

ADVERTISING

“Made In Italy” prestige begins with the Romans: Caruso Exec

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Italian menswear brand Caruso

By JEN KING

NAPLES, FL – The president of Italian menswear brand Caruso argued at the Luxury Summit 2014 that centuries of fine living lend the "Made in Italy" phrase a distinct flavor.

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During the “Does Made in Italy Still Matter” keynote, the executive discussed the importance of production location in terms of quality, design and essence. Affluent consumers are passionate about the made in Italy label, but, realistically, does this signifier still matter?

“The Italians are the ones who have perfected the art of living well,” said Umberto Angeloni, president/CEO of **Caruso**, Milan.

“Italian brands have understood that, by association, they can do well,” he said.

The Luxury Summit was hosted by Richard David Story, editor in chief of Departures, and Evelyn Webster, executive vice president of Time Inc.

Reading the label

Mr. Angeloni opened with data from Boston Consulting Group’s “True Luxury Global Consumer Insight” report that discovered that 87 percent of consumers in the BRIC

countries feel that Made in Italy is important, while 71 percent of consumers in Europe, the United States and Japan felt the same way.

The report also showed that Italian brands are ranked number one in terms of clothing, accessories and jewelry. The country is ranked second in watches and automobiles.



A Caruso suit, made in Italy

For Mr. Angeloni, he does not feel that the report's findings are an indication that the quality and design of Italian products are superior than other countries. He importantly notes that, in some cases, Italian brands have lowered their standard of quality by moving production outside of the country, so the emphasis on "Made in Italy" must be less rational.

In terms of economics, there is the country of origin effect. Essentially, consumers are attracted to a brand's country of origin because they relate to that culture rather than the product itself.

During Mr. Angeloni's presentation he argued against the myth of the Italian climate being the reason and focused more on the heritage and historical moments in the culture's 2,800-year history.



Departure's Mr. Story speaks with Caruso's Mr. Angeloni

Mr. Angeloni equated the success of the Romans to understanding the luxury lifestyle and purpose of functional designs. Instead of conquering through force, the Romans expanded their empire by absorbing other cultures and becoming patrons of the arts.

Through the Renaissance to modern day, the globalization of the Roman mind and ideals have been preserved, making Italy, in many ways, a center of creativity. This lifestyle and “keeping the legend alive” idealism has created an almost mythical culture that brands can benefit from by simply being associated with the country.

Molto bene

Many brands have relied on this association to prosper in the luxury market.

For example, British shoemaker Kurt Geiger is taking consumers on the production journey of its Britton pump to highlight the craftsmanship that goes into one shoe.

The “Made in Italy” video blends both the brand’s London roots and its Florence factory where its shoes are manufactured. By choosing to focus in on one shoe, the video is more effective, because it is able to trace the entire life of that shoe before it hits retail ([see story](#)).

Other brands have emphasized their Italian heritage to celebrate its own contributions to fashion.

For instance, Italian jeweler Bulgari is strengthening its relationship with the fashion industry by sponsoring The Glamour of Italian Fashion exhibit April 5 through July 27 at London’s Victoria & Albert Museum.

The Glamour of Italian Fashion is showcasing Italy’s rise in the fashion industry after World War II. The exhibit examines Italian fashions from 1945 to present day with defining moments such as the 1950s Sala Bianca catwalk shows held in Florence on display.

The post-war time period examined by the exhibit parallels Bulgari’s own time of innovation and creativity, bringing a “bold and youthful spirit to jewelry design,” according to a statement given by Julie Ann Morrison, managing director of Bulgari UK Limited, London ([see story](#)).

Mr. Angeloni feels that the glamor and perception of Italian design is too powerful to break, especially with such a strong interest from Asian consumers. Also, as the world becomes more and more globalized, the importance of “Made in Italy” will remain.

“As we globalize and lose our national identity,” Mr. Angeloni said, “country or origin will become more important, [while] other ‘made in’s’ may become diluted.

“The character that [Italians] have, the passion and the instinct to live well will prevail,” he said.

Final Take

Jen King, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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