

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

Italian craftsmanship, positioning will keep I-beauty brands competitive

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Beauty Made in Italy is run by the Italian Trade Commission. Image credit: Beauty Made in Italy

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

NEW YORK Despite the impressive and speedy growth of Korean beauty, experts agree that Italian brands will not be pushed out thanks to their commitment to quality.

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K-beauty has grown fast and furious in the cosmetics world, mostly due to skincare, but Italian beauty brands' reputation for quality in color cosmetics will maintain their place in the beauty world. During the July 23 panel, "Italian Beauty 360: From Concept to Consumer," hosted by the Italian Beauty Council and moderated by *NewBeauty* executive editor Liz Ritter, a group of experts in beauty explained that Italian brands' abilities to remain small and medium companies while maintaining innovative facilities have allowed them to establish images of the utmost quality.

"If you're physically giving someone a product they will know if it is quality or not," said Alyson Lord, senior partnerships manager of Ipsy. "Marketing only goes so far.

"That will either convert or will turn someone off. It is all about connection," she said. "You cannot fake quality, and the Italian brands we work with have a leg up on quality."

The quality of Italy

Fabio Berchi, CEO of SiFarma & Cosmetica and Italia board member in charge of internationalization, explained that Italy's third top export is cosmetics and 42 percent of its beauty industry products are exported. The country is well known for its beauty and fashion products, in addition to food.



Amani plans to ramp up its beauty and fragrance collections. Image credit: Amani Beauty

Mr. Berchi also explained that Italian companies are often known to be small or medium sized family businesses rooted in culture.

Italy is a country rich in ingredients, which allows these beauty companies to be close to their supply chain. Its quality and bevy of natural ingredients also mean that a significant number of United States-based brands and others throughout the world have products produced in Italy.

Consumers are often drawn to the lure of an Italian product, because they feel a connection to the highly romanticized country.

Mary Ann Guarino, U.S. vice president of Ancorotti Cosmetics, explained that consumers want to have a piece of Italy and if they cannot get there themselves, beauty is a good entry point.

Ian Ginsberg, president of CO Bigelow Apothecaries & Bigelow Trading Ltd, seconded this notion by revealing that when working with Italian companies, he focuses on showcasing the story of the brand because that is what consumers are drawn to.

Beauty subscription service Ipsy's Ms. Lord detailed that the Italian brands she has worked with have had a leg up on quality.

For Ipsy, customers receive the products in physical form, and they are able to discern if it is quality or not. These consumers are not building a relationship with brands via marketing, but through the actual product themselves, which means quality is an important factor.



Image credita: Acqua di Parma

Today, consumers are much more in tune with determining the grade products. Italian brands exhibit significant quality and authenticity, another factor important to today's consumer.

When asked about K-beauty, the panelists agreed that while the trend saw a big pop, it will not replace Italian beauty.

The lines of communication from the source of the brand in Korea to Western consumers often gets lost in translation, so the products lack in authenticity.

Another factor that will keep Italian beauty afloat against K-beauty is that they are in separate categories. Italy has always been known for its products in color, such as mascara, while K-beauty is more known for its skincare.

Additional insight

Targeting the opportunities ahead, the Italian government has for the first time created a program geared to promoting Italian beauty brands entering the United States market.

The government's Italian Trade Commission has introduced its Beauty Made in Italy campaign to push awareness, availability and excellence in Italian beauty products and brands making an incursion into the U.S. Nine Italian brands initially participated in the launch ([see story](#)).

Despite being a major production hub for beauty goods, Italy has remained under-the-radar in the category, but a national initiative aims to bring the country's cosmetic makers to the forefront.

During a panel discussion at the Italian Trade Commission, moderated by Women's Wear Daily's executive beauty editor Jenny B. Fine, speakers noted the differentiated approach to beauty in Italy, as well as the opportunities and challenges for Italian beauty brands attempting to enter the U.S. market. Through a mix of education and storytelling, European brands can position themselves to reach an American audience that is seeking out innovation and newness ([see story](#)).

"Even if customers don't understand, it's so romantic to them that it is made in Italy," Ancorotti's Ms. Guarino said. "If they've never been to Italy, as they're putting it on, they're imagining they are there."

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