

Italy's fashion companies building on "Made in Italy" brand in China

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ROME, Nov. 30 (Xinhua) -- Italy's fashion industry is working hard to ensure it remains in fashion in China, the world's fastest-growing major market for high-end clothing and accessories.

Key players in the sector have told Xinhua that China is an increasingly important market for Italian fashion houses.

The market in China "is one of the few areas where we can say things are actually going pretty well for fashion companies," Mario Boselli, president of the Italy-China Foundation, said in an interview. "Italian companies are among the major players in the market, and they are taking the steps necessary to keep things that way."

According to Nicola Guerini, director-general of the Milan Fashion Institute, the success of Italian fashion products and other Italian non-fashion brands in China gives companies a strong base to build on.

"The 'Made in Italy' brand has value in China," Guerini told Xinhua.

"Chinese consumers are increasingly interested in high-end products and the 'Made in Italy' tag on a product is a signal that something is of a certain level."

Boselli agreed: "The two main keys for success not only in China but in most markets are that a product should have a beautiful design and that it should be well made," he said. "That is what 'Made in Italy' represents."

The importance of China's market is amplified by the fact that the Chinese economy is one of very few in the world to have survived the coronavirus pandemic relatively unscathed.

According to a study released this summer from GlobalData, China is set to emerge from the pandemic as the world's largest market for high-end

fashion. Last year, before the start of the pandemic, GlobalData's report showed China was second to the United States.

But while the overall global apparel market and that in the United States are both expected to contract dramatically, China's market is far less impacted. A GlobalData official confirmed to Xinhua the trends in the report were still relevant.

"Clothing sales will take a while to recover, due to the drop in consumer confidence, the tourism crisis, and the threat of an imminent global recession and high unemployment levels," GlobalData retail analyst Vijay Bhupathiraju said in a statement. "But some markets in China are already seeing a return in stores of 80 to 100 percent pre-COVID levels."

Guerini said the changes to the global fashion market could end up working to the advantage of some fashion houses.

"Before the pandemic, a Chinese consumer might buy a product while traveling in Milan or Rome or Paris, and that would be the end of the transaction," Guerini said. "Now, they know the brands and they buy them from a local store in their home city. That can create a relationship because the store can tell them when new products are available, or when there are sales or special events."

Boselli said that Italian companies will do well as long as demand from Chinese customers remains high. But he said that growing demands reveal other weak areas.

"Companies will have to improve their distribution channels over time," he said. Enditem