

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Versace, Givenchy pull products after China pushback

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*Yang Mi has severed her relationship with Versace. Image credit: Versace*

By STAFF REPORTS

Fashion labels Versace and Givenchy are apologizing after their T-shirt designs received backlash in China.

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Both brands were selling shirts that listed areas of China including Hong Kong and Macau as separate countries, which Chinese consumers felt was disrespectful of the nation's sovereignty. Along with consumer outrage, the inaccuracies have cost some of the labels their brand ambassadors.

### China controversy

The Versace shirt in question listed cities around the world, such as Milan, Italy. For Hong Kong and Macau, both were listed as though they were their own countries, instead of indicating that they are part of China.

Versace issued a statement on social media, saying it had issued a recall of the shirts in July.

"I am deeply sorry for the unfortunate recent error that was made by our company and that is being currently discussed on various social media channels," said Donatella Versace, creative director of Versace, in a statement. "Never have I wanted to disrespect China's national sovereignty and this is why I wanted to personally apologize for such inaccuracy and for any distress that it might have caused."

Givenchy is similarly facing a swell of backlash over a similar product. The brand is recalling the design, and says it is working on its product review process to avoid a similar mistake in the future.

"The house of Givenchy wishes to sincerely apologize for this mistake that does not reflect the deep respect it has for its Chinese audiences throughout the world, as well as renew its commitment to pursue its longstanding relationship with the market in the most thoughtful way," Givenchy said in a statement.

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The house of Givenchy firmly respects China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Immediate actions have been taken to recall the inaccurate t-shirt design from all markets, and measures of product and process review have been and will continue to be taken to avoid similar situations in the future. The House of Givenchy wishes to sincerely apologize for this mistake that does not reflect the deep respect it has for its Chinese audiences throughout the world, as well as renew its commitment to pursue its longstanding relationship with the market in the most thoughtful way.

A post shared by GIVENCHY (@givenchyofficial) on Aug 12, 2019 at 1:03am PDT

#### *Instagram post from Givenchy*

Also over the weekend, Coach similarly got into hot water over T-shirts that also failed to indicate that Hong Kong and Taiwan are part of China.

According to its statement, Coach found the inaccuracy in May 2018, and immediately pulled the designs.

Along with hurting their relationships with Chinese consumers, these T-shirt blunders have also cost these brands some ambassadors.

Yang Mi, who recently began working with Versace, backed out of the spokesmodel role. Model Liu Wen similarly severed ties with Coach.

Versace, Givenchy and Coach are not the first brands to come under fire for a perceived attack on China's sovereignty.

Last year, the Chinese government took down Marriott's local Web site for a week after the hotel group listed Hong Kong and Tibet as countries.

In 2018 the overall luxury business grew 5 percent to \$1.4 trillion, primarily propelled by rising demand from affluents in mainland China.

Luxury sales in mainland China alone grew 18 percent in 2018, according to the 17th edition of Bain & Company's Luxury Study, produced in partnership with Altagamma. Currently, Chinese consumers are about a third of the luxury market, but Bain expects this to grow to 45 percent by 2025 ([see story](#)).

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