

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

Mozzafiato brings Italian beauty to North America through culture and heritage

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Skin & Co Roma was founded in Montecastrilli, Italy. Image credit: Mozzafiato

By NORA HOWE

Beauty retail platform **Mozzafiato** is changing the course of the Italian beauty industry as it represents the largest collection of Italian cosmetics and fragrance brands in one centralized online destination.

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Inspired by the landscapes, cities, culture, heritage and style of Italy, Mozzafiato launched this year to provide an immersive, authentically Italian experience to the North American market, introducing consumers to the soul of Italian beauty. As more than 60 percent of the world's cosmetics are produced in Italy, Mozzafiato highlights native brands that have stood at the forefront of quality, craftsmanship and tradition.

"People are paying more attention to the journey of beauty, not just the transaction of the purchase, and they desire meaning and joy behind the objects in their homes and routines, products that are truly worthy of and enhancements to those precious moments in the day when you connect with them," said Amy Parsons, founder and CEO of Mozzafiato, Denver.

In this Q&A, Ms. Parsons discusses the value of Italian beauty products, how Mozzafiato stands out in the industry and how the landscape of the industry is shifting. Here is the dialogue:



Amy Parsons, founder and CEO of Mozzafiato. Image credit: Amy Parsons

How is Mozzafiato unique?

Mozzafiato is the only retail platform carrying the best exclusively authentic Italian beauty brands under one roof. Brands from all over the globe go to Italy, more than any country in the world, for the production of their beauty products and fragrances due to the exquisite quality, craftsmanship, and multigenerational knowledge and innovation.

But Italy's own native brands, many at work for centuries producing the best products and fragrances in the world, have been virtually unknown and unattainable in the U.S., until now. We have found the best among the best in Italy and brought them under one roof for the U.S. consumer to discover and love.

We have also created a radically different shopping experience for the Mozzafiato customer. Upon landing on our site, the visitor is first immersed into the beauty of Italy with images of its landscapes and cities.

Each of our 17 brands has its own page where they tell their stories, share their family photographs, discuss their inspiration and heritage. We show on the map the origin of each brand and talk about that region.

This all comes before the individual products so that the visitor can experience that beautiful journey of discovery and connection to these heritage brands and their stories. To us, beauty starts with the connection and story and people and ends with the product and its use.



The Mozzafiato site retails a variety of Italian fragrance and beauty products

Why focus the platform on Italian brands?

No other country in the world rivals Italy in terms of its beauty culture from its natural beauty in its landscapes and coastlines, or its spectacular cities, to its wine, fashion, food, cars, and rich history, Italy is the epicenter of beauty. Embedded in that environment are the families and brands with true beauty luminaries the world turns to in order to create and produce the highest quality products and fragrances.

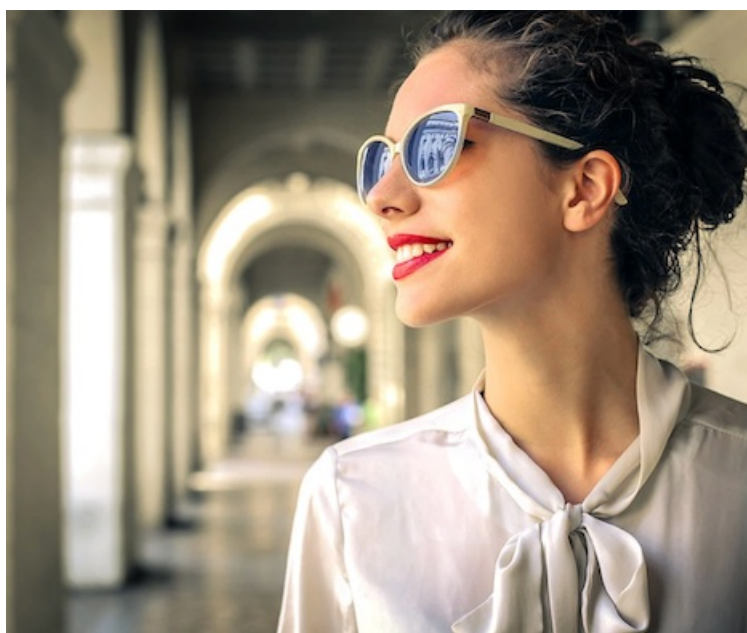
The secret is that there are many smaller native Italian brands producing their own incredible products with that generational craftsmanship and quality. In Mozzafiato, we have brought them together for the first time under one roof to tell their stories and bring their products to market.

Some have already been selling outside Italy and even in the U.S.; some have not. But they have never joined forces in one place before and the collection of their stories, from their new innovations in clinical skin care to their continual production of a 400 year old fragrance are powerful and provide a beautiful connection to the experience of their products.

In what ways might the rise of ecommerce affect the beauty industry?

Ecommerce provides a new way for the consumer to connect directly to the people and stories and places behind a product that they may otherwise just experience as a product on a shelf. If done right, it allows us to tell those stories and share the inspiration and heritage with much wider and more inclusive audiences and have a dialog about place and spirit and the experience of the products themselves.

We can create a journey for people through images and videos and sound and storytelling that may be more difficult to achieve in a store. Over time the lines between physical and online retail platforms will blur and hopefully make both experiences better and more meaningful.



Mozzafiato is inspired by Ms. Parson's deep love of Italy's culture and people. Image credit: Mozzafiato

How have you had to adapt your business strategies in the midst of a global pandemic?

We built and launched Mozzafiato all in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In normal times, we would have spent months in Italy meeting with the brands in the collection, trying their products, negotiating deals and working through logistics of buying, pricing, and shipping. As that was not an option, everything happened over Zoom, every day.

In a way, COVID immediately forced all of us, on both the U.S. and Italy side, into a mindset of innovation and creation and every brand we connected with embraced exploring this very new model we were proposing of a multi-brand retail platform, all Italian, in the U.S. We all decided that we could build trusting relationships and friendships over Zoom and negotiate deals and create something new, having never actually met in person.

In that way, the speed with which we were able to put the collection together and launch it could never have occurred but for the forced lock-down environment. We worked with the warehouses, shipping companies, web development, finance team, etc. 100 percent remotely.

Do you have any plans to open physical stores in the U.S., or will this remain exclusively online?

We do intend to start opening physical retail stores beginning in 2021. The timing and location of such stores will depend on the ongoing impact of COVID-19 in various markets, but we are closely watching what retail opportunities may open up for us as things start to normalize.

We also intend to host several pop-up events throughout the upcoming year.

Where do you see the beauty industry, and specifically the Italian beauty industry, in the next few years? Heritage Italian beauty brands such as those in Mozzafiato are poised to become prominent forces in the beauty landscape in the next few years as customers are looking for a better experience, beyond the dominant offerings of the crowded hundred-brand big beauty retailers. The beauty industry has gone too far in the direction of a pure commodity, generalized, beholden to the new-now-next culture and celebrity-of-the-moment whim.

We believe people, of all ages and genders and walks of life, are tired of it and ready for beauty to make a comeback in terms of the quality, rich heritage, and families behind the products, the dream of traveling to those beautiful places, and to find and truly cherish the products that make their way into those precious spaces and moments.

It is time for something much better in quality, effect, experience and in the genuine story and spirit behind the products and fragrances. In other words, it's time for what's new and next to be that which has been centuries in the making.

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