

Q&A

Inside Cosabella's sale and plans for a CX-driven future

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While based in the U.S., Cosabella has had a Made in Italy ethos since the beginning. Image courtesy of Cosabella

By SARAH RAMIREZ

U.S. luxury lingerie label Cosabella is joining Switzerland's Calida Group in an acquisition that speaks to how smaller brands can successfully leverage omnichannel strategies to drive consumer loyalty.

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The acquisition, announced on May 19 ([see story](#)), values Cosabella at \$80 million. The relationship with the Calida Group seems to be a seamless fit, as the Miami-based brand with Italian roots looks to accelerate its growth.

"We're looking for Cosabella's future and we're looking for that bridge," said Guido Campello, managing director of [Cosabella](#), Miami.

"Europe means quite a bit to my family; it means quite a bit to us," he said. "And I think finding the group that people would rally behind was a big part of that [acquisition], internally and externally."

New chapter

Founded in 1983 in Miami by Italians Valeria and Ugo Campello, Cosabella has grown to include several product categories with a focus on intimate apparel. In 2021, the brand generated \$29 million in sales, primarily in the U.S., with ecommerce accounting for more than half of sales.

The second-generation of the Campello family, Guido and his sister Silvia, took over leadership roles in 2015, ultimately serving as co-CEOs. Both will stay with Cosabella following the acquisition, expected to be completed during the second quarter of 2022, with Mr. Campello as managing director and Ms. Campello as vice president of finance and operations.



Cosabella's Guido Campello (left) and Calida Group's Timo Schmidt-Eisenhart (right). Images courtesy of Cosabella

"Never change the winning teams," said Timo Schmidt-Eisenhart, CEO of the **Calida Group**, Sursee, Switzerland.

"This is exactly our philosophy when we bring brands in," he said. "The brand is running perfectly well, so we do as little as possible maybe accelerate or fund [a strategy] but no fundamental changes."

Cosabella has managed to thrive during the COVID-19 pandemic, investing in its digital capabilities to complement its bricks-and-mortar business.

As shoppers leaned on lingerie purchases to feel comfortable and sexy during stay-at-home orders ([see story](#)), Cosabella found the potential in virtual fittings.

"The virtual fitting has become a great retention vehicle," Mr. Campello said. "Because once you have that clienteling moment and that connection to a customer, it's exactly what the stores used to do and what they weren't doing [due to the pandemic] there's a human interconnection that's viable.

"We're focusing on the brand experience, and we are building our brand experience department and clienteling," he said. "We've taken members who source for us across department stores for that experience and bringing them now on to the online experience.

"So the idea is we should be having a few touch points with our customers. We're using all the modern ways of selling online that really come from the old bricks-and-mortar base."

Mr. Schmidt-Eisenhart echoed how the importance of omnichannel grew during the pandemic.

"That multichannel, omnichannel piece any brands that can do that well, I believe will benefit over time," Mr. Schmidt-Eisenhart said. "It goes back to it goes back to what Guido said: being close to the consumer, inspiring the consumer.

"That is online, obviously, and social media and that whole thing," he said. "It's different when people walk in just to touch the product, you smell the product, you feel it, you try it on."



Cosabella has moved in a more inclusive direction. Image courtesy of Cosabella

Cosabella launched a successful rebranding effort last August, including an expansion of its product line, styles and sizing.

The brand unveiled a new logo, brand imagery, advertising and social media campaign, and has introduced new

products, styles and sizing categories both in-store at its retailers and on its website. Cosabella now offers lingerie and loungewear in new sizing categories beyond women's wear to all people regardless of shape, shade, identity, age and gender ([see story](#)).

"I am receiving the old love letters that my parents used to receive," Mr. Campello said. "I'm very excited to see the reaction.

"I think we're game changing, and I think we're doing it at a perfect time."

Untapped potential

Calida Group's acquisition of Cosabella looks to be mutually beneficial, providing the Miami-based brand a larger foothold in the European market which currently accounts for about 15 percent of its business while creating an entryway for its other intimate apparel brands to enter the U.S.

While both Calida Group and Cosabella intend to be programmatic about their expansion approach, there is also the belief that there are other untapped markets to explore namely, Asia and South America.

"There all these steps and all these great opportunities first to focus on, but the interest for Cosabella has always had a natural way into Latin America," Mr. Campello said. "There is a tension there.

"There are some really historic and great foundations for intimates in Latin America, and Cosabella naturally, in our opinion, would have an opportunity there in the future," he said. "So, I do think the way that Calida strategically creates the priorities, Latin America is there as one of the discovery areas for sure."

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