

CHS@AU in Italy
Integrative Group Project
American and Italian Retailers: A Comparative Analysis

The goal of this assignment is to examine and compare retail settings, channels of distribution, merchandising assortments and practices, pricing and product quality, and consumer shopping patterns in the U.S. and Italy. Your paper will include the following sections:

1. Review of Literature (approximately 3-5 pages): Your group is to identify one multinational retailer (MNR) based in Italy and one based in the U.S. that sell both apparel and foods. (They may also sell many other products in one or more of their divisions.) For each of the MNR's your group identifies, prepare a brief summary of the corporation including corporate history, retail divisions (e.g., names of different stores or retail channels owned and operated by the parent company); locations (e.g., countries in which they operate, and in Italy, the major cities in which they operate); type of retail channel of each division (e.g., specialty retail, discount, grocery, department store, mail order); merchandise categories sold in each division (e.g., apparel & accessories, groceries, hardware, home fashions, etc.). Also include in your review of literature information on consumer shopping patterns in the U.S. and Italy, e.g., percentage of budget spent on food, clothing, and housing, information on disposable income levels, and laws regarding retail store operations.

2. Methodology (approximately 3-5 pages): In the U.S. and in Italy visit at least two locations (i.e., different cities) of at least two store types (i.e., divisions) for each of the MNR's you selected. At least one store type (i.e., division) in each country needs to sell food items as well as apparel. You are also to visit at least one locally-owned apparel store in Auburn/Opelika and one in Ariccia, Albano, or other city in the Castelli Romani region. Develop and describe a methodology that will provide answers to the following questions.

- What is the range of merchandise sold in each store visited (e.g., clothing, home fashions, hard lines, groceries)?
- What is the price range and quality level(s) offered?
- What size ranges, age, gender, purpose/opportunity are included in the apparel sold in each store? What, if anything, appears to be missing (consistent with the type of store)?
- In apparel, do they carry internationally recognized designer labels, national (e.g., in U.S. or Italy respectively) brands, private label, and/or boutique type labels? Give examples of these brands.
- What type of labeling is required for apparel in each country? What labeling is required for food in each country?
- What countries does the apparel come from? (Name at least 5 countries of origin for apparel found in each store and indicate the item of apparel, country of origin, and store.) Did you find evidence of food imported from other countries? If so, what, from where, and in which stores?
- What types of food products are sold (e.g., canned, fresh, frozen, prepared meals, gourmet)?
- What is the store location (e.g., name of city, type of location—e.g., strip center, city center, enclosed mall, free standing)? How do customers get to the store (e.g., drive, walk, bus, train)?
- What types of retail venues are offered under the same roof, but probably provided by a contractual vendor (e.g., eye centers, banking, restaurants, photo processing)?
- What is the layout/traffic pattern of the store? (Sketches or pictures can be helpful here).
- What services are offered (e.g., lay away; gift wrap; gift registries; child care/play areas; waiting areas for tired, physically challenged, or bored shoppers or those accompanying shoppers; cooking lessons)?

- What accommodations are made for people with disabilities? For people who do not speak the native language of the country in which the store is located?
- What are the days and hours of operation?
- What financial arrangements are available (e.g., credit cards, lay away, merchandise returns)?
- What is the store's theme/slogan?
- What is the store's policy regarding sales and promotions? How do they advertise/promote? How would you describe their advertising?
- Describe the visual merchandising approach; the signage, lighting, fitting rooms, and restrooms. (Sketches and photos –if permission is given–are helpful here.)
- Do they have a website? If so, does it offer merchandise for sale or is the website primarily for information purposes? If there is a website, how does it serve international customers?
- What are the shopping patterns? What times of the day and week is the store the busiest? Who is in the store (e.g., families with young children, workers on lunch break, teens, young professionals, older people)? What is the mood of the shoppers, e.g., do they appear to be purposeful, frustrated, casual, driven, enjoying themselves, etc? Is the shopping destination-oriented or entertainment-oriented?
- What about the sales staff? Relative numbers, relative age, training, helpfulness, professionalism? What about the ease of completing the sale, e.g., checkout process?
- What commitment to sustainability or green marketing, is evident?

3. Results (approximately 3-5 pages): This should be a comparative analysis of the data that you found in answer to the questions listed above. This can be presented in whatever format you believe is most helpful to the reader.

4. Discussion (approximately 3-5 pages): Discuss the results with respect to differences and similarities of Italian and U.S. consumers as well differences and similarities between Italian and U.S. MNR and entrepreneurial retailers and the retail environment in both countries. Discuss your results with reference to the review of literature, your guest lectures, and what you have learned through observation about Italian and American consumers, shopping patterns, and retailing.

5. Integration (approximately 3-5 pages): Does this project integrate the areas of CAHS, HDFS, and NUFS? If so, how? If not, what could be done to make it a better integrated Human Sciences experience? Use and cite the Human Sciences references provided.

6. References. Cite all of the references you used in this paper, including lecturers and dates they lectured.

7. Appendix. Include sketches, photos, examples, or other images to enhance and illustrate your main points.

