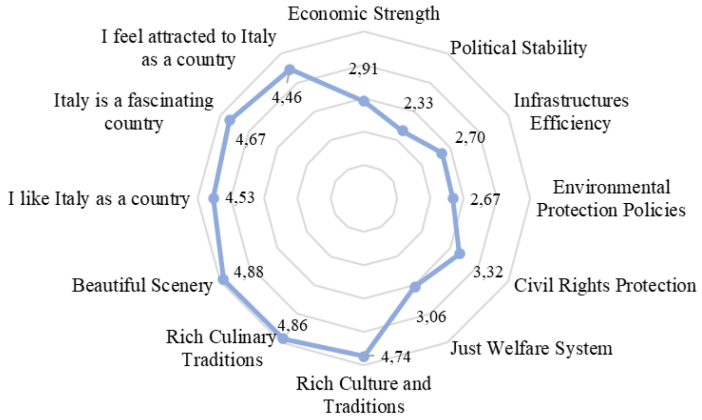


Figure 2: Overall Perception of Italy by all Respondents

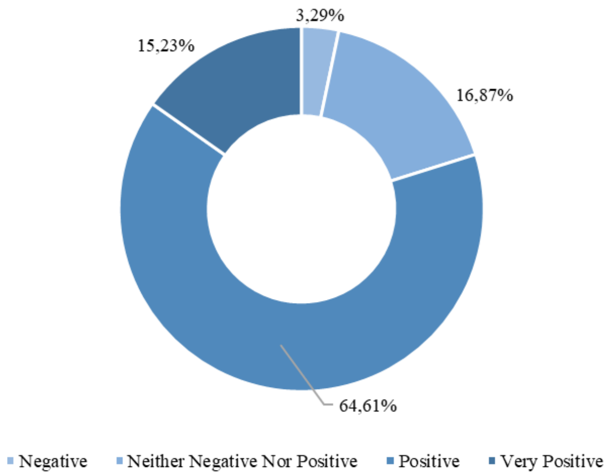
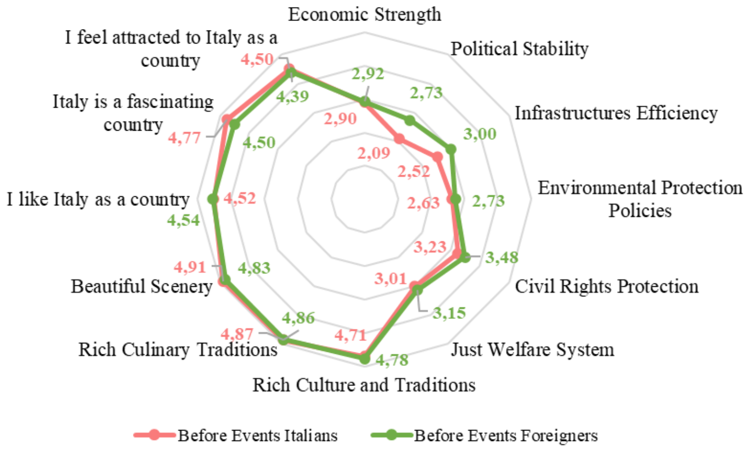


Figure 3: Perceived Image of Italy by Foreigners and Italians (Attributes)



Appendix 4.5: Made in Italy Products Perception

Figure 1: Industries Associated with Made in Italy by Foreign Respondents

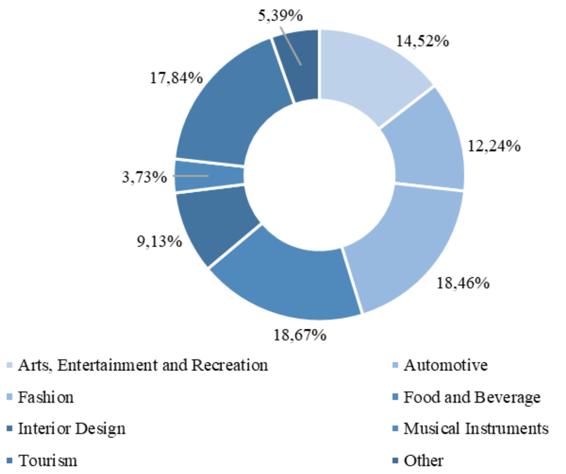


Figure 2: Industries Associated with Made in Italy by Italian Respondents

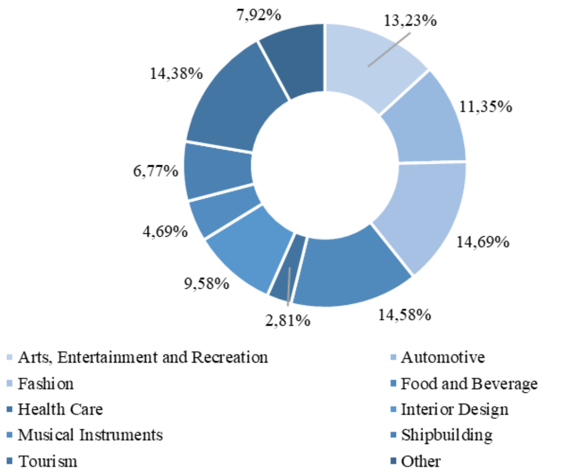


Figure 3: Willingness to Purchase Made in Italy by Foreign Respondents

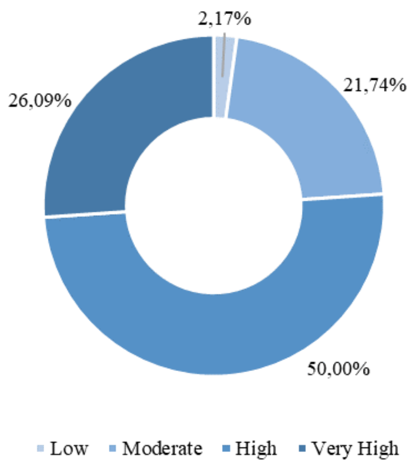
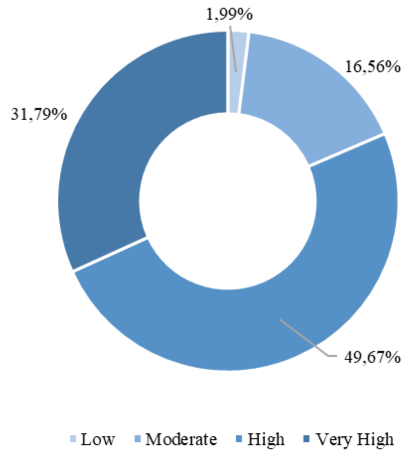


Figure 4: Willingness to Purchase Made in Italy by Italian Respondents



Appendix 5: Secondary Data

Figure 1: NBI Top-10 Ranking 2008-2020. Source: Ipsos (2021a).

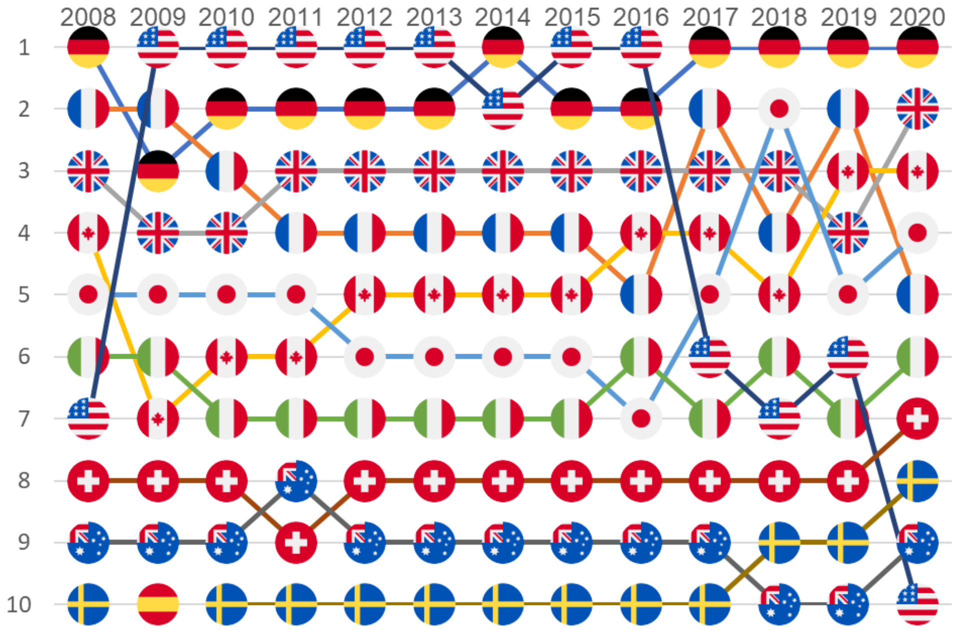
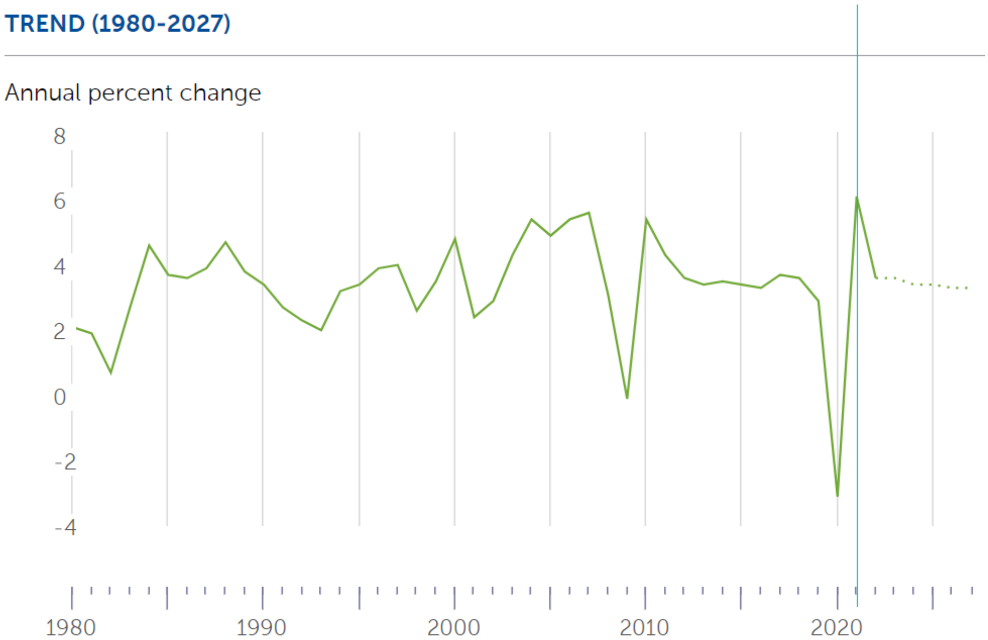


Figure 2: Annual Percentage Changes in GDP (1980 – 2027). Source: International Monetary Fund (2022).



Appendix 6: Focus Group Transcripts

Appendix 6.1: Focus Group 1, 09/04/2021

Moderator 1: Okay, guys. Thank you for participating today. We know that you're busy. And we hope we can make it up to you with these snacks. Hopefully it's enough. And since this focus group represents a very big part for our master's thesis, we really appreciate your help today. And then, of course, if you need any clarification about the question during the focus group, just please ask. As I already said, it's going to be recorded, but all the information is going to be confidential, so no name is going to be written anywhere. The topic we're going to explore today is Made in Italy, and in general your consumption habits. So, there are no right or wrong answers. We just want to hear your honest opinion about what we're going to ask you today. We just start with: how are you doing guys?
Participant 2: Good!
Participant 3: Great!
Participant 4: Stressed.
Moderator 1: Okay, I see your embarrassment but it's okay. The snacks are there for that: you can eat, okay? Are you ready to start?
Participant 4: Yeah!
Moderator 1: First question guys: **Which factors do you consider as most important when purchasing a product like for example, price quality or whatever comes to your mind?**
Participant 2: Both price and quality.
Participant 2: I guess it depends on the product: for some it's more the price, for some it's both quality and price.
Participant 3: For me it's more quality but adding good price. I mean, it doesn't have to be super cheap, but as long as it's not super expensive but you get a great quality for the money. And also, how it's made. I don’t want to buy something that's children in China have been sweating all over.
Participant 5: I think it also depends for me a bit on how long I will use the product. If it's for 30 years from now, then maybe more the quality, otherwise maybe more the price.
Participant 6: I think it depends on the product to be honest. Because when I buy furniture, I'm not that focused on the quality but more on the price. But If I were for example to buy a phone, I would be more focused on the brand and the quality.
Participant 7: Yeah, of course it depends on the product. Just going specifically about food: for example, for vegetables I don't care about the price much and I try to, I mean, I would like to buy stuff that is øko, as they say in Denmark, but for example here they package it in plastic, so I never buy that because it's a waste. But this is just for food related things. If we go outside like electronics and such, the price is probably the number one concern I have.
Participant 8: Yeah, I think I would agree with that too. Also, like somebody said before, we know that okay, I'm just going to use it once and I really don't need to use it again, then I would definitely go for the price.
Moderator 1: Okay, you actually introduce the next question. So, we're going to go a bit deeper into the product category. So**, if you were to purchase food products, then what would be the factor that you would consider for buying a food product?**
Participant 8: Expiry date.
Participant 7: Always reaching for the last product on the shelf to get the product, for no reason at all.
Participant 3: sometimes I feel like an idiot because I am dragging everything out to see the last one and what expiry date it has. And then also, I don't want to have food that has a lot of antibiotics and stuff. And for

example, when I'm buying chicken, I want to know that they're eating good food, not like being injected with a lot of stuff.

Participant 2: Yeah, especially for meat I would say quality is important and maybe the country of origin. And for some food products maybe also how they look, then they would attract me more.

Participant 8: I would also say packaging: first of all, here you have all fruits or whatever, packaged as someone said separately in plastic, there's just so much waste. But also whether the packaging is broken because, like, with other products, I don't really care if the bag has a hole or something, but with food this is something that I look at.

Participant 4: I try not to buy food that has a lot of plastic in the packaging and also, for me, it depends on the country that the food comes from. Like, I'm Spanish, so, for example, if I see veggies that are from Spain, I tend to buy those rather than veggies that come from, I don't know, America or somewhere else.

Participant 6: to be honest I don't care too much about all these particulars. I just try to not buy too much food, so I don't need to throw it away. But I think when it comes to food, I'm really price sensitive, not always but sometimes. Of course, for some quality products I'm not price sensitive, but usually I'm very price sensitive. I also look at the offers in the catalogues or so.

Participant 5: Me as well. Only maybe if I have specific brands that I really like then I am maybe a bit less price sensitive for example for Lavazza coffee.

Participant 6: Do you like that?

Participant 5: Yeah!

Participant 6: It's one of the best, I think.

Participant 7: I have a bit of a weird habit like if it's perishable foods like fruits and vegetables, I don't care about the origin at all, like I don't even check it and I tend to go for the ones with the lower plastic content. I don't like to see stuff even if it's organic or whatever, if it's packed in three or four layers, I'll just skip it. And also, I don't care about the price when it comes to those for pasta boxes and/or sauces and stuff that is in season or whatever I go by if it's made in Italy, I usually focus on those, pasta brands for example are De Cecco or Barilla always. And that's also because I'm really limited in my choices because I only have Føtex next to my place and they don't usually present Rummo or other more high-quality brands. So yeah, I don't go out of my way to find them.

Participant 5: Super Brugsen has Rummo pasta.

Participant 7: Yeah, but it's far away from my place, so I actually stay with them. The opportunity cost is too high. But when it comes to meat, then, for some reason I'm very price sensitive. If it's 2 DKK today I'm eating chicken instead of the other one. It makes no sense but that's how I do it.

Moderator 1: So, the same question **if you were to purchase this time a fashion product, the factors that you consider**? So, when it comes to clothes or accessories or whatever you think about fashion.

Participant 3: Definitely quality. I always check what fabrics it's made of, because then I know if it's made from like polyester, I know it's not going to last me as long. But if I buy something that is, I don't know, 100% wool or something I know that maybe it's more expensive in the moment but it's going to last me longer, so in the long term it's actually less expensive, so I definitely check for quality.

Moderator 2: Okay, thank you. And what did the others think about clothing and accessories? What do you consider?

Participant 5: Who buys cheap, buys twice.

Participant 3: Quote of the day.

Participant 6: So, you would rather buy two things, two non-quality things, than one thing with quality?

Participant 5: No, no, the opposite. The one with higher quality instead of purchasing the same product a few months later once again.

Participant 2: Yeah, I guess for fashion I'm also pretty much focused on brands. There are a few brands that I trust, and I would definitely go for them. I know that the quality is more or less fine, and the price is fair, and hopefully they don't use any child labor. You never know that. I would never buy on Shein, for example.
Participant 5: Do you look at the COO?
Participant 2: Not every time.
Participant 6: Did you say H&M?
Participant 2: No, Shein, the Chinese mega store.
Participant 7: In my case, it will depend on the expense, like if it's t-shirts or something that usually it's lower than 20 euros or something, I don't care, I just pick the one that looks better. But if we are talking about significant purchases, like a new coat or something, then it takes me three months because I first have to decide the price range and I want to go over that, and then I spend hours on websites searching for reviews and people saying, "that one was nice", "that one was actually bad" and whatever. So yeah, price and quality are the two main factors, but only if it's a significant purchase, otherwise I don't care.
Participant 4: I can kind of agree on that. If, for example, I need a pair of jeans or a basic white t-shirt then I don't care that much about the quality. But if it's another thing like a jumper, then yeah, I want it to last as long as possible.
Participant 6: Of course, I care about the quality but when I choose what to buy, it doesn't depend on which brand it is, but just if it's nice to me. So, I can change brands very often.
Moderator 2: Okay. So, you don't have any brands that you're particularly loyal to?
Participant 6: Yeah, I have some brands that I like but I wouldn't say that I'm very loyal to them.
Moderator 2: Okay, thank you.
Moderator 1: Okay. Then, with the same question, **if you were to purchase a car, what are the factors that you would look at, hypothetically in the future?**
Participant 2: It has to be a German car. That would be because of quality and to support our country's economy. It would be an electric car, if I had the money.
Participant 7: I would go by the services that they offer you with it. Usually, they can offer you a quite nice car but then you have to take care of everything yourself like the tires and the maintenance or whatever. But I think it would go with the ones that work for you. For example, three years deals with tires, whatever, oil change and general maintenance.
Participant 6: I can't really set myself in the mindset of buying a car. Because living in, I mean, right now living in Copenhagen, I don't see why I need a car right now. So, I've never had this thought about which cars to buy. So, I really have no idea about which things I would like to prioritize when buying a car in the future.
Participant 8: I think it also depends on where and what I would need this car for. If I have a big family and kids and I need to drive them to school, then of course I would also take this into consideration.
Participant 6: Probably with car I'm like, more than with the other stuff, I really like some brands, for example Audi, and so, maybe the brand would be a driver for me. But also, the service inside the car I think are very important.
Moderator 1: Something else to add about factors?
Participant 3: Also, where you live because I feel like if I were to live in a big city, then I would want a smaller car, because of parking. Whereas if I lived like somewhere else, like a smaller place, then that wouldn't really bother me to have a big car.
Participant 6: Probably, if I'm going to have a nice car, I will just move from Denmark because taxes here are too high.
Participant 3: Dubai?
Participant 6: Yeah. It's like, where do you park the car?
Participant 3: Yeah, that's true.

Participant 7: Then, I guess fuel prices, right?
Participant 6: Yeah, that's that. Now, there are frozen fuel prices, but I mean fuel prices for a period were higher in Italy then in Denmark. Now, maybe it's a bit the opposite, but still very high.
Participant 3: Yeah. It's expensive either way.
Moderator 1: Okay, so, moving on to the second tranche of questions. In the past two years, we already know that we went through many changes brought upon by the pandemic, unfortunately. So, the question is now, **if you have noticed any changes in your consumption habits, and if you did, can you just please elaborate a bit on that?**
Participant 3: It's got so much worse… It is so bad! Because during the pandemic when we were sent home, then I would, like, scroll down on online shops and everything, really so bad. So, for me it was not good.
Moderator 2: So, you felt like you had an incentive to buy more?
Participant 3: Yes, because I had more time! Like, we were home schooled all the time, so I was okay. Yeah, I got like a mini hobby.
Participant 2: For me, I feel like I didn't buy more but definitely more online. Not only clothes, but also ordering food, that became more of a habit.
Participant 8: For me it depends: it's like, I think I started eating healthier, because I didn't do as much sport during the pandemic for example, but I had more time to actually cook by myself.
Moderator 2: Okay, any other opinion on this?
Participant 6: I don't think that I changed, I think.
Participant 4: Yeah, same.
Participant 6: Not really, maybe not my consumption. Maybe no, that was just during the pandemic that I just took less flights. But then that has changed since that so…
Moderator 1: And for those who actually said that something changed, did you also notice a change about the factors that you look at when buying products or not?
Participant 3: No, I think it stayed the same.
Participant 2: Maybe you get more time to compare prices and quality, but overall, not too much.
Participant 6: Maybe I had an idea about not using, for example, Amazon too much and turn to help some of the physical shops but that's just so inconvenient both because of the price (if you're price-sensitive, then it is cheaper online), but also because online you can have, you can like compare prices, you have much wider choice. So, I think I'm still buying a lot of stuff online. Despite this I would prefer to help some of the shops.
Participant 7: I was actually thinking because I thought that nothing changed in the behavior but actually, I did because yeah, during the pandemic I took no flights to go back home. So, I was running out of Italian food quite quickly, and I had to consider other options with, like, there are some websites that you can order from Italy, just like doing bulk purchases of pasta, biscuits and such.
Moderator 1: So, always elaborating on what you've just said, **did this change affect Made in Italy product consumption?**
Participant 7: I was buying them online instead of bringing them from the country.
Participant 6: I think I need to hear the question again.
Moderator 1: If you noticed these changes in your consumption behavior, was this change also reflected in your consumption of Made in Italy products as well or not?
Participant 5: Mm, if so, I maybe cooked more Italian pasta for lunch, since I was more at home and not somewhere else.
Participant 6: I actually don't even remember what I did during the pandemic.
Participant 3: Yeah, we all know that the past two years do not count.
Moderator 1: So, we can just move to the next question. So, **how would you define Made in Italy?**
Participant 7: That's broad.

Participant 3: It really depends what kind of category it is. Because if I think of, for example, shoes or clothes I think quality and maybe a higher price range. Whereas if I think of food, it's like, it's good quality. So it depends on what, what kind of product it is really.
Participant 6: Even if I know that it's not the same for all the Italian brands, but I mean, because there are so many Italian brands that I know for their quality, I associate Made in Italy with the high quality and also high prices. But also, because we have this Made in Italy label when things are produced in Italy, for example, with shoes produced in Marche, and then you have this perception that when things are produced in Italy, and not in China or in Cambodia, and they are of high quality, then you are also willing to pay more for them. It's at least my impression, so yeah, high quality and high price and I think they should stay in that market or in that segment because there are so many companies and brands that are competing on price.
Participant 5: Yeah. Probably also across several industries. So, both food and, also, fashion, and furniture maybe.
Participant 6: And Italy also has like kind of big industry in weapons, I think.
Participant 3: I don't buy weapons. But I also feel like the label Made in Italy comes with a very good reputation. Like, if I saw something, and this sounds really bad, but if I saw something that's Made in Italy and Made in China, I would automatically assume that made in Italy has better quality than made in China without knowing if it really does. So, that's why I also think a lot of people are willing to pay more for Made in Italy than, I don't know Made in Burma or Made in China.
Participant 6: I mean this is a product of reputation. It's very difficult to change. You need so many years to change the reputation. So even if the Chinese started to produce very nice products and very high-quality products, probably they would need 200 years to build up the reputation that Italians have been linked to. That's also a thing to consider.
Participant 4: Yeah. In my case I associate Made in Italy with a high price and a high quality but more like in fashion, in the fashion industry and cars, but not with food. Because I guess that, yeah, I'm from Spain, so the food is quite similar to the Mediterranean diet and so on, so I don't really think about Made in Italy and food. To me it's more fashion and cars. But still, high quality, high price. We agree on that.
Participant 2: Yeah, I also agree.
Participant 6: I think I was also a bit influenced by the culture of living with Danish people. They will like, when it comes to Italy, food is a very important thing. I think more than fashion to be honest.
Participant 3: And I also feel like when I walk, I'm from Norway, so in Norway, we have like if you want to buy wine, you go to the wine monopoly. And you like French wine and Spanish wine and Italian wine. And it's all very categorized. And in Norway it's well known that if you want like the cheaper option of the Italian (I'm so sorry for this) then you got to the Spanish wine, even though they taste kind of the same. But like, I think that's also what the Made in Italy is.
Participant 6: It's reputation.
Participant 3: Yeah! It has a reputation!
Participant 6: Because there also a lot of good Spanish wines.
Participant 3: Yeah, yeah. I know that they have a lot of good wines. I'm so sorry.
Participant 4: I mean, I don't like wine, so I don't understand it. But yeah.
Participant 3: But it's kind of like, for example, with Champagne and Kava: Kava is cheaper and doesn't taste a lot different, not really. I don't think it does but like the Kava is so much cheaper than Champagne for example.
Participant 7: You'll notice something similar here with olive oil, for example. Two very similar olive oils, if it has the Italian flag it's 5DKK more expensive than the Spanish one. For no reason almost because it's packaged for example with the Føtex label or something.

Participant 3: You just automatically assume that it's better quality. Like I'm so stupid, I think "Oh, better quality!".
Participant 7: But going back to the original question, I think I have a bit of mixed feelings, if it's food or fashion, then you assume high quality but then if you go for example, politics or general services like transportation and such, it automatically goes down the opinion because you know that they're not that good. Especially transportation, we have a joke that we're always late with the trains and everything, which is a shame because for example, all the transportation like the railway system and the metro system in Denmark and in all the Nordics are made by Italian companies.
Participant 3: Really?!
Participant 7: Yes. A bunch of Italians were actually employed to build the metro. It was built by an Italian company.
Participant 6: But also, the IC train, I think they're called, the train that goes to Jutland.
Participant 3: Yeah.
Participant 6: They're also made by Italians.
Participant 3: Really? I learn something new every day.
Participant 6: Now you should really consider when you go to Italy if you should take a train.
Participant 7: Again, it is a shame, but it's so engrained in our culture that we don't know how to make things work, but that's not true. Then yeah, I just briefly mentioned politics, so yeah, that was a bad Made in Italy brand that we developed.
Participant 6: We actually tried to catch up a bit on that with Draghi. Yeah, just a bit, I think.
Participant 5: I've the impression that it has improved quite since then, actually.
Participant 3: I don't think it has like the good quality label as Italian cars, Italian politics. Especially, after living with you Italians I feel like it's really bad sometimes.
Participant 6: I think sometimes as you're saying, especially Italians that are moving abroad, they sometimes see all black, like so negative.
Participant 4: Same here with Spain.
Participant 6: I've been there and in Spain, I think, you have less differences between North and South. Because I visited Sevilla and Granada. You have like, good transportation, you have bike lanes for all the streets, in Sevilla for example.
Participant 4: Yeah, but it's Sevilla…
Participant 7: You've just opened a Pandora box.
Participant 6: If you go to the south of Italy, I mean, yeah, it's much worse than in Southern Spain. There's my impression. I mean, the difference is much less pronounced, maybe just my impression. I don't know where you are from in Spain.
Participant 4: Malaga, it's in the South as well.
Participant 6: Then you have lots of tourists there also.
Participant 4: Yeah.
Participant 7: Maybe another area that we didn't discuss, like healthcare services. If I have to choose between Made in Italy or anything else, I would go for the Italian one anytime. It's just because it builds up a reputation that it works so much better. Again, it's something that works in a regional way, but I feel like just the service is better. And also because of quite a number of bad experiences here in Denmark. And that didn't help with the perception.
Participant 6: You also have some centers of excellence in Italy when it comes to health care. Really good hospitals.
Participant 5: Do you have a separation between private and public there as well?
Participant 6: Yes, we do have very good public hospitals.

Participant 7: But again, it's the same as before: north very good, south mmm, they're trying.
Participant 6: That's also the biggest problem when you have to outline the biggest problems of Italy, when you see the economic perspective. Then if you have five or six main points, one of those points would be the huge difference between North and South. Because I mean, if you just took Lombardia, Milan, that area of Italy, then you would have another idea.
Participant 7: Yeah, that is true. And it was all because of the Spanish guys. Sorry, I was going back in history, but it is true. But it's also, it's more than North and South, it goes by region because even in the north there are some regions that were not very well managed. And as soon as Corona hit you could see the differences. I'm talking about that one Veneto, I don't know if you know, but that one didn't really shine. The president of the region.
Participant 4: What was the original question? I forgot about it.
Moderator 1: It's just: How would you define Made in Italy?
Participant 7: It was so broad I felt entitled to make a point. There's another point: television shows. Made in Italy ones are crap.
Participant 3: They showed me the ones with the girls that like take feminism back like 50 years.
Participant 7: Yeah, the veline.
Participant 3: Yeah! I was like...
Participant 7: That's embarrassing. That's embarrassing. Yeah.
Participant 3: Is there another point to this other than them just walking up and bringing feminism back 50 years and walking back?
Participant 7: True, it's quite embarrassing that we're still quite behind on that.
Participant 6: I think political talk shows I mean, they're not every time so serious but I really like them, I could spend three or four hours watching one.
Participant 7: Because it's a trash show. Right? It's just fun
Participant 6: Because they have, I think, some interesting person invited but they also have the kind of compere, so then you could like spend there three hours. But it's, you have to think about it as knowledge and entertainment.
Participant 3: But they have some good shows. My mom, she's obsessed with this Montebello, Montecarlo, something. It's on Netflix. Like, every time I come home, she's watching it and I'm like what? It makes no sense. But yeah, so there are some good but yeah.
Participant 5: That's also a famous one about the mafia in Southern Italy.
Participant 6: But you actually also have mafia in the North. It's not really the Mafia but corruption.
Participant 7: Yeah, don't worry about it. It's everywhere.
Participant 6: It's another kind of corruption because it's more like high level. Yeah, I would say more in the institutions. But while in the southern part of Italy, it's more you see it in the everyday life. For example, if you don't pay me this money, I will just burn your restaurants or the likes of it.
Participant 7: But yeah, in general when it comes to television and screen entertainment, if I hear Made in Italy, then I already expect a certain kind of approach to the film or TV series. And I'm actually surprised if it goes in a different direction. But I guess it's similar to like Bollywood, they have their own stuff, their own way to do things and it's just different.
Participant 6: Probably because I always expect some type of entertainment, I like many of them. I just need some when the time is nine in the evening, then I, I'm open to it.
Participant 3: I'm not actively seeking Italian soap series.
Participant 4: The only thing I know about Italian television is about the fifth channel that is kind of the same as the Spanish one. It's a trashy channel, right?
Participant 7: Which one?

Participant 4: The fifth one?
Participant 6. Ah, Berlusconi's channel. Four, five and six are owned by Berlusconi.
Participant 4: My favorite guy.
Participant 7: To be fair, Berlusconi is a good answer to what made in Italy is question. It’s quite a good answer, to be fair.
Participant 6: Can we have the next question?
Moderator 1: So, this is kind of similar to the one before but it's what do you think are the factors that make a product to be labeled Made in Italy? Because made in Italy is actually a label and there are some regulations about it. So, **what do you think are the requirements that products need to have to be labeled Made in Italy?**
Participant 3: Being made in Italy?
Participant 4: Let's start there.
Participant 5: Yeah, produced or at least assembled In Italy?
Participant 6: I mean, produced according to some very high-quality standards. I think about shoes, like leather shoes, and I don't know the standards. But I know there are some standards, and these expect that the standards are followed.
Participant 7: It is not an easy question because it really depends on the product. For example, when it comes to pasta, if it’s Made in Italy, I would like the full production chain to be made in Italy. And we actually had a couple of recent situations where, yeah, the packaging of the pasta was labeling "this was made in Italy, 100% Italian wheat". And then as soon as the situation between Ukraine and Russia happened, basically they said, "ah, we need to raise the prices because our wheat is blocked in Russia" and wait a moment, what do you mean your wheat? Wasn't it supposed to be Italian? So yeah, it's a bit difficult to understand what actually made in Italy means. I guess when it comes to cars, for example, you cannot expect that everything is made in Italy, because you have different parts. I think it goes back to the concept of the economies of scale and everything. Like, if you have a specific component, I guess it needs to be assembled in a country that is efficient in making those but probably, I don't know, 60% of it needs to come from Italian manufacturers, or at least the design of it. No, I actually wouldn't even care about the design. It needs to be the product itself, like the physical part of it. No, but it's not easy.
Participant 6: So, you kind of expect that also all the raw materials are from Italy. That's like, but I would expect more the...
Participant 7: But that never happens.
Participant 6: No, that never happens. No, no, no, no, because we were talking about the pasta and that the raw materials were coming from Russia, for example.
Participant 7: Yeah, okay, food wise, I would expect that everything is made in that country. For a product that involves a degree of engineering or assembling that can come from, I wouldn't care if the steel comes from the mines in, I don't know, in China or whatever or somewhere else, but maybe the assembling part or to make it on a more general perspective, the value of it, like people working to assemble something, it needs to be mostly based in Italy. I don't know if there is a percentage regulation advisor or how does that work? It's quite confusing if you look into the rules and everything.
Participant 3: And I also feel like what I expect and what reality is are probably two different things because I feel, a lot of times, if it's if it says it's made in Italy, I expected that the laborers are from Italy and that it is produced in Italy, but I feel like in reality that's kind of a naive thought to have.
Participant 5: I mean every car company has production sites in China, so...
Participant 3: Yeah, exactly. But they put made in Italy instead of Made in China anyway.

Participant 7: Do they? Do they put Made in Italy in for example, cars made by Fiat? I don't think so. I will be surprised actually because everything is happening outside of them, maybe the concept and thought and the ownership but everything production is outside.
Participant 6: Yeah, but I think to be honest, I don't know precisely what rules have to be followed to decide whether a product is made in Italy or not. But I think the most important part of it is the assembly part in the supply chain. So, if the materials or components come from developing countries but if it's to a certain degree produced or assembled in Italy that I think would be enough to call it Made in Italy, but I don't know.
Participant 7: Maybe it's a bit easier to go for example for the fashion and clothing industry because I guess the raw materials, the cotton and everything comes from Southeast Asia I guess, or something like that.
Participant 5: Probably even more I don't know even, one Gucci sweater is probably made in Bangladesh.
Participant 7: Man, what's a real Made in Italy clothing brand? I'm really out of my depth here so I'm just asking.
Participant 3: I don't know, but if I'm buying let's say leather shoes that says Made in Italy and the animal that the leather came from is from, I don't know, the United States or something, I will be very disappointed, but I don't know.
Participant 7: For that issue is actually the one reason I'm comfortable if they say Made in Italy then I expect everything to be made there, but that's because it's a kind of a loyalty I acquired because I always know that it's always small enterprises, there are more artisans that are working on those so I wouldn't even question that. But t-shirts or sweaters or something more mass produced, I wouldn't know what to say. Probably, maybe the design it's in Italy but everything else it's made outside. But usually, they make the distinction, right? They say designed in and then made in something else.
Participant 6: For fashion: designed in and made in
Moderator 1: Someone has something to add to this? Okay, then just for your information Made in Italy label can only be used for products that have been designed, created, developed, engineered and packaged in Italy, in the Italian territory. It doesn't matter where the company's from but if the products have all these requirements, for the law, the label can be Made in Italy.
Participant 5: So, almost the whole value chain?
Moderator 1: Basically everything. Nothing is really said about raw materials or where they come from. But the whole process needs to be carried out in the Italian territory, so that's legally what Made in Italy label is for.
Participant 6: I think probably materials can come from outside.
Participant 7: Because we don't have them anyway.
Moderator 1: So, next question now: **in your everyday life, do you purchase any Made in Italy products?** Whatever category.
Participant 3: Pasta.
Participant 2: Food.
Participant 8: Mostly food, yeah.
Participant 5: Pasta and coffee.
Participant 2: Food and drinks.
Participant 7: Shoes, wine.
Participant 2: Wine, Aperol.
Participant 7: Yeah, food, shoes, wine, that's true.
Participant 5: Coffee machine. Maybe. I mean, the moka for sure but also there are some other companies.
Participant 6: if you try the coffee called Illy that's very good.
Participant 5: Ah yeah. Yeah.
Participant 4: I buy Italian food here but not in Spain.

Moderator 2: Fair enough. Definitely.
Moderator 1: And then **which are the reasons for you to buy these products**?
Participant 2: Because of the taste?
Participant 3: Yeah.
Participant 2: It's actually my main reason.
Participant 3: Yeah. And reputation? Like, if I buy Rummo for example, I know that it's a good pasta brand. So, yeah.
Participant 5: Yeah, taste, quality and brand.
Participant 7: I don't like change. I spent years, decades of my life, going with that food and I'm not going to change now.
Participant 4: I think also compared to the Danish food, it's way much better.
Moderator 1: Okay. So, **is there something that would incentivize you to increase the consumption or purchase of Made in Italy products?**
Participant 7: Lower price.
Participant 5: Especially abroad.
Participant 7: Lower delivery price then also. Yeah, shipping is quite expensive.
Participant 3: And if they start importing the pistacchio cream, then I will start buying it every single week.
Participant 4: I would buy that one.
Participant 2: More availability in stores here?
Participant 7: Availability is actually an issue because you might want to buy stuff that is simply not available. You cannot find it. Even if you go to SuperMarco, besides being extremely expensive, like literally five to six times higher than Italian prices, you simply don't find all of it.
Participant 2: It needs to be more available in all Danish stores.
Participant 3: Yeah, I'm not going to go to a special store, for example SuperMarco. I'm not going to go all the way there just to get like something that I've heard is good, but if it was in Føtex, then I might take it more easily.
Participant 6: I'm usually buying all my Italian food in Italy, but that's because I can travel with free luggage. Because with Ryanair, if you have the Erasmus discount, if you're a student, you can get it for free four times when you travel the big luggage.
Participant 7: Maybe another point that we, I don't know if it fits completely this question, but there should be more restrictions on what can actually be labeled as Made in Italy because you can go to the supermarket or everywhere and you see a lot of stuff that is labeled and packaged as Italian but then if you investigate and go over it, it's just yeah, it just isn't.
Participant 2: Probably a lot of people misuse the label.
Participant 7: Yeah, you can you just find Italian names on everywhere, but they are definitely not Italian products.
Participant 2: I would also be attracted to the flag.
Participant 3: Yeah.
Participant 7: That feels honestly like false advertising or definitely some shady practices. And it would also be nice to not hear I mean not to read, every once in a while, news about Italian companies. For example, this is one of the wheats that is supposed to be Italian but then it's actually Russian, that doesn't help the brand at all. Of course, you really need to dig to find this kind of news but yeah, still not a good thing.
Participant 5: Which brand is it?
Participant 4: You're not going to buy that one, don't worry.
Participant 7: It's not one of the famous ones but... I don't think you're going to be able to find it here.
Participant 2: But you mentioned your order big stuff or like a lot of pasta online.

Participant 7: Yeah, there's this website called MammaPack. And you can, I don't know, they also sell detergents and cleaning products for some reason.
Participant 3: Pistacchio cream?
Participant 7: That is quite specific, but you can search for it. It's actually nice because they have a very fixed shipping price like you pay for it and it's based on where like, you live. Denmark is, I think it's in their medium higher price range but then you pay like 17€ and you can order as much as you want.
Participant 3: Okay, we're ordering.
Participant 2: Big packages or also smaller products?
Participant 7: It's literally as you want.
Participant 5: The price is much cheaper than like here in the supermarkets?
Participant 7: Yeah, they are cheaper than here but it's not that cheap. You need to buy in bulk to make a significant saving.
Participant 4: C'mon package comes into the apartment.
Participant 3: I'm going to buy so much pistacchio cream.
Participant 7: It's a totally very specific product I don't want to raise the expectation with this.
Moderator 1: And now the last question. This one is only for foreigners. We talked about Denmark. **So, you say you buy Italian products here in Denmark. What about when you're in your own country?**
Participant 4: We don't have a lot of Italian products in Spain. And I guess it's the same for you that you don't have that many Spanish products in Italy because they kind of overlap, like wine, oil so that's why.
Moderator 1: What about the others?
Participant 2: Yeah, we do buy a lot of Italian food and drinks.
Participant 8: I mean, I don't think anything changed for me. So, the same as here, in Poland too.
Participant 7: I know German people are crazy for Italian cookies and biscuits and stuff. A friend of mine orders such a crazy amount every time.
Participant 6: Which kind of brand?
Participant 7: From the Mulino Bianco. Not even their artisanal ones, just the industrial ones. He doesn't care.
Participant 4: I like the what's the name of the cookies? Cantuccini?
Participant 3: Oh, they are so good.
Participant 4: I discovered those ones here. And I love them. If I see them, I buy them.
Participant 7: So expensive here.
Participant 4: Yeah, I know.
Participant 3: They're even more expensive in Norway, but I buy them all the time. They're super popular in Norway.
Participant 7: I started making them myself because I cannot buy them here.
Participant 3: I don't have that level of expertise. But they're so good.
Participant 2: No but yeah, it's the same at home. The desire to buy good food from Italy.
Participant 4: I don't see the Italian products here.
Moderator 1: One last thing, actually. **Did you notice any difference in your consumption habits of Made in Italy products between here in Denmark and in your native countries?**
Participant 3: It's worse, it's worse, because Norway is not a member of the EU. So, we don't have it. If we import stuff, it's even more expensive than it is here. Like Norwegian prices are expensive anyways. So, if I were to buy a package of like normal Cantuccini, it would be around four or five euros for like one small package. So, yeah.
Participant 2: But I would say in Germany, every supermarket has a corner for Italian products. And also, a lot of smaller local shops.

Participant 8: I think in Poland, in supermarkets, for example, there is like a bigger variety of products in general in comparison to Denmark. So, at some point, I think it's easier to actually find Italian products.
Participant 7: I have a question. I need to ask you guys because it's... Is it a problem that we focus so much on food? Should we also explore other areas?
Moderator 2:
It's totally free. Like, what comes out.
Moderator 1: That's the point. Because we just want to know what you think about.
Participant 7: That's because the food is so like key when you think about it. There are so many varied direct connections that we can lose focus on other things, but there are other things.
Moderator 1: That's actually what we're looking for. Yeah, like what you think about the country and the products, we don't really need to go over all the products, just what you think are related to Italy. So, it's completely fine. Is there someone who wants to add something about anything related?
Moderator 2: Like anything in general about everything you talked about. If you have anything that comes to mind, this is the time to talk about it.
Participant 8: I think in Poland, when somebody says Italy, it sounds fancier than when you're in Denmark. I don't know why. That's just how I feel.
Moderator 2: Interesting.
Participant 3: This really makes me want to go to Italy.
Participant 7: Actually, what about vacation deals? Like, if they were made in Italy would you choose it?
Participant 3: My family loves Italy, we always, pre COVID, we went all the time. So, but I feel like in Norway, it's kind of like divided if you're like a Spain person or like an Italian person. It's really weird and people are like, so invested. Like it's almost different football teams.
Participant 2: What about the other countries, then, like France?
Participant 3: No, but, Norwegians, if we travel, it's like either Italy or Spain. We want some sun. We don't have sun in the summer.
Participant 6: I feel that Italy is losing a bit its competitive position when it comes to vacation because prices in Italy are high and people are starting also from Scandinavia, from Germany are starting to open their eyes to Croatia and to Albania, that has nice beaches. Spain is, I think, more competitive in prices. And I think of course, Italy has good food, nice places but it's very expensive compared to other areas, other nice places. I'm starting to see this trend.
Participant 2: The quality of the hotels, some are very old.
Participant 3: And also I don't know, but like in Norway, Italy has kind of gotten like a reputation that they don't like tourists. So you come as a tourist and I can understand if I lived in Rome, and every summer were invaded by all the tourists taking pictures everywhere. I would also be super annoyed. But I think people usually say that people in Spain are more like welcoming to tourists. And, for example, is it Albania? I don't really remember. But they say, oh it has Italian beaches and good prices, but they're welcoming. So, yeah, they kind of sell it as the cheaper, more welcoming kind of Italy, even though, of course, it's not Italy but it's just similar.
Participant 6: I think I mean, in Italy, when it comes to that, we are relying too much on our reputation, and continuing to do that, we will lose that reputation in the long term, I think. Also with other products, because you're talking about being welcoming, I think lots of places in Italy, compared to other places, you don't feel that welcome, as you will fulfill in other and other countries. So that's, of course, an issue.
Participant 3: And also, because there are so many people. Like I remember when I was in Venice, it was impossible.
Participant 7: Yeah, but you picked the one place where it's crazy.

Participant 3: But we actually lived in an island called Lido right outside, which I was super happy about, because there were, no, not so many people and good prices and good restaurants. But, when we went into the city, it was, it was traumatizing.
Participant 7: That's something of Venice alone, it's like the exception to the exception.
Participant 6: Sometimes the problem is also that tourists are choosing the most touristic place.
Participant 3: Yeah, that's true.
Participant 6: And that's also, you get another experience there because, of course, people will exploit that, when it comes to prices.
Participant 3: But for example, I can see a difference where, when we've traveled to, for example, Rome, were people are very standoffish, and we've also gone a lot to Forte dei Marmi which is wow and everyone so calm. And it's such a different vibe, because I feel like people are more relaxed and welcoming. Whereas if you were to go to like Florence, or a bigger city, it's less.
Participant 7: Forte dei Marmi, there is quite a price barrier. Like if you want to go there, you need to spend a bit more, which kind of, yeah.
Participant 6: There is also like, where the rich Italians go, so yeah. Yeah.
Participant 3: You should always go where the natives go, because they know.
Participant 7: But I mean, leaving aside Corona, this is kind of a degrading of the welcoming feeling of Italians. It's not associated to also a degrading interest because there's always more and more people coming. So yeah, it's not, it's actually reinforced this behavior, people can behave annoyed, and still, they will get, their hotels are going to be filled out for the summer. So, there's not going to be a corrective action to the phenomenon.
Participant 3: People still want to go to Rome.
Participant 7: Corona changed the rules, it actually changed completely the rules, but...
Participant 6: I think maybe when you choose to visit the big cities, then of course, Italy still has Rome, Florence, and Venice. But when you would have to decide for a trip, for a summer vacation, for example, you go to the beach. And I feel that at least in Scandinavia, people have switched a bit. I hear more and more people going to Spain instead of Italy. So of course, it depends also on the type of vacation you are going.
Participant 5: Was it different in the past though?
Participant 6: Good question. Maybe not, maybe yes. But I think there are new countries that are attracting people. Croatia was not that attractive 20 years ago. Albania, I think, it's in the place in the market where Croatia was 10-15 years ago, and in 10 years Albania will be a very touristic place.
Moderator 1: Okay, then, I guess if no one has something to add, then we're done. So, well. Thank you very much for all the opinions. Thank you very much.
Moderator 2: Thank you. I'm going to interrupt the recording right now. Thank you, guys.

Appendix 6.2: Focus Group 2, 10/04/2021

Moderator 1: Okay, so guys, first of all, we're going to start the recording now. So, thank you so much for being here. We know you're all very busy, but we hope we can make it up a little bit with the snacks to you. So yes, basically, this focus group is going to be a crucial part of our master thesis. So, we really appreciate your participation today. If you need any clarification with any question that we ask, just ask us, and this is meant to be like an open discussion between all of you. So, we will not interfere in any way with what you say. There are no right or wrong answers, so just feel free to express anything that comes to mind with you. And the topic that we're going to explore is Made in Italy products and your general consumption habits. Your

participation is voluntary, of course, so if you feel like you need to leave the room in any way, at any moment, you can of course. Okay. So, how are you all doing today?
Participant 2: Very, very good. Full of energies!
Moderator 1: Classic answer. Okay, so now we're going to start the serious part. The first question is, **which factors do you consider when purchasing a product in general?** Any type of product.
Participant 3: Price mainly.
Participant 2: The price is the most important thing but also quality is the second factor.
Participant 4: And availability, like how easily I can find a product. Yeah.
Participant 5: Sustainability. I really the environment.
Participant 3: But do you also pay more to get products more sustainable than another ones?
Participant 5: Yeah, I guess. So quality is the same and I can afford it. As a student probably not ahahah.
Participant 2: Exactly, not as a student.
Participant 6: But that's the goal to work towards where you can actually afford something that's sustainable. Yeah.
Participant 2: So, I think that it depends on the...
Participant 3: Yeah, maybe for us as students the first steps may be price, then maybe quality or sustainability.
Participant 7: But I also feel the brand is important: if I know the brand, if I have any connection to the brand, that is also to be counted.
Participant 5: Because you will trust it? Then you know the quality?
Participant 7: Yeah, if I've tried it before I know that.
Participant 3: So, you tend to be loyal to the brand if you liked it before.
Participant 7: Yeah, yeah.
Moderator 1: Ok, is there anything else that you think influences your purchasing behavior generally speaking?
Participant 4: Word of mouth, a lot.
Participant 3: Yeah!
Participant 4: If a friend of mine says "I use this and it's amazing", I don't even look at the price.
Participant 3: That's also true: whenever I get a referral from a person that I know I can trust, maybe I feel it's better for me to spend money on that thing, because it will cost even more to buy different things that are going to add up to that amount of money anyway.
Participant 2: And it really depends on the product you have to buy, of course. I mean, with some products you focus more on the quality of the product because it has to last longer and with food, for example for bread, you look for the cheapest one. So, it really depends on the product you're buying.
Moderator 1: Okay, actually you just introduced the following question. Now we are going into specific industries. So, the next question is: **which factors do you consider when purchasing specifically food products?**
Participant 3: Okay, quality first.
Participant 5: Yeah.
Participant 4: In this case I would also say sustainability.
Participant 3: Exactly, bio products.
Participant 4: But my research is very limited, you know, I base myself on the labels.
Participant 3: And there is also the issue regarding how the labels are really made.
Participant 4: Exactly. I mean, I buy those with the labels.
Participant 3: Especially in Italy there is a whole thing about how trustful brands are regarding how they put those (labels). For example, with a product like eggs. With eggs I'm trying to be very careful, you know, there are the numbers 01234: if you take a 0 that's bad, and you know that actually the chicken was mistreated during

its life to make those eggs. But yeah, if I think of food, I think quality. Maybe that's also because I'm Italian, but actually no, it's not because of that. It's just because maybe we grew up with that kind of thing, but I think anyone who puts their health first would also go first for quality, and maybe then price.
Participant 7: But I think what's different for food is the fact that this sustainable aspect comes also with the location. I think that's not for any other sector the fact that you want to know where it's produced and everything. So, I think for me it's also like that: I check, for example, that the tomatoes are as local as possible. I also don't check this all the time. Indeed, price also influences me, but yeah, the location of food production is also affecting me.
Participant 6: If you're talking about food, I would also say convenience. As a student I'm just busy with a lot of things like studying, school, friends, volleyball and so on. So, it's also a matter of what is convenient and what's easy for me to get.
Participant 3: To cook also.
Participant 6: Yeah, exactly all of them.
Participant 5: But I mean for lunch, for example if I'm in the library, I don't pay too much attention: I just buy whatever I can grab in the cereal stuff and there are not too many options so I cannot choose properly.
Participant 4: Yeah, availability again.
Participant 2: When I'm in Italy, I always check if the product I'm buying is made in Italy. For example, if I go and buy some oranges or vegetables and fruits, I always check if it is from Italy. And, of course, you can decide whether you want to buy fruit from Spain or from Italy, for example, so I choose the Italian one. But yeah, for the seasonality of course. When it comes to food, also quality, of course.
Participant 3: Yeah, I would not buy strawberries now. They are very big and fluffy and that's because they're full of hormones.
Moderator 1: Okay, if there are no other opinions on food, the next question is: **which factors do you consider specifically when purchasing fashion products?** So, anything from clothing to accessories.
Participant 4: Either brand or price first, depending on what type of thing I'm buying. If I want that specific product from that specific brand, I don't look at the price. But if I need a shirt for work, or whatever, then I put the price first, I think.
Participant 7: Yeah, I think the same for me. And I would also always check the material. I mean, it's not the most important factor but mostly I would also check things out: if there are a lot of plastic materials or something, I would consider buying another product.
Participant 4: Yeah.
Participant 3: I'm becoming more... Oh, sorry, you want to go?
Participant 2: No, I was just saying that I look at the price with clothes. I know that it's not the sustainable thing to do. But right now, I can't afford it. But of course, also the quality counts and what it's made of. And yeah, of course if there is a cloth that is made locally, I prefer it rather than something made in China or whatever.
Participant 4: Quality, as durability, you know. For example, if I spend 40€ on a t-shirt, I want it to last, at least.
Participant 2: Yeah, of course, but it really depends on the brand.
Participant 3: Thanks to social media there is an increased awareness towards the sustainability of products. For example, once I started digging in some things that I found online. Everybody knows what is behind, for example, Asos or Shein. If you pay 5€ for your shirt, someone is paying with their body for it. So, from that point of view, I don't put price first, but I'm trying not to buy when I don't know where the products come, or from fast fashion in general. It's also H&M, Zara, and Bershka. Zara was not actually born in that way but then it became just fast fashion, I think. So maybe not price first. Maybe, consciously, I go for sustainability in fashion.

Moderator 1: Okay.
Participant 7: But I think what is different from food, for me it's also the way it looks, of course. I focus more on the look and the feeling and everything for clothes rather than for food. If it's food it doesn't matter, you consume it anyways, whereas for fashion you actually wear it and it's definitely other factors that count: for me the look, I don't know how to say it, it's more important for fashion than for food.
Participant 6: So, if you see something that you really like, you don't care about the price as much.
Participant 7: No. I think we haven't talked about that, but a factor is, of course, also the way the clothing product looks on you.
Participant 6: Yeah.
Participant 7: Because I think this factor for food doesn't really matter. I mean, what form the tomatoes have doesn't really matter. But for fashion it does.
Participant 6: I feel like sometimes, if I see something that I really like, any other factor just goes out the way. I have a principle to not buy from H&M but that's just because I feel I can wear it once and then, when I wash it, it doesn't look the same.
Participant 3: Exactly!
Participant 6: But if I go into H&M for fun with my friends and I find something I kind of just forget my principle and think like: "Oh it's cheap, it looks good on me. It's okay, I could just wear it once or twice" and then I'll buy it anyways so yeah, I think actually the look is quite important too.
Participant 4: Oh, and also, I don't know if this makes sense, but for food, if a friend of mine suggests that food to me or I know that other people buy that food, I'm more inclined to buy that product. When I shop for clothes, if I remember that one of my friends has the same thing that I'm about to purchase, I think: "I'm not going to purchase it". You know, it's like an individual fashion sense kind of thing. You know what I mean?
Participant 5: That way you differentiate yourself from other people when it comes to fashion, otherwise you just copy others.
Moderator 1: Okay, thank you. So, the next question is: maybe not for the immediate time, but **if in the future you were to buy a car, which factors would you consider?**
Participant 6: If you think about how the economy is going, the oil prices and so on, I will probably just go by bike. Maybe an electric car? We grew up in a very environmental mindset. Yeah, you can also see that electric cars are becoming better and better. So, I think that environmental sustainability will definitely become a factor. But I guess it depends on how much you care about cars, because I don't really care about them. But of course, I want it to be comfortable and to look nice. It should have the main functions, Bluetooth and air conditioning. Yeah, also a little bit extra efficient, so it's nice to do a road trip or something.
Participant 5: I mean, living in big cities is also a big factor. I don't think you would really rely on having a car, at least a super good car. Especially if you only do weekend trips or stuff. But I think if you live in other countries, for example, yeah.
Participant 6: That's actually also a good point. If you live in a big city, I would definitely buy a small car because it's easier to navigate around.
Participant 2: To park.
Participant 6: Exactly. But if I live in Jutland, that's long distances and I want a comfortable car, right? One that is bigger.
Participant 4: And also probably, this is going to sound so superficial, the status associated with the car? You know, if I had to buy a car, I wouldn't go around in one that makes me look like I just came out of a dumpster. It's a bit about overall image.
Participant 6: Yeah.
Participant 7: That happens with clothes as well, right?
Participant 6: Definitely, that's also a big factor.

Participant 4: And probably, talking about electric cars, maybe not really in line with sustainability, I think you also get a price support, right?
Participant 2: Yeah, many.
Participant 3: Right now, with electric cars, we don't have as many plugs available in the streets. That's the problem.
Participant 2: In Italy, for example, it's like that, but they are increasing in number.
Participant 3: But it's not that common, that's the whole thing. However, when I'm going to be able to afford a car, I think I will definitely buy an electric one. But they have an automatic gear, and I can only use the manual one, so I hate that. I would like to put manual gear on an electric car, but I know that I can't because it doesn't work with the engine. For me using an automatic gear is not driving.
Participant 6: Oh ok, I thought you meant you didn't know how to drive an automatic car ahahah.
Participant 3: No. The manual gear is the best part of driving for me, so I hate the automatic one. However, I can use the automatic one as well.
Participant 6: But that's also an important factor, right? Because...
Participant 3: It's amazing, okay? But...
Participant 2: I think you're going to get used to that ahahah.
Participant 3: I know, I know but I mean...
Participant 6: Again, it comes to how much you care about cars, right? Because in the US everything is automatic but there are those few people who have manual gears.
Participant 3: Yeah, but those cannot go with electric cars.
Participant 6: No exactly, but...
Participant 3: So, if I can afford an electric car, I will definitely buy one, that's it.
Participant 5: You would prefer that even over the feeling of the manual gear?
Participant 3: Yes, even though I don't like the feeling of the whole thing, I will just go for a sustainable car and, thus, choose an electric one.
Participant 6: Yeah. When it comes to price, instead, of course it depends on how much you can afford to buy, but it's not as important because you're spending so much money anyways. I guess with food and clothing 5DKK or 10DKK make a difference. But here you are way more into the design of a car and other things, and then you're willing to spend like 100,000DKK more or I don't know.
Participant 5: I mean, it's also a bigger decision. When it comes to clothes or food, you can just change what you buy. But with a car, you usually buy it for a couple of years. I don't know, maybe...
Participant 2: How many years? A couple of years? You meant 10 years, maybe. Once you buy a car, you will use it.
Participant 3: My father has had the same car for 15 years, so ahahahah.
Participant 4: 4 years.
Participant 2: Yeah, exactly, my parents too. We have always had the same car.
Participant 3: I'm glad you can afford it.
Participant 7: But then I also feel like, given that it is such a pricey item, that makes me take more factors into account. I mean, as the decision process is just longer for buying a car, I feel like I won't only look for the looks of it or something, I will instead look for several factors just because for me it's a bigger decision. And I think that the brand factor is also more important for me, I don't know, being German I feel like...
Participant 2: You know that some brands are more reliable than others.
Participant 3: Me as an Italian would maybe go for an Alfa Romeo, for example. Or Fiat.
Participant 6: Yeah like, I don't really know anything about cars, so I'll probably just be very open minded to whoever tries to sell them to me.

Participant 7: When it comes to cars, I feel like brands come with certain characteristics that you associate the car with.
Participant 3: Maybe the benefits I will also consider.
Participant 7: Yeah.
Participant 3: But yeah, I will just go for a Tesla, when I will afford it.
Moderator 1: Okay, so if there is no other opinion about this topic, we can move to the next. **In the past 2 years, as we all know, we experienced a lot of changes with the pandemic.**
Participant 3: Oh really? Ahahahah.
Moderator 1: So, **do you think these changes have brought any changes in your consumption habits as well?** Did you notice any changes in your consumption habits?
Participant 7: I bought less clothes.
Participant 4: Definitely.
Participant 6: You didn't need to show off.
Participant 7: Yeah, exactly.
Participant 6: Yeah, I agree. I bought more home clothes, like joggings.
Participant 7: But I still I feel like in general I bought less clothes, and I feel like, more food? Yeah, or I spent more money on food at least.
Participant 3: Yes.
Participant 4: Definitely.
Participant 2: Now I'm spending a lot on travel.
Participant 7: It's because I feel like, with the lockdown, I was spending so much more time at home, so I wanted to have more quality food.
Participant 5: But on the other hand, you don't go out for dinner, right?
Participant 7: Yeah, yeah, that's true. Right now, I just thought about grocery shopping, exactly.
Participant 3: Shopping online and grocery online, were also a thing during this Pandemic that you said ahahahah.
Participant 5: You just had less opportunities to spend money at all. And so, I think also the consumption went down. Maybe overall, at least in Germany I think, there was also a trend that people didn't know how to spend the money. So, they just bought a lot of stock and stuff. And I think that's a great sign that the consumption actually suffered from the pandemic dynamics.
Participant 4: I paid much more for subscription services, much more. I think I have like five streaming platforms and two streaming music platforms now.
Participant 3: Me too.
Participant 6: Two music streaming platforms?
Participant 4: Yeah.
Participant 6: Why?
Participant 4: Apple Music and Spotify. Don't ask me why, I was bored. It just happened. I was there in lockdown, and I was just like "Yeah, sure, why not?".
Moderator 1: It's an open discussion, but of course I can always bring it back to the main question. Okay, so, given that you said you noticed some changes in your consumption habits, **do you think these changes in consumption also affected your consumption of Made in Italy products specifically?**
Participant 5: Maybe positively because I cooked more pasta at home, and yeah, I think a big cuisine to follow is the Italian one to do by yourself at home. So maybe it profited in that way.
Participant 7: Yeah, I also feel like, for grocery shopping, I looked more into quality. And the fact is, for me made in Italy is connected to quality, so then I think this made me purchase more.
Participant 5: Yeah.

Participant 3: Yeah. I also think, being an international abroad and an Italian, I will always look for something made in Italy exactly for its quality too, so I think that has affected me in some way.
Participant 2: Yeah. Yeah, maybe. Also, for example, I remember when I was at home with my family and there was my dad that always wanted to buy Italian products to help the local economy to improve.
Participant 6: I have to admit, as a Danish person, I don't really look at where the products come from that much. But I think, I love Italian food and I love to go to my friends' places, and they cook for me. They care a lot about where the products come from. And they always have ideas like "Oh, you have to try this" and I have a lot of Italian friends who go to Italian supermarkets because they want the good quality products. However, I myself do HelloFresh because that's just easier and more convenient for me. Yeah, I don't really have a lot of time to actually start cooking like that. Yeah, at least not right now.
Participant 7: But did you also do HelloFresh during the lockdown?
Participant 6: Actually, during the lockdown, I went home to my parents, so they cooked for me. But yeah, I did do it, I started during lockdown. But like, the end of the lockdown, kind of?
Participant 4: I don't know. I feel like, maybe for groceries. No, actually not that much. I don't think I buy that much Made in Italy. Living abroad I don't, I take care more of...
Participant 3: I mean, Lidl sells Italian products, kind of.
Participant 4: I love how we destroyed the whole conversation of before about quality and price. Yeah, but when do I get to Lidl, you know? To get to Lidl, I need to walk far. So, for groceries I buy whatever I find that looks like acceptable food according to human standards. Those criteria we talked about before are valid but, you know, I don't...
Participant 6: But it can be good quality coming from Italy.
Participant 4: But I have a lot of Italian friends, not like me, properly Italian, you know what I mean? They go ballistic when they see the kind of olive oil that I buy. Yeah, Romania, ok, but it's oil, it does the job. I don't think I have that kind of Italian mindset.
Participant 3: Also, to cook the extra virgin one and then to dress the salad the olive one. No?
Participant 4: Yeah, of course there are different usages, yeah. Sunflower seed for everything ahahahah. No, I'm joking.
Participant 3: Extra virgin to cook and just olive oil to dress the salad. If you put the extra virgin on salad is going to be too heavy because the extra virgin is just used to cook.
Participant 4: Exactly. But no, that's a level of commitment that’s a little bit too far from my standards, I think. Every now and then I do that, you know? Yeah, I take my time to check, like “Okay, I'm going to buy this type of tomato”. Otherwise, I'm just in the mindset that I need food. I don't have time to do that. But maybe for high spending decisions yes. I don't know, like clothes, shoes, and that kind of stuff. Maybe then I'm more inclined to go for Made in Italy.
Participant 5: Also for coffee, right?
Participant 4: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, coffee, yeah. Definitely for coffee too.
Participant 3: Also with gelato, for example. I found this gelateria nearby my face yesterday. And the guy there showed me that he was importing the gelato directly from Toscana, he really wanted to stress that. He showed me the whole thing, and the gelato was literally directly from Tuscany. He wanted to make a point, he found these two Italians walking there and he said, "Do you want to try one?". And also, he was so smart because I had just ordered cappuccino, but he gave me a small cone with the gelato. Because I was like "I don't take gelato outside of Italy". Yeah, I said that in the US, and I felt so bad. But when I tried the gelato there, I was like "This is very good, where does it come from?". And he said, "Directly from Italy" and showed me the whole thing. So yeah, I'm definitely going to go back to that place. Now that I saw the Made in Italy, I’m more willing to go there.

Participant 4: I think there are selected products that I cannot go without, for example balsamic vinegar. I don't know if it's because I was groomed in Italy to drink that balsamic vinegar, but the one that I find abroad, I cannot have it. It's terrible. So, I need the specific Modena one.
Participant 3: Ok, but I think that I found it, I mean, I have it at home. So, they have it here, I think, because I have it at home.
Participant 4: Or speck? I cannot buy it. Even if I find it here, I need it wrapped in paper, just like we do in Italy.
Participant 3: Did that fulfill your question?
Moderator 1: Yes, thank you. Remember it's an open discussion, so anything that comes to mind, hopefully not too far away from the main question, is fine. So, next question is: **how would you define Made in Italy?**
Participant 6: I think for me, the first thing that pops to mind is quality, especially with the food and clothing. And actually, also with cars, right? Because I don't know, when people talk about Italian products, especially if we go with food, they feel like they are simple, fresh, and homemade. And that's all stuff I associate with quality, and that I think society at large associates with quality.
Participant 3: I'd also say quality and passion, for example. Authenticity. Craftmanship. And tradition. Yeah, that's also pretty important.
Participant 2: Quality. Tradition.
Participant 4: Tradition. Craftmanship. I usually see it a lot with specific locations. You know, product locations, like lemons from Sorrento, or oranges from Sicily. That kind of stuff.
Participant 6: Yeah, I don't do that. But that's because I'm not Italian. It depends also where you're from, I'm sure Italians have way different perceptions of Made in Italy compared to other Europeans or people from other countries, because you guys grew up with it there. Well, I'm just like, "Oh, Italy. It must be good." You know, it's like an overall "Okay, fair enough". If it's not too expensive, I'll buy it because it kind of says it's a good product. If instead the label says made in China, I'm just more like, "should I buy, or should I not?". Yeah, so it just gives you an overall indicator of, as you said, the craftsmanship of the product or its quality.
Participant 4: And there I trust the labels much more. Before I said that when I buy food here, I just look at the label and I trust that even if I don't know much about it. You know, dolphin-safe tuna is dolphin-safe tuna, for example. But in Italy I really do trust the labels.
Participant 3: But, being in Europe, there is also the European law about it. It's not like in the US, with the DPTT under which around 300,000 products are not labeled in that way. That's why in the US, for example, you are allowed to... There was like a video of a man, that got fired right after, in which he showed that basically they were feeding pigs with small pieces of plastic in the whole thing of food that they were giving to pigs. So, American people are eating plastic out of pigs and then I think thanks God, we are Italian. And, also, in Europe we are much more controlled and secure, so in general I would trust the label. If I'm in Europe I trust that for me, and actually I've seen that once I was back few months ago from the US, the quality is different. Just the food, the tomatoes here, they have a real taste. In the US, they don't.
Participant 2: Here in Denmark as well.
Participant 3: Really? Actually, in Denmark I know the vegetables are imported, right? The majority of vegetables which you cannot grow here. But still, compared to the ones in the US...
Participant 4: I'm talking about the...
Participant 6: Like organic labels or?
Participant 4: No, the limited location thing.
Participant 3: Ah, the DOP?
Participant 4: Yeah, that one. That one I trust it hands down. I don't even question it. That consists in food stamps that we put on food that's from a specific region, produced in that region, made in that region. So about those kinds of things I don't even think twice.

Participant 3: And you cannot fake them. In Italy they are very strict about these things. You can't actually fake the DOC and DOP, so if you see them, you just say "Ah, okay, then it's fine".
Participant 6: Actually, I also think that sometimes I see the label made in Italy or made in Denmark or whatever and I don't always trust it. This is because, for example, take the butter cookies whose label says made in Denmark. It's like that just because they have a factory or they have a store or whatever in Denmark, but they're actually produced somewhere else, I think. The label might say made in Denmark and then maybe they are produced in Poland.
Participant 3: Yeah, it's like the label Made in China but designed in California.
Participant 6: But I guess I will also think about that if the label says Made in Italy. I could also be like, "But is it actually?". And it's the same, I guess, with clothing and so on. But then again, most of the times, when I go out and buy stuff, I don't really have the energy to question it. If I want it, I'll buy it, and that's it.
Participant 7: I also don't really look that much at labels. I feel like, for me, Made in Italy, is more like a slogan, not a label. But I think in general also those labels like, I don't know, locally produced or organically produced or something, I don't look at them. And that's because I don't trust them anyway. Yeah, they do not affect my buying decision.
Participant 6: Yeah. If it's at the supermarket, I don't look at it. It's more if you go into delicacy stores and people actually come and tell you "Oh, it's made in Italy." Yeah, that's when I'm more mindful about where the product comes from. But in the supermarket, it's like "Okay, I need this, I need that", or in a clothing store it's like, "Oh, that's pretty. Let me get that".
Participant 5: Do you think Made in Italy is always an indicator for quality? Because I'm just trying to think of negative examples. I don't know. Yeah, for example, in engineering.
Participant 4: Yeah, exactly, I was thinking about the same thing.
Participant 2: Well, when it comes to engineering, it depends on what. Cars?
Participant 5: I mean, there was a bridge...
Participant 2: Okay. Yeah. Infrastructure. Because in Italy they don't check them after 20 years.
Participant 6: But I guess you mostly associate Made it Italy with…
Participant 2: Food and clothes.
Participant 6: If people say it's made in Italy, I usually just think "Oh, it's good".
Participant 5: Yeah, when it comes to the food or luxury products, like designer brands.
Participant 6: Yeah, exactly. It's also very rare that I go out to buy those.
Participant 5: For example, Fiat is also Italian, right? If you think about Made in Italy cars, you don't think about Fiat, right? You think about Ferrari and Lamborghini, right?
Participant 3: Okay, but I mean, we are comparing Fiat with Lamborghini and Ferrari, that makes no sense. That's what I mean. Fiat is a kind of affordable car, you know.
Participant 5: Of course. But no one thinks of a Fiat if you say Made in Italy.
Participant 3: Ah, ok, that's true. Just that when it comes to cars and Made in Italy, you only think about Lamborghini and Ferrari.
Participant 6: I guess Italians have been very good at marketing their products in that way. Like, around like the positive things. If you think of cars, you think about the high-quality cars like sports cars or luxury cars. While, maybe, if you think about Germany, it's more about the standard good family cars. Right?
Participant 5: But there are also that types of cars in Germany, but they focus on other things, yeah.
Participant 6: That will always be, right? Yes, I think it's maybe a marketing strategy from Italy? That's actually very good. How did they think about that? China hasn't been very good at that.
Moderator 1: Okay guys, remember that there are no right or wrong answers. So, if there's anything that comes to mind, also negative examples, you are totally free to make them. And guys I know that this is going to be a bit hard, but if you can try to speak one at a time, it would be a little bit easier. Thank you very much.

And by the way, you've already basically introduced the following question, which is: **which requirements do you think a product needs to have to be labeled as Made in Italy?**

Participant 4: Location. Definitely location. Like what you were saying before about iPhone, you know, designed in California. That cannot be, you know, you cannot play on those kinds of laws on a Made in Italy product. If I see, I don't know…

Participant 3: Made in Italy, designed in Tuscany.

Participant 4: Yeah, that would drive me absolutely mad. That would make no sense. I don't remember what I bought recently that I thought was Made in Italy, and there was a map behind of the production, packaging...

Participant 6: Like the supply chain, kind of.

Participant 4: Yes, it was a map. I didn't look at that, because I thought it was part of the design of the thing, so it was kind of confusing then. And it just said in the front "Italian product", and I was like, "Yeah, sure". So, I bought that and went home. It was like pickles something. And then I looked at the map and was like, "Wait, what?!".

Participant 6: But it's kind of nice they have a map!

Participant 4: Yeah, that was very transparent of them, but it was just like, confused by the "Italian product". I think it was like sundried tomatoes.

Participant 6: But I guess it's also hard, right? To just say it's Made in Italy or whatever. Because most products are combined by different things coming from different places. So, I guess like, if the main ingredients or whatever are from Italy, I guess it makes sense to call the product Made in Italy, because they have to choose one thing.

Participant 4: Yeah, true. But I don't know. I just think the Made in Italy concept/label is easily spent on a lot of products that are not really Made in Italy.

Participant 5: I completely agree. I've just watched the documentary and I think a lot about it. A lot of sundried tomatoes from China imported to Italy and then just filled into can with the label Made in Italy.

Participant 3: Really?

Participant 5: That's not Made in Italy.

Participant 3: Maybe nowadays, you really have to go to the local farm to be sure, you have to physically walk to the person. It's just getting so hard not to. But your question was, sorry again, which are the requirements?

Moderator 1: Yeah, that a product needs to possess in order to be labeled as Made in Italy.

Participant 5: So, if we go by the standard, it just has to be processed in Italy, not even made, I don't know.

Participant 4: Oh, yeah, sure.

Participant 3: Yeah, process maybe. So, location, processed in Italy.

Participant 7: But I think it shouldn't be that way, right? I feel like, when it says Made in Italy, I would want for the whole origin and processing and everything to take place in Italy.

Participant 4: Like, at least 50% of the whole supply chain happening in Italy.

Participant 6: But with our global world, it's just hard.

Participant 4: Yeah, I know, but that's how you discount the brand value of the label Made in Italy, you know?

Participant 6: But what would you then label it? Let's say it was, like 10% Made in China, 80% from like five different countries. That's 100%.

Participant 4: I mean, I would do the map thing.

Participant 6: Made globally? Ahahahah.

Participant 3: That's why the blockchain is going to be introduced with regards to this, it allows the customer to see the whole journey of the product. And it's just to have more traceability. But I mean, the thing about what you said, like 20% in a country, 0% in a country, I think you cannot prove it. I mean, for food, it can be processed but also grown in Italy for sure. However, for example, if you have to use much workforce, you have to produce a lot for that specific product, and you don't have the facilities in Italy to do that, then it's normal to produce it outside the country. Not produced, like processing put outside the country, then back to Italy and then served. Because if you use the workforce in your own country, the product always costs more. That's why, the whole process is just to have a product that is actually affordable for customers.

Participant 6: So, you think the ingredients are more important than... Okay, let's just stick to food because that's easier for me to wrap my head around. Let's say a can of tomato sauce. So, if all the ingredients are from Italy, like the tomatoes, the herbs? Well, I'm not very good with the food. If they ship it to let's say Poland, because they package and make it and then ship it back to Italy, or other places for this distribution.

Participant 3: In those cases, it's just globalization doing its work.

Participant 2: It depends on the reason they outsource the facility. If it is because they didn't have space to grow those things, it's fine. But if they did it because their labor is cheaper, in that case it's very bad.

Participant 3: But we know that that's what the majority of companies do. When they put 100% Made in Italy, I think they want to stress the feel of "Hey, don't worry, no children have been used to make this tomato". The thing is that you can never be sure unless you use the blockchain to trace products.

Participant 4: But, for example, do you think of Nutella as a Made in Italy product?

Participant 3: Nutella? It's made with hazelnuts that are behind the house of my boyfriend in Rome. So, it's there.

Participant 4: Let's do Barilla: do you think of Barilla as Made in Italy? Barilla is a product of Italy, for sure. The brand is Italian, but their pasta is definitely not Italian. The majority of the grains that they use is not Italian.

Participant 3: I know that we stopped using our own grains, it's all imported.

Participant 4: Yeah, which is absolutely ok, because we need to scale up. Barilla is a global brand, they need to sell everywhere, you know. We don't have the space in Italy to mess up the country with the cereals, sorry. And that is definitely a product of Italy.

Participant 7: But then I still don't think it should be labeled Made in Italy.

Participant 4: But it's not Made in Italy, because it's not. What I'm guessing is that where we want to go as an economy in Italy, with the word Made in Italy, is that we want Made in Italy to be associated with great quality. If you want to scale up a company and sell globally, you cannot provide quality. You know, you need to kind of limit yourself in the way that you stamp Made in Italy on everything.

Participant 5: Maybe going for more fashion clothing or luxury brands? I'm not sure, like adding a label to Gucci or Armani.

Participant 4: Yeah, the leather from those brands, like the whole Kering group, it's Italian made. Maybe the animals do not come from Italy, but you don't care whether the cow is Italian, you care about the way the leather was processed.

Participant 3: Yeah, exactly, and there are videos of the Italian crafters doing that. That's why it makes sense that I pay. Okay, it doesn't make it worth like 4000€, but it makes sense that I pay more because that person has been doing that through the years. So, I'm paying the experience of the person who's making the leather of the purse.

Participant 4: Yeah.

Participant 3: Yeah, but about food it's a bit hard. That's what I mean.

Participant 4: But like, going back to Nutella, the hazelnuts are definitely Italian. But do you remember that campaign that Nutella did about the palm oil thing? The palm oil is completely sourced in Indonesia. And that's 50% of the product. The sugar is...

Participant 2: Oh, yes. Do they still use it?

Participant 4: Yeah.

Participant 2: I never buy Nutella.

Participant 4: And the sugar is from South America and the palm oil and sugar in the whole thing is like, what? 70% of the product?
Participant 6: But is the factory in Italy?
Participant 2: Yeah.
Participant 4: I highly doubt that.
Participant 3: The Ferrero factory, yeah. It's in the North.
Participant 4: Yeah, okay, but are they bottling the thing in Italy?
Participant 3: Let me check.
Participant 4: Are you sure?
Participant 3: No, I'm joking. I don't know.
Participant 4: So, you see Italian products for short? What do I call Made in Italy? You know, if I need to send abroad a product that's Made in Italy, I prefer it to be Berluti leather or Gucci shoes. Do you see what I mean? Because it's the limited availability cost. But you know that more than 50% of that is actually Italian.
Participant 2: Nocciolata Rigoni.
Participant 6: But I guess with Nutella, you can still kind of say Italian design. It was started in Italy, and that recipe is still used. So, in the end, I guess it doesn't really matter where the product comes from, as long as the quality is good and that this process is the same, right? Because then you still have that feeling that Nutella is Italian and then, even if it doesn't say like, produced in Italy, I don't think people care because they already know.
Participant 4: That's why I did the distinction before between a product of Italy and Made in Italy. Yeah, they're like two different things.
Participant 6: That's also what I said about the tomatoes, if everything is from Italy, and it gets shipped to, let's say, Poland to be made, you can't put on the product that is produced in Italy or Made in Italy, right? Even though all the ingredients are Italian, so that's up to the brand to kind of market it as an Italian product. Right? So yeah, I think that's a good distinction to make, actually.
Moderator 1: Okay, thank you.
Moderator 2: Guys, just for your information, Italian laws about Made in Italy is that a product needs to be designed, created, engineered, processed and packaged in Italy. It doesn't say much about raw materials, unfortunately, it's not specified. But if the product is all completely done in Italy, then it can be labeled Made in Italy.
Participant 3: Maybe importing the ingredients, and then the product has to be done completely in Italy.
Moderator 2: From the creation to the packaging needs to be carried out in Italy.
Participant 7: That's valid for me because it just says Made in Italy. I mean, when I hear 100% Italian, then I feel like the raw materials should also be from Italy.
Moderator 2: Made in Italy, 100% Italian or similar, they all flow in the same category of Made in Italy.
Participant 7: Yeah, that I wouldn't agree with.
Moderator 2: These are the regulations in Italy.
Participant 2: So, for food, it must be done in Italy. So, Barilla...
Participant 4: No, but you don't care about the raw materials.
Participant 6: But to be honest, that makes sense. Because I'm from Denmark, right? So, we are very limited on our raw materials and stuff. But let's say, we are very good at crafting and designing and making products. The fact that a raw material is not from Denmark, doesn't mean it's not high quality, of course. With food, it can be maybe not as good because it has to be transported so far. But in the end, if they find the right raw materials and they take them to Denmark, use the Danish craft and design and so on, I'll stand for it and be like, “Yeah, that's made in Denmark”. And that will be completely fine because that's also a part of

globalization, right? We're able to produce so many nice products and be very creative, because now we have access to it. I understand that if it’s 100% Made in Italy, then you of course expect...
Participant 7: But to me 100% Italian is not the same as Made in Italy. Yeah, 100% Italian is just 100% Italian, like everything is included. But with Made it Italy I get that and totally agree that it doesn't include the raw materials from Italy.
Participant 6: I get that.
Participant 4: Just to clarify, I don't care where the wheat for the pasta comes from. If I need pasta, I buy whatever pasta. But in my head, I have a distinction between Barilla pasta, which is like the pasta that I consume usually, and when I have to cook for friends, for example. In that case I don't buy Barilla. Like with the brand Molisana, for example, I'm quite sure that it’s 100% Italian. And I don’t do that because I'm like “Oh my God, I need to give money to my country”. It's just because I...
Participant 3: You associate with that kind of brand the quality of Made in Italy.
Participant 4: Yeah, I have a feeling of the product less moving around, you know.
Participant 3: Yeah.
Moderator 1: Okay, the next question is kind of easier. **In your everyday life, so also here, do you purchase any Made in Italy products?**
Participant 6: No, or I wouldn't know. Because I buy what I need. And I don't think I'd go specifically after something that was made in Italy. Maybe later on in my life, I don't know. But right now, it's not relevant for me, if that makes sense. And also, I feel like Italian products are good but more expensive, and price is definitely a factor for me.
Participant 2: I do. I mean, for example, when I see that there are two products, and one is from Italy, of course, I buy the one from Italy. For example, with prosciutto di Parma ham.
Participant 6: Let's take my answer back, actually.
Participant 3: I think I don't have the opportunity from living here to buy Made in Italy products.
Participant 2: There is not a lot of availability.
Participant 3: Maybe at SuperMarco. Oh yeah, maybe Mutti.
Participant 4: No, I don't think Mutti is Made in Italy. But there's for sure one thing.
Participant 3: Okay, so maybe, I don't know.
Participant 4: I mean, I don't get the vibe of Made in Italy from Mutti, I don't know why. It's kind of suspicious.
Participant 7: But for me, as a German, I would say that this tomato sauce is Made in Italy, not knowing anything about the brand. Yeah, and I think that I would buy it. I feel like, for example for pasta, I would buy more Made in Italy, because I know that there's a difference in taste quality. But yeah, my perception of Made in Italy is also maybe not the right one. Like, about which brands actually make it.
Participant 6: I wanted to take my previous answer back. Because I really like Italian wines. So, when I go out to buy wines, I will go after the Italian wines because for me they are a bit more fruitful. So, I would maybe prefer them over French wines, for example.
Participant 3: A good place is Nebbiolo here in Copenhagen.
Participant 6: Yeah, I know. I've been there a lot of times. I think you can taste a lot of wine there.
Participant 3: Manfredo at Netto is very good. 70DKK.
Participant 5: Yeah, I think it's very product specific again. Like, parmigiano, wine, coffee, and pasta. Yeah, those are the most common stuff students buy.
Participant 6: It's also what they specialize in, right? Like, when you think of Italy those are the products you think about.
Participant 2: Well, at Meny, I think there are spaces where they put Italian food, Spanish food, all kinds of different foods. Meny is amazing. So, there you can actually decide if you want to purchase.

Moderator 1: Okay, so **for which reasons specifically do you purchase Made in Italy?**
Participant 4: I think it's more about...
Participant 2: I'm proud of Italy, so...
Participant 4: I want to say habit because I grew up with those. But also, I don't know if I'm breaking the stigma or insulting the whole country, but I don't really have that feeling of Made in Italy uber alles, you know? It's not always the best, you have versions of stuff. You know, the wine in Italy is surely good. But French wine and southern Germany wines are kind of good too.
Participant 6: But I also think that depends on taste.
Participant 4: Yeah, sure. There's taste, but you know…
Participant 6: Individuals' taste, right?
Participant 4: Yeah, right.
Participant 6: Because there are definitely some people that are like "Oh, I love California wine", right?
Participant 5: What was the question, again?
Moderator 1: For which reasons you purchase Made in Italy. Because the majority said they do purchase, so.
Participant 5: For me it's exposure, actually. Because I've been to Italy last 6 months and I discovered my love for some Italian products, so I also want to buy them here because I just know that they are good, and I like them.
Participant 3: I do know many internationals that, when they start going to Italy, maybe in summer again and again, they actually start understanding little nuances between different stuff, even better than actual Italians, so that's nice.
Participant 5: Yeah, you really notice some quality in specific food and also in coffee. I don't think I've had one proper espresso here.
Participant 3: Yeah, the espresso is very concentrated in Italy. That's how it's supposed to be. I'm looking for one here. So again, the quality, exposure, and maybe homesickness.
Participant 4: That's what I wanted to say, like habit. But I think here you also miss the experience part of it. I mean, even if I find an espresso here, it's not going to be the same as in Italy.
Participant 3: Buffalo mozzarella is only in Naples.
Participant 4: Because you know, where's the piazza? Where's the barista? Where's the drama? When we talk about this, I realized that we have never really talked about Dolce Vita, you know that kind of stuff?
Participant 3: Yeah, that's true. Also, I think with the Instagram reels and so on, Italy and the Dolce Vita are very exposed to international people. I mean, maybe because it's also another period for us as millennials. Maybe it was more like with Fellini movies and so on.
Participant 4: Yeah, exactly, I think the media in Italy kind of convey the Made in Italy quality and whatever that we talked about. But there is a whole package of like...
Participant 3: Also, movies. We didn't talk about movies, right?
Participant 4: Oh yeah. We're so good.
Participant 5: Italian movies?
Participant 3: The history of cinematography and also the school of theater that we have it's important in Italy. I think it's a kind of movie that cannot be translated or dubbed into other languages because otherwise you're going to lose the quote. That's what I mean. For example, I think, *La Vita e Bella*, the movie that won the Oscar.
Moderator 1: *Life is Beautiful.*
Participant 7: Yeah, that one.
Participant 3: That kind of movies, they all belong to a certain stream of movies that actually in Italy are perceived in a certain way, but you're not able to translate them in other words. Okay, that works actually with every country. But also, we are one of the few countries that dubs every movie.

Participant 7: In Germany too.

Participant 3: Okay. So, I mean, there are fewer schools of dubbing in Europe, and I think ours are very strong. For me, for example, I know here in Denmark they don't dub the movies. If I go to the movies, I only see it in English with subtitles in Danish. The movie is not dubbed in Danish. That's what I mean.

Participant 6: Some are, mostly anime. Like cartoons.

Participant 3: Ah, Okay. For example, in Italy it is a special occasion to have a movie in its original language.

Participant 4: I don't think I've had the chance to see a movie in original language in Italy.

Participant 3: Marvel, for example.

Participant 4: Yeah?

Participant 3: Yeah, you can see them in certain theaters. They offer you the possibility to watch movies in English.

Participant 6: When I went to Italy and I went to the movies, that was in English. But isn't that annoying? Because, if there's an English movie and especially kids' movies, they do get dubbed in Danish. I would never watch it in Danish because it's just not matching, you know?

Participant 3: You know English. We are very, very bad in Italy at that. We're so ignorant. We don't know English that well, so we cannot have movies in English. Subtitles are not the same thing.

Participant 6: It's just like, I couldn't.

Participant 2: Also, because here you watch movies in English when you are younger, right?

Participant 6: Yeah, that's because we don't have that many Danish movies.

Moderator 1: Okay, next question. So, **what would incentivize you to increase your consumption of Made in Italy products?**

Participant 6: Money.

Participant 4: Availability.

Participant 2: Availability.

Participant 6: Also, what you said before with people who get exposed to it. I think that's also a very important factor. I have a lot of friends who have been to Italy like a couple of times, but I've only been there for a short amount of time, so it's not like "Oh, that was good. Let me buy that". I don't get cooked for me or cook by myself in Italy. So, when it comes to Italian products I wouldn't, when I get back, be incentivized to buy them, I'll just go back to my own habits. But if you've been exposed to them longer, then probably... Once I get a full-time job, maybe, right?

Participant 3: Availability. Money too.

Participant 7: For me it's also money.

Participant 5: Yeah, once you eat tomato in Italy and pizza every day for like 20 days, then you don't want to switch to the German pizza.

Participant 6: Okay, yes. I got that one but sometimes you just need a pizza. That's all that's available. But it goes into like availability, right?

Moderator 1: Okay, thank you. We are basically reaching the last question which is directed at foreigners. It wouldn't apply to you [Participant 6] because you're originally from Denmark. So, **do you purchase any Made in Italy products in your native countries?**

Participant 7: I think it's the same, we have the same range that we have in Denmark, so I think it's the same. Barilla, Mutti. Yeah, pasta, coffee, wine. But I do feel like we have more products Made in Italy available in Germany than in Denmark. It's just like the general assortment, but it's also probably because Germany is a bigger country.

Moderator 2: For this question, actually, you [Participant 6] have been living in Taiwan, right?

Participant 6: Yeah.

Moderator 1: Oh, ok.

Moderator 2: So, what about you?
Participant 6: Yeah, actually I was also thinking about that. I used to live in Asia for almost a year and I go back a lot. And one thing that I love is like cheese and bread and so on. And it's really hard to find those products in Asia, actually. It's not hard, like it's becoming more and more common, but it's not their usual food. So, when I go there, my mom's side of the family is very much like "Oh, we need to buy all these products" and my aunt actually also used to live in Italy for like a year, so they go out for my sake and find these Italian products. And also, I guess it's because in Europe we have a lot of substitutes given that our foods' taste is kind of similar, right? It's kind of bread based and pasta based. But that's not how food is in China, so I think when they did buy European food, like Italian food, they cared a lot about the fact that it was actually from Italy. Does that make sense? But it's also way more expensive because it gets imported. Yeah, so they will probably do it for special occasions and so on.
Moderator 1: Okay, thank you and really last question. Still directed at non-Italians. **Did you notice any difference in your consumption habits of Made in Italy products between here in Denmark and in your native countries?**
Participant 7: Yeah, just exposure and availability. It's more available in Germany and I think it's also less expensive to buy Made in Italy in Germany than in Denmark. But I think just general prices are lower.
Participant 6: I guess as I said before, in Denmark, if I wanted to eat Italian cuisine, I'd buy any kind of pasta, any kind of pesto or whatever. Maybe because there is stuff here that is what you can associate with Italy but doesn't have to be Made in Italy. On the other hand, if I were in China or Taiwan, I would go for the Italian products because I wouldn't trust the Chinese ones.
Moderator 1: Okay, so thank you all, we are done. Thank you so much for bearing with us and please take some snacks. I mean, the group we had yesterday already finished everything by the end.