

FOREIGNERS AND EMOTIONAL RELATIONS WITH THE WELCOMING COMMUNITY

Nidia Batic

1. Introduction

Statistics on the presence of foreigners in Italy are fragmentary, but taking into account both foreigners resident in Italy (Istat, 2017) and those with regular residence permits (ISMU, 2016), in 2016 there were about 5.4 million people (Colombo, 2017), 22% of whom come from Africa (ISTAT, 2016).

There is a wide body of literature on foreigners¹, addressing the issue from different points of view, but here we focus on the emotional perception that characterizes the relationship between foreigners and Italians.

In 2016, a survey done on a sample of 1854 people (Batic, 2016) showed that the inhabitants of Friuli Venezia Giulia have a positive and reassuring representation of foreigners, describing them primarily as "honest, good, educated", confirming the opinions arising from previous research, carried out at a more circumscribed territorial level, in which the foreign component represented 19.4% of the population (Batic, 2011). These attitudes derive from the factorial analysis that, famously, brings out the emotional dimension of the concept being investigated, and in this case the "foreigner" is identified as honest and good.

Less frequent are research studies that interview foreigners to hear their opinions or to understand how they perceive us, and whether there are correspondences between their points of view. In 2014, the Moressa Foundation interviewed 600 foreign families across Italy and it turned out that foreigners think that Italians are hard workers (78.3%) but immigrants are more so (90%), while Italians and foreigners equally love a beautiful life (70.0%). 26.1% of respondents agrees that Italians are racist, but the complementary figure can be emphasized, with 73.9% describing Italians as non-racist. Another point concerns the statement that "Italians are corrupt": 33.9% of foreigners interviewed are in agreement, but in this case it should not be ignored that two thirds (66.1%) do not think that way.

¹ We can remember the ISMU (Indagini e Studi sulla Multienicità) that deals with different issues concerning immigrants, divided into sections: Economy and Labor, Integration, Social Policies, Population, Health, Schooling and Education, Transnationalism and Co- development, Family and minors

Starting from these research studies a reflection was undertaken on the experience of foreigners living in Italy, with particular reference to the universe of African immigrants.

2. Objectives, instrument and method

The goal of this research was to understand the emotional component that characterizes the attitude of foreigners towards Italians. It also sought to understand the motivations that bring these people to our country, their degree of integration, their plans to stay in Italy, and what should be done to help them.

For this purpose, a questionnaire with 26 items was designed, divided into five sections:

- 1) personal data;
- 2) reasons for migration to Italy;
- 3) welcome and integration;
- 4) relationship with the native country
- 5) perception of the Italians.

The target of the research were only African people and the interviewers were two students from Africa². It was thought that their evident origin facilitated contact and willingness to be interviewed by African immigrants. However, despite this consideration, it was very difficult to find people willing to answer the questionnaire. The criterion of choice was absolutely random, and the questionnaire was administered in public places (street, station) or in university places (study room, student's home or in the canteen) but many refused to answer or even to hear the topic of the questionnaire.

The questionnaires, written in Italian, were self-compiled but interviewers were present to provide clarification or to translate some unclear terms.

The survey was carried out in December 2016 and January 2017 in the cities of Udine and Ferrara.

Due to the difficulties in finding people willing to collaborate, 60 people were interviewed. It is a very small and non-probabilistic numerical sample, for which this work is to be considered purely exploratory and the results obtained can provide interesting information for further reflections and insights.

² Thanks to Dr. Adjoko Elveia Christel Lassey for coordinating the survey and carrying out most of the interviews.

3. Data analysis and hypothesis testing

3.1 Sample features

The sample of 60 people was 55.0% male and 45.0% female, with an average age of 27 years and 6 months (28 years and 1 month for males and 26 years and 11 months for female), at the end of 2016. Half of the sample is represented by students and the remaining 50% is divided between casual workers (20.0%), sellers of objects (13.3%), employees (6.7%) and unemployed (10.0%). These are people from different African countries: Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Togo.

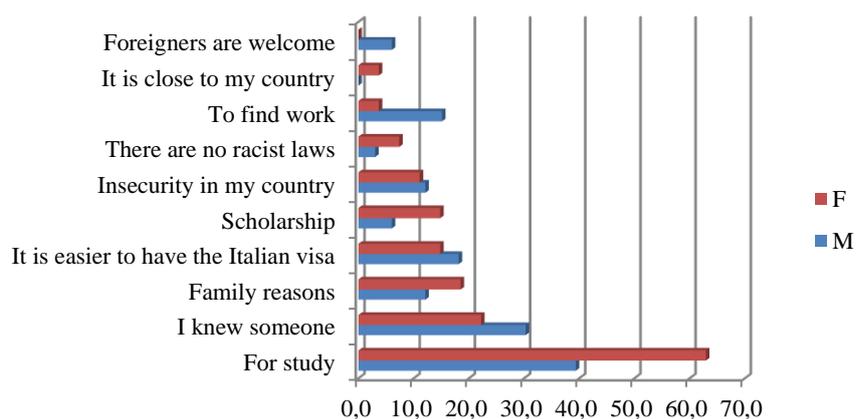
65.0% are native speakers of French and the remaining 35.0% are native speakers of English.

It should be noted that given the small number of interviewees, gender-specific data will not be analyzed but will be represented in tables and figures.

3.2 Reasons for migration in Italy

The composition of the sample shows that the main reason respondents came to Italy is related to study (50.0%), followed by the fact that they knew someone who welcomed them in Italy (26.7%). Few say they came to Italy to find work (10%) because there are no racist laws (5.0%) or because we welcome foreigners (3.3%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Reasons why the foreigners came to Italy (multiple responses, values by gender, in percentages)



Can be provided up to two responses.

3.3 Welcome and integration

The desire to integrate is common among almost all the interviewed Africans. Only one, corresponding to 1.7%, claims to be "little" willing to integrate with the welcoming community, others say "quite" (63.3%) or "much / very much" inclined toward integration (see Table 1). Beyond their wishes, 71.7% claim to be integrated and 65.0% feel welcome in the community they live in.

Table 1 – *Integration and desire for migration of foreigners in the community they live in (values by gender, in percentage)*

| | M | F | % on 60 |
|--|------|------|---------|
| He feels welcomed in the community he lives in | 63,6 | 66,7 | 65,0 |
| He feels integrated | 66,7 | 77,8 | 71,7 |
| He wishes to be integrated little/enough | 63,6 | 66,7 | 65,0 |
| He wishes to be integrated much/very much | 36,4 | 33,3 | 35,0 |

To promote integration, 25.0% believe the first step should be taken by foreigners, while for 61.7% there should be a mutual approach. On the other hand, only 35.0% share the strong desire to be integrated. Regarding integration, suggestions are also provided: there is a strong awareness that to be accepted into a community foreigners must respect laws (71,7%) and adapt to the rules of the community (15,0%). The opinion that foreigners should learn Italian (35.0%) is not very widespread, although the survey shows that before coming to Italy 40.0% knew a little Italian and 26.7% had studied it some(see Table 2).

Table 2 – *Behaviors that foreigners should adopt to foster their integration (multiple responses, values by gender, in percentage)*

| | M | F | % su 60 |
|--|------|------|---------|
| Respect the law | 63,6 | 81,5 | 71,7 |
| Learn italian | 36,4 | 33,3 | 35,0 |
| Participate in community life | 27,3 | 37,0 | 31,7 |
| Do not expect to live as in your Country of origin | 9,1 | 22,2 | 15,0 |
| Adapt to the rules of the community | 15,2 | 14,8 | 15,0 |
| Work | 18,2 | 0,0 | 10,0 |
| To pay taxes | 6,1 | 11,1 | 8,3 |
| Respect local traditions | 9,1 | 0,0 | 5,0 |
| Obtain citizenship | 3,0 | 3,7 | 3,3 |
| Do not be bully | 0,0 | 7,4 | 3,3 |
| Do not take a job away from Italians | 6,1 | 0,0 | 3,3 |

For every question they had to answer "yes" or "not".

Integration also means participating in the life of the host community (31.7%) and not expecting to live as in the native country. But to integrate, should

foreigners abandon the culture and practices of their native country? The "no" supporters are 35.0% and the "yes" supporters are 15.0%, while the remaining 50.0% assume a more moderate attitude, meaning that "sometimes" the price of the integration goes through a waiver. It is interesting to note that the foreseen options of "sending children to school" and "speaking in dialect" have not been indicated by anyone.

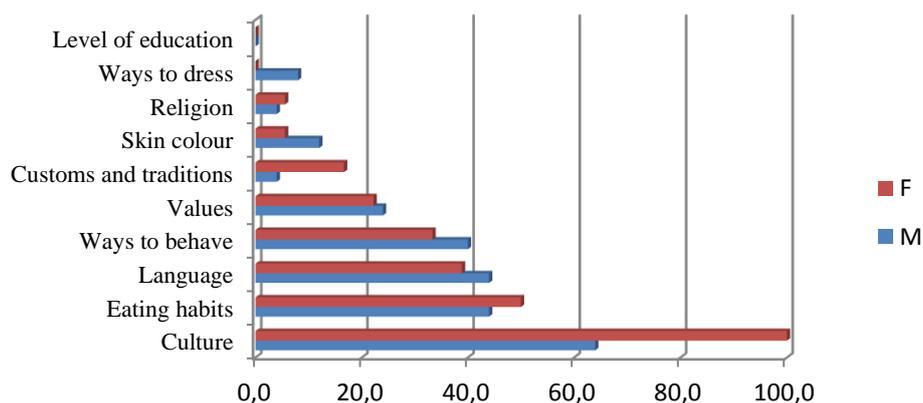
Integration is "built" over time, so all foreigners with a longer history of immigration are integrated (100.0% of those who reside in Italy for more than 6 years, representing 25.0% of Sample), while those with a maximum of 5 years, 62.2% feel integrated and the remaining 37.8% do not. In this respect we note the presence of many students in our country is for a maximum of 5 years, with two thirds of them feeling integrated.

An additional indicator of integration considers the knowledge of Italians. It was only asked how many Italians are known or frequented, for reasons of study or work. It was not easy to provide an accurate response, so 40.0% tried to quantify their contacts and averaged a mean of 6.3 contacts per capita (ranging from 0 to 20 known Italians), while the remaining 60.0% is divided as follows: 23.3% "few", 21.7% "numerous" and 15,0% "many".

Integration also means to "put down roots", form a family, or be joint by one's family. 13.3% was achieved and 21.7% had a family in Italy, however, partners, apart from the case of an Italian wife, are all Africans.

How do Africans perceive the welcoming community? Do you consider the Italians "different"? And what is this diversity? It is striking that 28.3% do not see

Figure 2 – Elements of differentiation between Italians and foreigners (multiple responses, values by gender, in percentage).



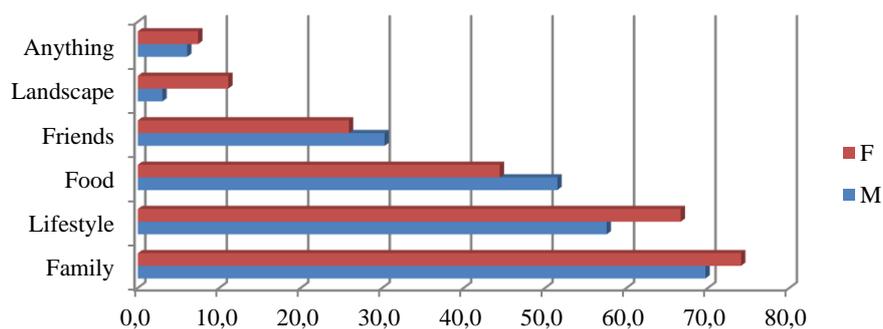
Can be provided up to three responses.

elements of diversity between Italians and Africans, while 71.7% express themselves in that direction. The first distinctive factor (see Figure 2) is represented by culture (79.1%) meaning in anthropological terms, while no one has indicated differences in the level of education. A little less than 50% finds different eating habits (46.5%) and "only" 41.9% places the language as a distinctive element. The survey did not provide anything more in depth in this regard, but it is likely while staying in Italy many interviewees have learned the language and for them it is no longer a problem. Few believe that the uses and habits are different (4 in all) and even less think that religion and the ways of dressing make a difference (2 people). The perception of "diversity" is not explained by the low number of people who indicate skin color differentiation (9.3%); perhaps it may be explained by considering that a maximum of three responses were to allowed, and it may be that respondents have identified other priorities.

3.4 Foreigners' relationship with native Country

A longer stay in Italy does not exclude that the relationship with the native land is strong. Indeed, only 6.7% do not feel any nostalgia, and there are 4 people who say they feel fully integrated in our country. For the others, in first place there is nostalgia for the family (71.7%) followed by nostalgia for the lifestyle (61.7%) and for food (48.3%). The latter data shows a substantial agreement with the previously presented data: just under 50% of foreigners emphasize differences in nutrition and suffer from them; On the other side it can be said that little more than 50% no longer consider it a differentiation element and have also been integrated from this point of view (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 – What is missed by foreigners in the country from the country of origin (multiple responses, values by gender, in percentage)



Can be provided up to three responses.

Do the respondents consider their choice to stay in Italy definitive? When asked "Do you think you'll return to your country?" 68.3% answered yes, 26.7% do not want to leave Italy and 5.0% have to return to their native country because their residence permits have expired, But if it were possible, they would like to stay. The main reason for leaving Italy (see Table 3) is the nostalgia for the native country (31.7%).

Table 3 – *Reasons why foreigners want to return to their country (multiple responses, percentage values)*

| | % on 60 |
|---|---------|
| I am nostalgic about my country | 31,7 |
| As soon as I hope to put aside some money | 26,7 |
| I've just finished my studies | 25,0 |
| There is my family there | 16,7 |
| As soon as the security conditions are in place | 10,0 |
| Here I don't feel welcome | 8,3 |
| I have not found a job here | 3,3 |

Can be provided up to three responses.

There are also people who think they will be repatriated as soon as they reach their goal: 26.7% want to earn enough to be able to return home; 25.0% will leave after finishing their studies. On the other hand, among those who do not think they'll return home, most people feel integrated (13.3%) or have found work (8.3%) (see Table 4).

Table 4 – *Reasons why foreigners do not want to return to their country (multiple responses, values in percentages)*

| | % on 60 |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| I feel integrated | 13,3 |
| I found a job here | 8,3 |
| My kids go to school | 6,7 |
| I cannot find job in my country | 6,7 |
| For personal safety reasons | 3,3 |
| I live badly in my country | 1,7 |
| I feel good here | 1,7 |

Can be provided up to three responses.

3.5 Emotional relationship with the "Italian"

The use of Semantic Differential Technique (Osgood, 1957) made it possible to bring out the emotional dimension of the relationship of foreigners toward the inhabitants of the country hosting them, through 17 bipolar adjectives scales at

seven positions. At each position a value from 1 to 7 was assigned and a first analysis of the medians shows that in two scales the median is 2, in seven scales is 3 and in the other the median is 4, corresponding to the neutral position (see Table 5).

Table 5 – *Medians of bipolar scales on the concept of "Italian"*

| Bipolar scale | median | Bipolar scale | median | Bipolar scale | median |
|----------------------|--------|---------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|
| educated-uneducated | 2 | good-bad | 3 | hot-cold | 4 |
| useful-useless | 2 | honest-dishonest | 3 | open-close | 4 |
| acceptance-rejection | 3 | worker-slacker | 3 | poor-rich | 4 |
| active-idle | 3 | avaricious-generous | 4 | unpleasant-sympathetic | 4 |
| calm-fear | 3 | beautiful-ugly | 4 | unselfish-selfish | 4 |
| cultured-ignorant | 3 | dirty-clean | 4 | | |

It was applied the sample median test to the bipolar adjective scales (Diamond, Jefferies, 2002), referring to the neutral position 4, and the null hypothesis was rejected for 10 scales ($\alpha=0,05$), with a significant displacement toward: educated, useful, acceptance, calm, good, honest, worker, beautiful, clean, rich. The scales were also subjected to factor analysis. After eliminating those with double saturation³, it was re-applied to the 15 remaining scales and a total of five factors were extracted, explaining 71,6% of the observed variability⁴. The first factor suggests a representation of Italians absolutely positive, identified with the first adjective, goodness, and described the Italians as: good, educated, generous, honest and welcoming. The second is a factor associated with humanity, represented by adjectives such as warm, altruistic and useful. The third is the factor of industriousness: quiet, worker and active, and the fourth of the personal dimension: rich, clean, open. Finally the factor of beauty, strongly correlated with the adjective beautiful.

4. Conclusions

Conclusions will focus on two topics: the integration and the emotional dimension of the relationship between Africans and Italians.

The foreigner perceives elements of diversity as compared to Italians; this find a symmetrical convergence of views in the Italians perception toward foreigners

³ From the analysis the stairs with double saturation were eliminated: cultured-ignorant and unpleasant-sympathetic.

⁴ The analysis of main components was applied and the factor matrix was rotated with the Varimax method in order to make the axis perpendicular to the factors. The factors with eigenvalue greater than or equal to 1 were extracted.

(Batic, 2016). Interviewees acknowledge as the first element of diversity the cultural factor (79.1%) confirming the opinion of 70.1% of Italians. Similar opinions regards the linguistic differences, expressed by 41.9% foreigners and 51.5% Italians.

Regarding integration, 65.0% feel "welcomed" in the community in which they live and 71.7% feel they are "integrated". This apparent contradiction can be explained in the following way: there are immigrants who, after arriving in Italy, have moved from one municipality to another, so they can feel integrated in Italy but a little less welcomed in the community where they currently reside. One might hypothesize that the wish of integration is stronger in those who claim not to be integrated, while it is less intense in those who already are. Otherwise, analyzing the answers, there is no statistically significant difference in the desirability of foreigners to be integrated, both declare themselves integrated and not ($\chi^2 = 0.519$)⁵. Although not exactly coincident in percentages, the wish not to fully integrate had already been brought out from a survey done by the Moressa Foundation in 2014, where 44.8% stated that immigrants do not want to integrate.

Another thing to compare with the research of the Moressa Foundation is the ease of entry into our country. In 2014 it was found that for 64.4% it was too easy for foreigners to enter Italy, while among the respondents in Africa this facility was a reason for entry only for 16.7% of people.

In order to explore the emotional dimension evoked by the concept of "Italian" in foreigners interviewed, the technique of the semantic differential was applied. The results of factorial analysis (foreign versus. Italian) can be compared with the similar elaboration (Italian versus foreigners) made on the scales of the semantic differential used in the search of 2016 (Batic, 2016)⁶. In the present search five factors were extracted and in the previous one three were extracted. Analyzing the first factor, it should be noted that among the five scales associated with it in the opinions of foreigners, four are also correlated with the first factor in the opinions

⁵ To test the presence of statistically significant differences between integrated Africans and those who do not wish to belong to the community they live in, Yates's chi square test was applied, as in some cells the frequencies were less than 5. For a 4x2 matrix (scale of "integration desire" from "little" to "very much" for the two "integrated / non-integrated" conditions), degrees of freedom are 3 and the critical value of square chi with $\alpha = 0.01$ it is 11.35.

⁶ The scales are not exactly the same because in their structure some factors have been taken into account which differentiate the conditions and experiences of their respective populations. For example, in the inquiry to foreigners regarding the attitude towards the Italians, dichotomies have not been given: white / black, embedded / marginalized, dark /light, woman / man, resident / tourist, too much/ little, trust / insecurity and security / insecurity that would not have been adequate to represent the feeling of the Italians. On the other hand, the following stairs were included: poor / rich, unselfish / selfish, avaricious / generous, worker / slacker.

of the Italians: both think of each other that they are: good, polite, honest and welcoming (see Table 6).

Table 6 – Perception of Italians by foreigners and foreigners by Italians. Factual analysis comparing

| | Factors | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------|---------------|--------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Foreigners vs Italians | goodness | humanity | operosity | personal size | beauty |
| Italians vs foreigners | honesty and goodness | personal traits | presence | | |

From an emotional point of view it has been noted that foreigners have a good opinion of Italians (mutually confirmed), and this is probably one of the factors that contributes to make feel them integrated in our country. However, this positive predisposition to the Italians and this sense of welcome that is well recognized is not enough to compel people to stay in Italy: 68.3% would return to their native country (in line with a research done in the city of Rimini, Pollini, 1993).

Such information could be used to design interventions for immigrants. It has been seen that their project is to consider staying in Italy as provisional, until certain conditions are achieved, first of all to put aside some money to be able to live with dignity in their own country. As a result, we could think of helping these people by inserting them into training programs for professions or crafts that might be useful when they return to their home country. Italy should not be seen as a country that delivers money but as a country that forms, which gives culture and tools for work autonomy to spend when returning home.

At the same time, as long as they reside in Italy, we should work on the front of reception and integration. It is difficult to think of a population of more than 5 million people living away from the human fabric surrounding it. Integration is a mutual achievement and they themselves recognize the opportunity to adopt a series of virtuous behaviors. First of all, the foreigner must surely be committed to legality, to learn the Italian language and to participate in the life of the host community. This latter aspect is central to the integration process: taking advantage of opportunities to participate as socializing moments can be a strategy for getting acquainted, to overcome the barriers of distrust that accompany the contact with the "different". As Belletti, Boffi and Ambrosini (2014, p. 147) reflected, "the less you know them, the more you avoid them and you are fearful. If you start to know them, maybe some fear falls away and you start getting in relations. "A mutual approach could be the best recipe, an "offer" to "receive", an exchange where there is no superiority but only equality and mutual respect.

References

- BATIC N. 2011. Atteggiamenti di integrazione verso la popolazione immigrata in un piccolo comune industrializzato nel Nord-Est, *Nike. La rivista delle scienze politiche*, Vol. 8, No.1, pp. 179-196.
- BATIC N. 2016. The perception of foreigners in northeast Italy, *Rivista Italiana di Economia Demografia e Statistica*, vol. LXX, No.2, pp. 117-128.
- BELLETTI F., BOFFI P., AMBROSINI M. 2014. Gli italiani di fronte all'immigrazione: l'indagine CIsf del 2014, in CIsF (Ed), *Le famiglie di fronte alle sfide dell'immigrazione*, Trento: Erickson, pp. 91-152.
- COLOMBO F. 2017. Quanti sono, in tutto, gli stranieri in Italia? <http://www.lenius.it/stranieri-in-italia/>
- DIAMOND I., JEFFERIES J. 2002. *Introduzione alla statistica per le scienze sociali*, Milano: McGraw-Hill.
- FONDAZIONE Leone Moressa 2014. *Cosa pensano gli immigrati degli italiani?*, Studi e ricerche sull'economia dell'immigrazione.
- ISMU 2016. *Ventiduesimo Rapporto sulle Migrazioni 2016*.
- ISTAT 2016. <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/190676>.
- ISTAT 2017. *Indicatori-demografici 2016, Statistiche report*.
- OSGOOD C.E., SUCI G.J., TANNENBAUM P.H. 1957. *The Measurement of Meaning*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- POLLINI G. 1993. Immigrati extra-Cee a Rimini: comportamenti, atteggiamenti ed orientamenti", in G. SCIDÀ, G. POLLINI, *Stranieri in città*, Milano: Franco Angeli, pp. 199-261.

SUMMARY

Foreigners and emotional relations with the welcoming community

It is estimated that in 2016 there were about 5,4 million foreigners in Italy, including those with regular residence permits, and about 22% comes from Africa. A lot is written about foreigners present in Italy but it is more difficult to know something about their lives in the community that welcomes them; hence the goal of this research was to interview a sample of foreigners from different African countries, present in some municipalities in northern Italy.

There have been many difficulties in finding people to interview, so this work can be considered only exploratory.

A brief questionnaire was administered to a non probabilistic sample of 60 foreigners: 50,0% are students and only 10,0% are unemployed.

The three main reasons that led them to our country are study reasons (51.7%), the fact that they know someone (26.7%) or because they came to know that Italy is a country that welcomes foreigners (16.7%).

65.0% feel welcome in the community in which they live and to support integration 25.0% believes that the first step should be taken by foreigners while for 61.7% there should be a mutual approach. On the other hand, only 35.0% of respondents share the desire to integrate.

The factor analysis applied to 17 bipolar scale referring to the perception of Italians by foreigners, brought out a very positive profiles. There are extracted five factors, with 71,6% of observed variability. The first factor suggests a fully positive and reassuring representation of Italians: it is the factor of *goodness*. The second is a factor associated with *human warmth*. The third is the factor of *industriousness*, the fourth of the *personal dimension*, and finally the factor of *beauty*.