

# **Positioning Italian Fashion Brands in the Taiwanese Market: Local Specificities and Comparison with Other Asian Market**

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# **Positioning Italian Fashion Brands in the Taiwanese Market: Local Specificities and Comparison with Other Asian Markets**

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Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, 2026

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine how Italian luxury fashion brands position themselves in the Taiwanese market and how they adapt to local cultural and consumer dynamics. The “Made in Italy” is something globally associated with quality and prestige, but its success cannot be taken for granted. Taiwan is a small and different market compared to China, Japan and South Korea, is a sophisticated and culturally unique context that demands specific strategies. Based on a qualitative approach, data were collected through 10 semi-structured interviews with boutique sales professionals and staff involved in international activities of Italian fashion companies, providing both retail and corporate perspectives, supported by secondary sources such as international market reports and field observations. The analysis focuses on how the brand must respond to Taiwan’s specific cultural and behavioral patterns. Findings indicate that Taiwanese luxury consumers are selective and value authenticity; they seek an emotional connection, referring to a sense of trust, identification, and personal attachment developed over time and personalized experience over ostentation. Italian brands are appreciated for their heritage, but the success in Taiwan depends also on the communication and the customer experience. This study contributes to understanding how “Made in Italy” can be competitive in the Taiwanese market by identifying strategies that balance brand identity with local expectations.

Keywords: Italian fashion brands; Consumer behavior; Made in Italy; Cross-cultural brand positioning; Luxury retail in Taiwan.

# 義大利時尚品牌在臺灣市場的定位：在地特性與其他亞洲市場之比較

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## 摘要

「這項研究的目的在於探討義大利奢侈時尚品牌如何在臺灣市場中定位自身，以及如何因應當地的文化與消費者行為動態進行調整。「義大利製造」（Made in Italy）一向與高品質與聲望密切相關，但其成功並非理所當然。與中國、日本、韓國相比，臺灣是一個規模較小但極具特色的市場，其消費者成熟、文化獨特，因此需要具體且在地化的策略。」

本研究採取質性研究方法，透過 10 份半結構式訪談蒐集資料，受訪者包括精品店銷售專業人員及參與義大利時尚品牌國際業務的企業員工，綜合零售與企業層面的觀點，並輔以次級資料，如國際市場報告與實地觀察。分析聚焦於品牌如何回應臺灣特有的文化與消費行為模式。

研究結果顯示，臺灣的奢侈品消費者具有選擇性並重視真實性；他們追求情感連結與個人化體驗，而非浮華的炫耀。義大利品牌因其傳承與工藝受到肯定，但在臺灣的成功亦取決於溝通方式與顧客體驗的品質。本研究有助於理解「義大利製造」如何在臺灣市場保持競爭力，並指出平衡品牌識別與在地期待的策略。

關鍵詞：義大利時尚品牌、消費者行為、義大利製造、跨文化品牌定位、臺灣奢侈品零售。

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background .....	1
Motivation .....	3
Research Purpose .....	4
Research Questions .....	4
Contribution .....	5
Limits .....	5
Delimits .....	6
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	1
The Italian Fashion Industry in the Global Market .....	1
Brand Positioning and Luxury Marketing Strategies .....	2
The three main luxury markets in East Asia: China, Japan, and South Korea .....	4
Taiwanese Consumers and Market Specificities .....	5
METHODOLOGY .....	15
Data Sources .....	16
Data Collection .....	16
Research Methods .....	17
Analysis Tools .....	17
DATA ANALYSIS .....	18
Perception of Italian Luxury Brands in Taiwan .....	19
Consumer Behavior and Cultural Traits .....	22
Communication and Marketing Channels .....	24
Findings Interpretation .....	27
CONCLUSION .....	29
Recommendations .....	30
APPENDIX A .....	32
APPENDIX B .....	34
LIST OF INTERVIEWEES .....	34
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	35

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

The Italian fashion industry represents one of the most powerful symbols of the country's cultural and economic identity. It is not only a key sector for the national economy, but also an ambassador of Italian lifestyle and creativity known by everyone, something that is among the first things that come to mind when the word Italy is pronounced around the world. The concept of Made in Italy has long been associated with quality, craftsmanship, and timeless elegance, and these values continue to play a central role in shaping Italy's global image with important economic and social consequences.<sup>1</sup> Cities like Florence, Milan and Rome are not just manufacturing centers, but also cultural capitals, where tradition and innovation coexist and influence the global fashion scene. These cities become the stage where this heritage comes to life and continues to update and grow.

In recent years, Italian fashion houses have been expanding strongly in Asian markets, because Asia now represents one of the largest and most dynamic regions for luxury consumption, understood as the consumption of high-end goods associated with symbolic and cultural value, where Italian brands have found new audiences that admire both quality and heritage. Among these markets, Taiwan stands out for its cultural sophistication and preference for authenticity, characteristics that make Taiwan distinct from others volatile markets around the world.<sup>2</sup>

Italian fashion in Asia is increasingly present, in the largest metropolises there are now even real institutions present on the territory, Moda Italia and Shoes from Italy, held in

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<sup>1</sup> Eugenia Paulicelli, "Fashion: the cultural economy of Made in Italy," *Fashion Practice* 6, no. 2 (2014).

<sup>2</sup> Soon Chen Kang, "The factors that make Taiwan a unique market," (2017), <https://www.campaignasia.com/article/qa-the-factors-that-make-taiwan-a-unique-market/437769>.

Tokyo and Seoul are an example of how the symbol of Italian fashion also transcends the brands.<sup>3</sup>

Even people who don't see fashion as one of their primary interests participate in events related to Italian fashion, confirming the fact that the connection between Italy and Asia is not only commercial but also cultural, as Made in Italy continues to represent creativity, art, and social prestige.

But if there is a sector that is exposed to extremely rapid and sudden changes, it is precisely the fashion business, the internet and social media have a huge influence on global trends, and trends can change suddenly from one day to the next.<sup>4</sup> In fashion, strategic planning is essential, as the variables are so many and so unpredictable that the market for a particular product can collapse from one day to the next. Added to this is the current phenomenon of "slowbalization", a deceleration of globalization marked by regionalization of markets and supply chains where international trade is being reshaped.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the post pandemic recovery has revealed a significant impact on the consumer behavior, particularly in Asia. For example Gucci, one of Italy's most iconic and famous brands, recently experienced a huge decline in sales in China, leading to a loss of almost nine billion dollars in market value for the company, the holding Kering.<sup>6</sup> Some analysis link this decline to increasing selectivity among Asian consumers, who are spending more cautiously, favoring products that retain value in the long term.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Assomac, "Focus sulle capitali asiatiche della moda per i brand italiani," (2023), <https://assomac.it/it/news/news-dal-mondo/focus-sulle-capitali-asiatiche-della-moda-per-i-brand-italiani/>.

<sup>4</sup> Lila Dominus, "Make fashion slow again: How social media sped trends up," *The Michigan Daily* (2023), <https://www.michigandaily.com/opinion/make-fashion-slow-again-how-social-media-sped-trends-up/>.

<sup>5</sup> Sergio Mariotti, "“Win-lose” globalization and the weaponization of economic policies by nation-states," *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 20, no. 5 (2024).

<sup>6</sup> Gianluca Bolelli, "Lo shock di Gucci in Cina si ripercuote su tutto il panorama del lusso," (2024), <https://it.fashionnetwork.com/news/Lo-shock-di-gucci-in-cina-si-ripercute-su-tutto-il-panorama-del-lusso,1618242.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Alex Harper, "Asia-Pacific consumer sentiment: Stability, selectivity, and spending shifts," *McKinsey & Company* (2025), <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/an-update-on-consumer-sentiment-in-asia-pacific>.

Despite this situation, some Italian brands such as Prada, Miu Miu and Bottega Veneta have achieved important results in some Asian markets, particularly in South Korea, and Taiwan, demonstrating how even the smallest markets are very crucial and important. These shifts demonstrate the need for Italian fashion brands to diversify their strategies across Asia, to adapt to new cultural and economic realities. The resilience of Made in Italy therefore depends not only on maintaining high standards of quality but also on understanding how to position itself meaningfully in diverse cultural contexts, in an increasingly competitive global market, where this market is increasingly competitive

## **Motivation**

Being Italian and born in Florence, the author has long been immersed in the cultural and economic environment of fashion that characterizes the city. In Florence, the fashion industry is not only an important economic sector, but also a fundamental part of the local identity. Florence is home to many famous fashion houses like Gucci and Ferragamo, but also small- and medium-sized leather goods companies that represent the very essence of Made in Italy. These companies contribute not only to the economy, but also to the cultural fabric of the city and the region, contribute to a heritage that combines craftsmanship, design research and tradition.

Studying in Taiwan the author observed how Italian products and style are perceived in a different cultural context. What has fascinated the author most is how the appreciation for Italian fashion among Taiwanese consumers goes far beyond the material aspect, it is seen as an expression of art and history. For many Taiwanese, Italian fashion is not just luxury, but also a possibility for a cultural connection, a bridge between Italy's creative heritage and Taiwan. The author aims to explore how Italian fashion brands can position themselves in the Taiwanese market, looking at the characteristics of the Taiwanese consumer and how the

economic exchange can also become a vehicle for cultural dialogue between two different countries. Fashion is not merely a product to be sold, but also a form of cultural interaction, where values and identities are shared. Being aware of these elements, the purpose of the research is therefore to define the identity of the Taiwanese luxury fashion consumer and why they make certain choices.

### **Research Purpose**

The main purpose of this research is to analyze how Italian fashion brands position themselves in the Taiwanese market, seeking to identify the strategies brands adopt to adapt to the Taiwanese context and local consumer behavior. To be competitive in Taiwan, it is essential to understand the island's unique futures. Those importing to Taiwan should carefully study this country and this market, which has obvious similarities to its regional neighbors, yet has its own distinct characteristics. The study not only hopes to provide useful information to potential Italian brands interested in this country but may also be useful to other types of businesses planning to interface with Taiwan, other European companies could also find useful information, as this research highlights Taiwanese consumer traits that are not limited to fashion.

### **Research Questions**

This research focuses on Taiwanese consumers and their relationship with and perception of Italian fashion brands. However, to gain a more complete picture of this market, the questions can also shift focus. The following questions hope to provide a thorough description of the characteristics of this environment, offering insights into how cultural identity, social values, and consumer behavior influence the interaction between

Taiwanese consumers and Italian fashion brands.

1. How do Italian fashion brands position themselves in the Taiwanese market?
2. How do they adapt their branding and distribution strategies to local consumers?
3. What are the main differences between the strategies adopted in Taiwan and those adopted in mainland China, Korea, and Japan?

## **Contribution**

This research aims to make a novel contribution on this little-explored topic: Italian fashion brands in Taiwan and their positioning. In Italy, much attention is paid to large Asian markets, not just fashion, and in fact, the literature available is extensive. Countries like mainland China, Korea, and Japan have been carefully studied for years, but the same cannot be said of Taiwan, as a smaller market, which has always received less attention. The author studying in Taiwan, and with a long-standing interest in fashion, the author sincerely hopes this research can fill a gap that still exists, providing a meaningful and in-depth understanding of the Taiwanese consumer, the Taiwanese consumer who can potentially purchase Italian fashion brands. This research aims to be an introduction to this country and its market for all the numerous Italian fashion companies that can potentially decide to invest in Taiwan, which is increasingly relevant within the global luxury industry.

## **Limits**

This research faced several practical limitations. Is particularly difficult to find both academic studies and professionals focused exclusively on the Taiwanese fashion market. Most available sources refer to the broader Asian or Chinese context, making it challenging to isolate data specific to Taiwan. Similarly, many export and marketing professionals

operate across the entire Asia-Pacific region rather than Taiwan alone, which limited access to specialized insights and. Another issue encountered was that several people refused to participate in interviews due to confidentiality clauses in their employment contracts. Despite this, the collected data still provided valuable perspectives on how Italian brands are positioned in Taiwan.

### **Delimits**

This research focuses on Italian luxury fashion brands in a specific country, the research does not intend to cover the entire clothing market in Taiwan, or the luxury fashion market in East Asia. The research adopts a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews and secondary data, priority is given to the cultural side and its interpretation rather than to an accumulation of data; these boundaries have been defined to maintain analytical clarity and be consistent with the objectives of the study, ultimately being able to have something useful at our disposal.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Italian Fashion Industry in the Global Market

The Italian fashion industry is a symbol of Italian manufacturing, the second largest in Europe behind Germany, and therefore plays an important role not only for Italy but for Europe as a whole. Italian fashion is recognized worldwide not only as a luxury product, but also as an ecosystem of craftsmanship and design, Italian fashion products are indeed imported all over the world and regarding the sectoral composition, the clear predominance of the manufacturing industry is confirmed, in particular textiles, clothing, and leather.<sup>8</sup>

Many international companies, including major French fashion brands, relocate their production to Italy for its manufacturing heritage.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of Made in Italy has evolved over the years, following global trends and catering to consumers and tastes around the world. Made in Italy has also become synonymous with innovation while remaining firmly rooted in tradition.<sup>10</sup> Small and medium-sized enterprises play a key role in this production, which continues to rely on small manufacturing firms over large industrial centers, and these small companies each specialize in different designs and handcrafted production.<sup>11</sup>

These small local businesses preserve craftsmanship and authenticity, and being part of a complex fashion system, they are also able to adapt to the constantly evolving needs of the international market, this shows that Italy's strength lies in blending tradition with adaptability to global markets.

At the same time, the globalized world is increasingly competitive, and the Italian

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<sup>8</sup> Giuseppina Talamo, "Internazionalizzazione, backshoring e made in Italy: un'analisi del settore moda e lusso in Italia," *Rivista trimestrale di Scienza dell'Amministrazione* 4 (2016).

<sup>9</sup> nss staff, "Chanel Has Acquired Another Factory in Italy," *nss magazine* (2025), <https://www.nssmag.com/en/fashion/40400/chanel-has-acquired-another-factory-in-italy>.

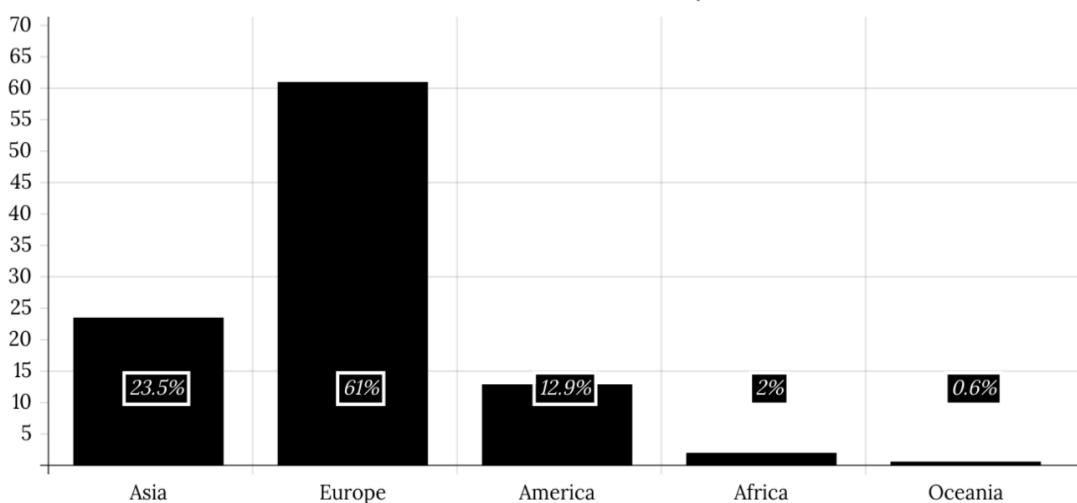
<sup>10</sup> Paulicelli, "Fashion: the cultural economy of Made in Italy."

<sup>11</sup> Giacomo Becattini, *The caterpillar and the butterfly: An exemplary case of development in the Italy of the industrial districts*, vol. 22 (Mondadori Education, 2001).

fashion industry must continually face new challenges, political instability, and economic crises, all problems that reduce spending for many consumers, as luxury fashion is certainly not a primary necessity.<sup>12</sup> This situation forces the luxury fashion industry to constantly look for new positioning strategies to continue to stimulate consumers. Added to this is the fact that other major global players are increasingly gaining ground in the luxury fashion sector, competing where Italian fashion had no competitors in the past, and this highlights that sustaining leadership requires balancing heritage with strategic adaptation to global competition.

## Italian Fashion Exports by Geographic Area (2024)

Source: MAECI Economic Observatory on ISTAT data



## Brand Positioning and Luxury Marketing Strategies

Effective brand positioning, the way a brand is perceived and differentiated in consumers' minds compared to competitors, is the key to successfully promoting a specific product to the targeted market segment. Luxury fashion is highly priced and not accessible to everyone. This positioning must be taken very seriously to be effective. Desire must be

<sup>12</sup> McKinsey & Company, "The State of Luxury: How to navigate a slowdown," *McKinsey & Company* (2025), <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/state-of-luxury>.

created through distinction, communicating that the product is exclusive; this is one of the key levers in selling luxury fashion.<sup>13</sup> These products must therefore become symbolic, evocative, and emotional, and a connection must be created between the product and the consumer, an effective positioning now depends as much on storytelling and atmosphere as on the product itself, this shows that exclusivity alone is not enough, emotional resonance is what truly drives luxury consumption.

Recent years have seen a significant paradigm shift in the luxury sector. Value no longer resides exclusively in the product itself, but increasingly in the overall experience enjoyed by the consumer. Contemporary shoppers are no longer simply seeking high quality, which is now considered a prerequisite and no longer a distinctive element; they desire something that goes beyond the simple physical possession of an object. What defines luxury today is the "unique" and personalized experience that accompanies the act of purchasing and endures over time. In a rapidly changing market, consumers seek experiences that generate an emotional connection with the brand. Hospitality, the dedication of sales staff, the in-store atmosphere, and post-purchase communication become essential components of customer experience, and fashion brands must be able to offer such a service.<sup>14</sup>

Luxury is also expressed through the "aura" surrounding the brand, which manifests itself in every interaction between the customer and the brand's universe. Italian fashion houses are particularly suited to this evolution. Made in Italy intrinsically embodies the concept of art and evocative power, and this element gives Italian brands the ability to create an emotional connection with their consumers with the products they purchase. The task of brand positioning is to do just this, make that customer feel special.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jean-Noel Kapferer, "The luxury strategy: Break the rules of marketing to build luxury brands," *Hogan Page* (2012).

<sup>14</sup> Uche Okonkwo, *Luxury fashion branding: trends, tactics, techniques* (Springer, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Sékou Kourouma, "Luxury Brand Positioning and Experiential Marketing in Global Markets," *Master's thesis, Université Paris-Saclay* (2022).

## **The three main luxury markets in East Asia: China, Japan, and South Korea**

Given its economic boom, East Asia has become one of the most important markets for those wishing to sell luxury goods. Many Western companies have invested heavily to gain a market share in this part of the world, and according to various statistics, Asia-Pacific is increasingly becoming the new global hub of wealth.<sup>16</sup>

This development has consequently led to resulted in an ever-increasing interest from luxury fashion houses in expanding into this region. China, a major player in the purchase and import of luxury goods, has its own unique characteristics; in China, luxury products remain closely tied to social prestige and the ostentation of wealth.

The Chinese market is so large and offers so many opportunities that many European clothing brands develop their main product lines based on Chinese trends, strongly catering to their tastes. Social media in China can have a particularly important influence on local trends, luxury brands use strategies on Douyin and other social media to reach their customers. The presence of influencers who advertise products is very popular on these platforms. This demonstrates how digitalized Chinese society is and how necessary it is to use these tools to be able to sell in China.

Japan represents a very sophisticated and refined market, where craftsmanship and minimalism are deeply appreciated.<sup>17</sup> This is also a particularly rich market, and the Japanese have always held aesthetics and elegance in high regard. Being able to sell in Japan requires a deep knowledge of the country, and it is necessary to know how to communicate the high quality of a potential product, the quality, craftsmanship, transparency of the supply chain

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<sup>16</sup> Lingjing Zhan and Yanqun He, "Understanding luxury consumption in China: Consumer perceptions of best-known brands," *Journal of Business Research* 65, no. 10 (2012).

<sup>17</sup> Lien Le Monkhouse, Bradley R Barnes, and Ute Stephan, "The influence of face and group orientation on the perception of luxury goods: A four market study of East Asian consumers," *International Marketing Review* 29, no. 6 (2012).

and the story behind the product are decisive elements for the Japanese customer. This phenomenon is linked to the Japanese culture of "monozukuri", or the culture of knowing how to do things well.<sup>18</sup>

An almost direct consequence of this is that the Japanese greatly appreciate everything related to Italian luxury fashion manufacturing.

In South Korea, luxury brands have great symbolic value; luxury clothing consumers are very numerous in relation to the population. Luxury fashion is often used to confer status and prestige; luxury is a signal of identity and social belonging in a context where there is a strong hierarchical component. In such an environment, Italian brands find fertile ground on which to make significant investments and profits. The phenomenon is so significant that even in periods of economic uncertainty, luxury consumption does not decrease but increases, acting as a mechanism of compensation and self-affirmation.<sup>19</sup> "K-Culture" also plays an important role, which, just as it influences trends abroad, now throughout the world, also influences the Korean consumer, and the constant exposure to consumption models promoted by celebrities and influencers generates an emulation effect that makes the Korean market one of the most dynamic in the world. Luxury brands often use K-pop as a communication and advertising tool for their products, using idols as testimonials.<sup>20</sup> K-culture contributes to making the Korean luxury market highly dynamic by linking consumption patterns to celebrity influence and global trend diffusion.

## **Taiwanese Consumers and Market Specificities**

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<sup>18</sup> ZenMarket, "How Japan's Obsession with Detail Influences Global Luxury Trends," *ZenMarket* (2025), <https://zenmarket.jp/en/blog/post/15170/how-japan-influences-global-luxury-trends>.

<sup>19</sup> Dae-hyun Kim, Ji-won Park, and So-ra Lee, "A Study on the Phenomenon of Conspicuous Consumption in South Korea's Luxury Market Under Economic Uncertainty," *Law and Economy* 3, no. 9 (2024).

<sup>20</sup> Joyce Li, "Why Luxury Fashion's Fascination With Korean Pop Culture Is Not Just a Trend," *Hypebeast* (2023), <https://hypebeast.com/2023/5/luxury-fashion-fascination-with-korean-pop-culture-not-just-a-trend-louis-vuitton-gucci-op-ed>.

Taiwan is not among Asia's largest and richest markets, but it represents one of the most fascinating and sophisticated markets, this is evidenced by the fact that, although Taiwan has a small population, its per capita imports of Italian fashion are very high compared to other countries in Asia. Taiwan could be used as a case study to understand how Italian luxury fashion is increasingly perceived culturally, not just materially, a trend that is constantly growing throughout Asia. What emerges from the literature and from the observation of the material used for this research is that consumption in Taiwan is a form of personal expression; it is not simply a display of wealth; indeed, it is precisely the display of wealth that is considered negative by some Taiwanese consumers. It emerges that high-fashion clothing is interpreted as a balance between aesthetics and identity, with an ever-increasing focus on aesthetics and detail.

Taiwan's economic boom had obvious consequences on consumption and consumers. Taiwan was a major manufacturing hub, and the "Made in Taiwan" label and its products, which could be purchased at low prices, were known throughout the world. The benefits of that success transformed the country into a highly developed and advanced economy. This success gave rise to a middle class of attentive and curious consumers, open to the world, and ready to expand their knowledge and tastes. This modern consumer, attentive to new trends and with a large amount of capital to spend, led Italian and European brands to become increasingly interested in the island's market. In 2021, the Taiwan fashion market reached a total value of around 15 billion US dollars, even surpassing the Hong Kong market, a sign of how Taiwanese domestic consumption is growing. These numbers are so high also thanks to luxury fashion.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Intralink Limited, "Taiwan Consumer & Retail Market Report, prepared for the British Office Taipei " (2022).

Taiwanese luxury fashion consumers stand out for their thoughtful approach to fashion. Unlike other Asian consumers, Taiwanese don't buy simply to show off their expensive clothes; they want to identify with what they wear, to be identified with someone with a refined aesthetic sense and who knows how to choose with good taste. Taiwanese consumers don't choose on impulse but arrive at their purchasing decision through a process of aesthetic evaluation and strictly personal taste. For Taiwanese consumers, elegance is seen as a value, like something they must control; they don't want others to perceive that they're showing off. The same happens when Taiwanese consumers purchase luxury jewelry and watches.

In Taiwan, beauty is often synonymous with balance; Taiwanese consumers convey balance; luxury clothing becomes a way to express their harmony with the environment, and for brand positioning, this suggests that marketing strategies should emphasize lifestyle values and cultural harmony rather than focusing solely on prestige or price. By aligning brand messaging with these values, companies can create deeper and more meaningful connections with Taiwanese consumers.

It's clear that this consumer wants to distinguish themselves through their own culture, that the object they display is their own culture, rather than directly demonstrating their superiority from a strict economic status. All this attention stems from the fact that individuality is often balanced with respect for others to create a harmonious environment. In China or South Korea, for example, luxury often tends to be a symbol of status, and this must be immediately apparent. In Taiwan, a more sober, almost intellectual approach prevails, more like the characteristics of the Japanese market.

Even in the case of clothing, good taste, and aesthetics in general, the cultural influence of the Japanese on the island is evident; these two countries share much in common in this regard. Beyond these elements, purchasing studies show that consumers on the island

also place great importance on the comfort and functionality of the garment, often putting the prestige of the brand or the country of origin on the back burner.<sup>22</sup>

Taiwanese consumers also value clothing in terms of its practicality and strive to find an aesthetic balance. Clothing must adapt to everyday life while simultaneously conveying elegance and authenticity. Elegance must not be overdone, and functionality must not be compromised. The source of influence in Taiwan also has its own peculiarities, including the fact that Taiwanese draw a lot of inspiration from their social circles, friends, and family. Word of mouth continues to play an important role in influencing them when making product purchase decisions.<sup>23</sup>

Second, online platforms play a key role in shaping the perception of luxury in Taiwan. Taiwan is a relatively small country, with few major cities, and almost the entire population is connected, allowing trends to reach almost everyone. Fashion is often discovered on social media, where the opinions of social media users are highly valued, even more than brand communication and promotion. Brands must pass this test. New generations are highly informed, read reviews, and draw inspiration from local influencers and key opinion leaders. Aggressive advertising is easily perceived as artificial. What truly convinces the customers is the brand's narrative credibility. Customers seek testimonials and proof of a brand's quality, especially luxury brands. Luxury fashion companies must be able to construct a coherent and authentic narrative.<sup>24</sup>

Taiwanese luxury fashion consumers live primarily in the country's three major urban areas: Taipei, Taichung, and Kaohsiung, where their culture of good taste flourishes. These often cosmopolitan citizens and consumers love simple, refined garments, clean lines, and

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<sup>22</sup> Osmud Rahman et al., "A study of apparel consumer behaviour in China and Taiwan," *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education* 11, no. 1 (2018).

<sup>23</sup> Shu Chun Chang and Trong An Nguyen, "Peer pressure and its influence on consumers in Taiwan," *African Journal of Business Management* 12, no. 8 (2018).

<sup>24</sup> Wendi Chang, "Understanding the shopping behavior, clothing choice and consumption experience of mature Taiwanese women" (Toronto Metropolitan University, 2021).

neutral colors. The minimalist trend in fashion in recent years has had a strong influence. Taiwanese women aren't often seen sporting flashy, gaudy clothing, as is often the case in other major cities around the world. Women, in particular, use fashion as a way to express themselves; they want to express themselves, and to express their emancipation. For many Taiwanese women, elegance means not overdoing it, knowing how to be modern yet very feminine. Luxury must be consistent with this image they want to convey, and they also want to convey a certain inner balance. It's no coincidence that one of the strongest perceptions of the Taiwanese woman in mainland China is that of a very refined and elegant woman.

Consumers interviewed in several studies describe purchasing luxury clothing or accessories as a form of self-reward, a way to reward themselves. This is much more important than demonstrating wealth. Taiwanese women are considered very strong and independent, and those seeking to position themselves in Taiwan know this well. Fashion consumption on this island encompasses several elements: personal expression and the pursuit of psychological well-being, the emotional element that makes consumers feel good and confident in their clothes. This emotional involvement plays a key role in the purchasing process. In a store, luxury shoppers in Taiwan seek courtesy from the staff, a calm environment, and the opportunity to try items in a relaxed manner with a wide range of options. All of this creates a bond with the brand, and Taiwanese increasingly desire this connection with the products they purchase.

Taiwanese love feeling recognized as special customers. They show great loyalty to fashion houses that offer continuity and respect. They must trust them and are unforgiving of anyone taking advantage of them. Trust between Taiwanese sellers and customers is long-lasting, and the relationship between customer and brand often takes on an almost familial

quality. It's a way of experiencing luxury as well as a unique and unrepeatable personal relationship, not just a simple and cold transaction.<sup>25</sup>

A major difference between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese consumers is that the Chinese are more attentive to trends and seasonal fashions. Taiwanese luxury fashion customers tend to favor timeless pieces, those products that never go out of style and are designed to last. They don't want to make purchases they no longer like in the short term. Luxury purchasing thus becomes a thoughtful gesture; Taiwanese think carefully before a purchase, often thinking long-term. Many Taiwanese, especially those from the upper-middle classes, choose to purchase during trips abroad to Italy, France, or Japan, not only to save money, but also to experience the authentic brand in its native context. For them, buying a piece in a Milan or Florence boutique isn't just about purchasing a product, but also about coming into direct contact with a cultural tradition; this is also part of the shopping experience.

One place that demonstrates the relationship between Italian fashion and luxury for Taiwanese is undoubtedly Taipei 101, the nation's iconic skyscraper and one of Asia's leading luxury hubs. Its shopping floors feature boutiques from the most prestigious international fashion houses, many of them Italian. Alongside the windows of Prada, Gucci, Fendi, and Bottega Veneta, we find Italian jewelers like Bulgari, luxury watches like Panerai, and plenty of Italian cafes and bars that complement that idea of refined Italian luxury so beloved around the world, where Italian elegance blends with the Asian modernity that Taipei 101 embodies. This skyscraper, in this case, is a symbol of how Taiwan has integrated Italian and European aesthetics, of how Taiwan has opened up to the world, in a skyscraper whose architecture harks back to its roots, with its shape reminiscent of a Chinese pagoda, a bridge between

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<sup>25</sup> Lin Mei Hui, "Taiwan Female Fashion Customers: A Study on Fashion Consciousness, Brand Loyalty, and Purchasing Behaviour" (Master Thesis National Taiwan Normal University, 2020).

Taiwan and its history and the world. It is a place where Made in Italy is no longer just an imported product, but a cultural presence, those many different cultures to which Taiwan has opened itself.

Since Taiwanese are very attentive and open to the rest of the world, in recent years there has been a particular focus on sustainability, which has introduced new variables in the behavior of Taiwanese consumers. Not many consumers in Asia take factors such as sustainability into account when purchasing a product. Younger generations, in particular, look for ethical fashion brands and values towards the environment and society; it is not just a passing trend but a real evaluation criterion that can make the difference between purchasing or not. For an increasing number of Taiwanese, fashion is perceived as an extension of their moral identity, and brands that communicate a commitment to the environment are perceived as more authentic.<sup>26</sup>

This rapid evolution is bringing a new conception of luxury to Taiwan: less social status and more substance, something that truly matters and has value. Taiwanese consumers, especially luxury consumers, aren't just looking for beautiful clothes; they want to feel good about owning them, knowing they represent something, something positive. One could call it "ethical luxury," a phenomenon that is redefining the market not only in Taiwan but also around the world, and this is pushing international fashion houses to integrate themes such as sustainability and durability into their promotional campaigns, while respecting others and the environment.

It's difficult to briefly define the Taiwanese luxury clothing consumer. They're a highly complex and sophisticated figure, refined, and highly cultured. They're a consumer who still deserves much study, and besides being complex, they're also rapidly changing.

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<sup>26</sup>Kuo-Kuang Fan and Yi-Ting Chang, "Exploring the key elements of sustainable design from a social responsibility perspective: A case study of fast fashion consumers' evaluation of green projects," *Sustainability* 15, no. 2 (2023).

When trying to define them, the most important characteristics seem to be that they're not seeking recognition, and they value authenticity over fame. Two souls coexist within him: curiosity for the world outside the island and a great respect for local roots and tradition.

It is important to focus on a point that emerges in many documents and sources on the internet regarding this topic: brands in Taiwan increasingly function as stories rather than objects. Through these stories, consumers are able to give a deep meaning to their objects. In the Taiwanese context, a brand story perceived as authentic is more effective, it generates a more positive image because it allows consumers to narratively elaborate the brand with their own emotions. This "narrative elaboration" transforms a product into a symbolic story that consumers use to express who they are. That whole long story behind the product belongs in some way to the customer. The customer also feels part of this world, as if he perceived that craftsman in a small leather goods shop in Italy and the work he is doing. This "narrative elaboration" is common to find in culturally sophisticated markets such as Taiwan, where emotional resonance becomes a key component of perceived authenticity.<sup>27</sup>

The imagery of Italy is part of this narrative, the same happens for France, this imagery of beauty plays a key role for giving the product a story. For Italian companies, the Made in Italy concept is extremely useful, because through narratives such as heritage or craftsmanship, emotional connections with customers can be strengthened more effectively than by selling a purely aesthetic or functional product.

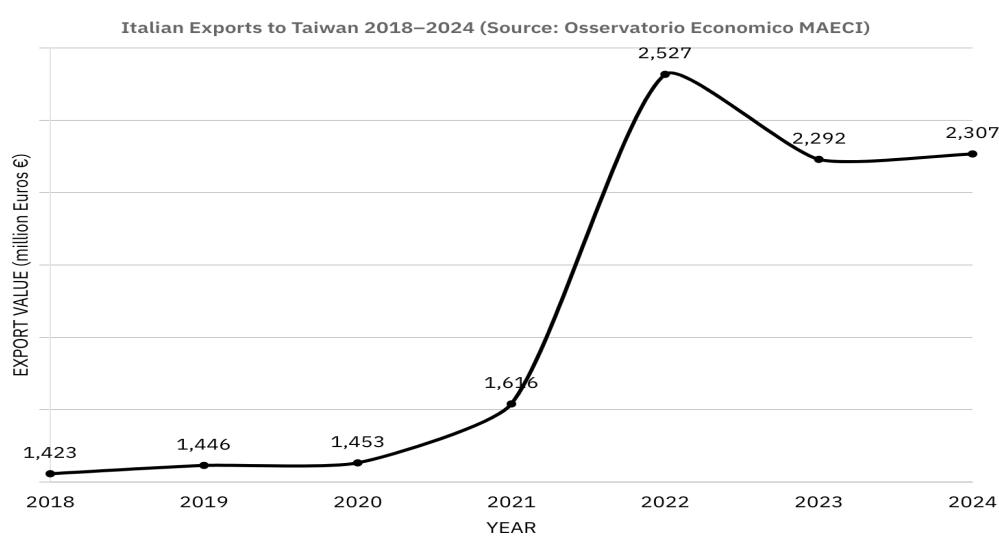
In summary, before proceeding with the research, we can draw some conclusions. There is a wealth of literature on mainland China, Japan, and South Korea, and this type of research has also been useful for understanding the market in this region, which includes Taiwan. However, despite its strong purchasing power we have seen it surpass even Hong

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<sup>27</sup> Wen-yeh Huang, "Brand story and perceived brand image: Evidence from Taiwan," *Journal of Family and Economic issues* 31, no. 3 (2010).

Kong in the luxury market, Taiwan has not yet been fully studied. Even for statistical purposes, Taiwan is often grouped with other East Asian economies and ends up in data and surveys for mainland China. Research and reports have obviously already explored the general characteristics of Taiwanese consumers, but there is still a gap and a lack of studies specifically addressing how Italian fashion brands are perceived and positioned in this context and in the various Taiwanese contexts. This lack of targeted research makes it difficult to understand how the values of Made in Italy are experienced in the Taiwanese fashion scene, and the dynamism of the Taiwanese economy and the speed with which the market changes require ever-new and updated sources, which are even more difficult to find, but at the same time, the figure of the Taiwanese consumer has emerged quite clearly.

It's also worth looking at some numbers and statistics. In recent years, economic relations between Italy and Taiwan have seen steady growth, with the import-export ratio between the two countries being balanced and highly beneficial for both. This excellent and friendly exchange between the two countries also helps explain why Italian fashion brands are increasingly successful on the island. According to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs statistics in 2025,<sup>28</sup>



<sup>28</sup> Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale (MAE), "Scheda Paese: Taiwan – Osservatorio Economico," 2025, <https://www.infomercatiesteri.it>.

Taiwan is now the 45th destination for Italian exports, with a share of approximately 0.3%, while Italy ranks 21st among Taiwan's suppliers, covering approximately 0.9% of the local import market.

In 2024, Italian exports to Taiwan reached approximately €2.3 billion, with an increase in the first quarter of 2025 compared to the previous year. Fashion products, especially luxury goods, stand out as a major component of Italian exports to Taiwan. Textiles, clothing, leather goods, and accessories, this entire sector accounts for approximately 16% of total Italian exports, worth approximately €370 million. This confirms what we've already read: fashion is one of the most important sectors of Italian trade with Taiwan and remains a way, perhaps the main one, through which the image of Made in Italy continues to thrive on the island. Taiwan's economy appears particularly strong and prosperous, an obviously important factor for selling luxury fashion items here. GDP is expected to reach €786 billion in 2025, with a growth rate of 3.5%, significant figures that give fashion investors hope in Taiwan. In this high-income Taiwanese market, purchasing power and cultural sophistication go hand in hand, and this is also reflected in other sectors, including fashion, luxury furniture, and various home products. There are currently more than fifty Italian companies present in Taiwan, with a total turnover of approximately €387 million, a significant number that allows these Italian companies to maintain a presence in the region and boost ongoing investment. As already mentioned, Taiwan is a smaller market than its regional neighbors, but Taiwan exhibits a unique combination of factors and represents exactly the kind of environment in which the values of Italian fashion can find a space to be sold and appreciated over the long term.

## METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach in the form of a multiple case study. It aims to analyze the positioning strategies of Italian fashion brands in the Taiwanese market. The methodology combines semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and analysis with the goal of collecting data from two main sources:

- Sales staff working in Italian luxury fashion stores, with direct experience dealing with Asian customers (including Taiwanese clients).
- Professionals involved in export processes and international strategy, working in Italian fashion companies.

These two different perspectives give us the opportunity to compare field experiences (retail) with internal strategic and operational logics (export), offering a complete view on this case study.

To illustrate the process of moving from raw interview data to themes and answers to the research questions, a short worked example is presented below, showing the transformation from quotation to code, category, theme, and finally the answer to the research question:

Quotation → "Many Taiwanese customers check the price several times and often ask to see different models before deciding."

Code → Price awareness, thoughtful decision, product comparison.

Category → Reflective purchasing behavior.

Theme → Caution and analysis in the buying process.

Answer to RQ → Taiwanese customers exhibit a reflective approach, carefully evaluating prices and options before purchasing, indicating that their decisions are not impulsive but based on perceived value analysis.

## **Data Sources**

The research is mainly based on qualitative data with some quantitative data:

Qualitative data:

- Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with employees of Italian luxury fashion stores (Milan, Rome, Florence), with direct experience selling to Taiwanese customers.
- Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with professionals involved in export processes to East Asia (export office, international marketing managers, global consumer statistics).

Quantitative data:

- Industry reports and market analyses.
- ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) data on Italian fashion exports to Asia.
- Company documents (brand profiles, international communication, official websites).

## **Data Collection**

Qualitative data:

- Interviews were conducted in person or via video call with four sales assistants from Italian boutiques in Italy, focusing on Asian and Taiwanese customers. The goal is collecting information from staff with experience with Chinese-speaking tourists from mainland China and Taiwan, to identify specific characteristics of Taiwanese customers. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes.
- Interviews were conducted with professionals and employees of Italian fashion companies, we focus on adapting strategies, the relationships with Taiwanese customers, and the differences compared to other Asian markets.

Quantitative data:

- Collection of quantitative data on Italian exports to Taiwan from Italian Ministry of

## Foreign Affairs

- Comparative analysis between Taiwan and other Asian markets based on institutional sources and consumption databases.

## **Research Methods**

Content Analysis: Applied to reports, company websites, and strategic documents to identify key messages in brand positioning.

Semi-structured Interviews: Use the information collected with targeted questions to analyze the phenomenon.

## **Analysis Tools**

Qualitative analysis was conducted through coding, the responses were organized into macro-areas (cultural perception, adaptive strategies, communication channels, operational difficulties) and interpreted in light of the theoretical models discussed in the Literature Review.

## DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the qualitative analysis of ten semi-structured interviews conducted with professionals in the luxury and fashion industries, individuals directly involved with Taiwanese customers. The purpose of this analysis and these interviews is to understand how Italian brands are perceived and positioned in the Taiwanese market, and to identify the main cultural and strategic factors influencing their perception on the island. The analysis uses these interviews to observe participants' responses, primarily regarding consumer behavior, perceptions of the brand they work for, communication practices employed, and the challenges Italian companies face in the Taiwanese market. The interview results have been organized to highlight the recurring patterns these professionals adopt. Quotes from the interviewees are used throughout this section to aid in the interpretation of the data and to clarify the overall picture. The analysis connects to more general theoretical positioning concepts, such as internationalization, branding, and luxury consumption behavior, to give the reader a deeper understanding of how Italian fashion brands operate in this Asian market.

### Data Preparation

Qualitative data were collected through ten semi-structured interviews designed to effectively gather the information needed to answer the research questions. Interviewees included sales staff, a store manager, a buyer, and other professionals working with Italian brands such as Gucci. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was based on a series of ten open-ended questions. These questions were chosen to address and collect data on five main topics: (1) their professional experience in the sector, (2) the perception of Italian brands and the values of Made in Italy in Taiwan, (3) Consumer behavior and relevant cultural traits in Taiwan, (4) Communication and marketing strategies adopted in Taiwan, (5)

Challenges and opportunities for the future of Italian brands in Taiwan. All interviews were recorded, each participant gave the author permission to use them for academic purposes. The interviews were then transcribed and translated entirely into English by the author. After transcription, the data was coded specifically for this research to be useful. The code includes keywords and short phrases that express the core meaning of each statement that is deemed important, such as craftsmanship or authenticity. These codes were grouped into categories to identify the five different topics and thus build separate main themes: (1) Perception of Italian luxury brands in Taiwan, (2) Consumer behavior and cultural traits, (3) Communication and marketing channels, (4) Challenges for Italian brands in Taiwan, (5) Future opportunities in Taiwan.

### **Perception of Italian Luxury Brands in Taiwan**

This first section discusses the perception and reputation of Italian luxury brands among Taiwanese consumers. It lists the findings of the interviews, which highlight brand perception as a crucial factor that companies must address before selling in any market. "Made in Italy" was mentioned numerous times throughout the interviews; this element is central to perception. All interview participants frequently spoke of "Made in Italy" and how it continues to represent Italy's high-quality manufacturing. This suggests that "Made in Italy" functions not only as a descriptive label, but as a key positioning signal that reassures Taiwanese consumers about quality, authenticity, and long-term value.

The "Made in Italy" logo on products is as important as the brand's logo itself; many customers search for it on their products, asking where it is located, and wanting a tangible sign of this. Interviewees discussed various aspects of what attracts Taiwanese customers to Italian luxury fashion products, which also depends on the type of customer, which can vary from store to store in different Italian cities. Some participants stated that Taiwanese

consumers in Italy place less importance on Italian products due to their craftsmanship, while in stores in Taiwan they ask much more often about the product's craftsmanship, as if they need confirmation of this. Taiwanese customers actively seek confirmation of craftsmanship and production processes, indicating that craftsmanship in Taiwan must be explicitly communicated rather than assumed.

Another interviewee noted that Italian brands are respected for their long tradition and history, which gives Italian fashion products a sense of authenticity that is difficult to replicate in other markets, even if they are the best in the world in this regard. When we tell the story of the brand or the origin of the product, they listen with interest. It's as if they are searching for the truth behind the name, as noted by a sales assistant at Miu Miu in Florence, this finding reinforces the role of brand heritage and authenticity as central elements in the positioning of Italian luxury brands within the Taiwanese market.

The idea of an Italian lifestyle is also a recurring theme; participants noted that fashion consumers in Taiwan associate Italy not only with fashion, but with a broader image of culture and art. For them, Italy is elegance and natural beauty, even those who don't shop and accompany people to the stores know the names of Italian brands and associate them with a certain way of life, based on good manners and gallantry, as observed by a buyer at La Rinascente in Florence.

Many interviewees described the Taiwanese luxury fashion customer as someone who values luxury, but in a discreet way, they don't want to be overly flashy, and they don't want to prioritize their status, they prefer to be identified as people with good taste. Taiwanese people, especially young ones, prefer clothing that expresses sophistication and good taste rather than ostentation, and the salespeople interviewed know this, and they avoid offering Taiwanese customers the flashiest clothes, directing them toward their more discreet ones. According to a global consumer specialist at Gucci in Florence, compared to mainland

Chinese customers, Taiwanese customers are more restrained. They don't look for large, flashy logos, but for product quality and sophistication, this preference suggests that Italian brands in Taiwan benefit from a positioning strategy centered on understated elegance rather than overt status signaling.

Participants also spoke about how trust and loyalty are key aspects of this perception, even in terms of sales experience. Salespeople must be people Taiwanese customers can trust, Taiwanese are very careful not to get "ripped off", this element is crucial when they are inside the stores. This trust between seller and customer must be present in an in store purchase. When Taiwanese customers really like a brand, they tend to return for more, that's what all the salespeople said. As explained by a store manager at Emporio Armani in Rome, when they find a brand they like, they always come back, they may not buy as much, but they want to continue with the same brand, and they return to the store even after years and they remember the brand, and from a branding perspective, this suggests that informational depth and transparency are more effective than aggressive sales tactics in the Taiwanese market.

Some interviewees stated that the overall image of Italian brands is very positive and well-known, especially when it comes to the most famous brands, but there is still limited understanding of the differences between fashion houses, especially among younger consumers, who rely more on social media for information. Therefore, it is necessary to effectively use social media to reach these young people and convey these values. Many know that Made in Italy is synonymous with quality, but they don't fully understand the differences between brands, and we need to communicate more about the value of artisanal products over industrial ones, as highlighted by a sales assistant at Bottega Veneta in Florence.

The interviews indicate that the perception of Italian luxury in Taiwan is structured around five recurring elements, craftsmanship, authenticity, elegance, emotional connection,

and trust—which collectively shape the positioning of Italian brands as culturally refined rather than purely status-driven. The Made in Italy brand also have an intrinsic prestige that reassures consumers of the product's origin and durability, Taiwanese know it will last for many years and know that it is obviously not fast fashion that lasts a short time, they usually don't want to buy something for just one season.

All interviewees agree that Taiwanese customers see Italian brands not simply as status symbols, but as expressions of a refined cultural identity, they really appreciate the culture behind these clothes, one of them said: "They often reference other elements of Italian culture when they are in the store", as explained by a sales assistant at Valentino in Florence, and a sales assistant at Gucci in Rome said, "Some Taiwanese experience Italian fashion as if it were art, they have the same approach". Statistics indicate that the Taiwanese market favors authentic storytelling, defined as the strategic use of brand narratives to convey values, heritage, and identity, and also product quality over aggressive promotions, aggressive promotions in Taiwan can have a negative effect on this idea of refinement that the product and the imagery of Made in Italy have. These findings indicate that Italian luxury brands in Taiwan are valued less as markers of social status and more as carriers of cultural meaning.

### **Consumer Behavior and Cultural Traits**

This section focuses on the cultural characteristics of Taiwanese consumers in the luxury market, what Taiwanese customers expect from these products, and what they seek over other, non-high-end products. These cultural traits directly influence how luxury brands should position themselves in Taiwan, particularly in terms of communication style, in-store experience, and product presentation. All interviewees emphasized that Taiwanese customers stand out from other Asian consumers for their calm and thoughtful purchasing process; they need to spend a lot of time in-store to make a purchase. It also highlights how the high

average education of Taiwanese customers makes them highly culturally aware.

Many participants stated that Taiwanese customers are very polite, and because they are polite, they want to be educated and take the time to observe products. A professional involved in global consumer development at Gucci, based in Milan said: "Taiwanese people don't buy on impulse; they want to understand where something comes from, how it's made, and whether it's really worth it; they question themselves a lot."

Another recurring observation is that Taiwanese consumers display a global mindset but maintain a sense of local taste; even Taiwanese living abroad seem to maintain a taste closely tied to their home country. "Taiwanese people really like the clothing style of Japan and Korea, the trends that start from there then arrive in Taiwan, so they follow the fashion of these two countries a lot, but at the same time they adapt these trends to their own style, in a Taiwanese way, they don't want to be the same as everyone else, they want to combine other elements with the Taiwanese style, I can recognize a Taiwanese customer very well", According to a global consumer specialist at Gucci in Florence.

The interviewees also indicated that Taiwanese customers are very attentive to service and the education of the sales assistant, to approach the Taiwanese luxury clientele, these values must be conveyed, also because through this service, the Taiwanese seek an emotional involvement in the purchase of the product. This involvement is a characteristic that the Taiwanese luxury customer seeks even when purchasing other products, not only fashion ones. As explained by a sales assistant at Prada in Florence, they are very polite and respectful, and they expect the same from the staff, the shopping experience is as important to them as the product.

Several participants compared Taiwan with mainland China, noting significant cultural and behavioral differences. "Chinese customers want to be noticed, while Taiwanese customers want to stand out discreetly, they are more similar to Westerners in terms of

choices and taste", as noted by a sales assistant at Miu Miu in Florence.

An international sales manager at Gucci in Florence noted that Taiwanese "not only avoid bright colors, but also shiny and flashy fabrics, and prefer simple, minimal fabrics.". Many have placed the Taiwanese customer as a middle ground between the European customer and the mainland Chinese customer, they need a lot of attention, not as much as Westerners but still important for them, unlike the Chinese who often have no interest in attention from sales staff, this comparison highlights the cultural specificity of the Taiwanese market and cautions against applying uniform East Asian luxury positioning strategies.

Overall, these behavioral and cultural traits position Taiwanese luxury consumers as reflective, service-oriented, and aesthetically restrained, requiring a nuanced and culturally sensitive branding approach, elements that companies should know.

These findings show that Taiwanese luxury consumers favor reflective, service-oriented, and culturally sensitive consumption rather than impulse or conspicuous display. This implies that effective brand positioning in Taiwan should prioritize education, in-store interaction, and understated aesthetics, rather than standardized Asian luxury strategies based on visibility and status signaling.

### **Communication and Marketing Channels**

This final section discusses how these Italian companies must behave to sell effectively to Taiwanese consumers, what strategies they adopt, and what tools they use for promotion. It quickly emerged that in Asia, and therefore not only in Taiwan, digitalization is crucial for effective customer communication. Social media is the key, even more so than in the West, This indicates that effective brand positioning in Taiwan requires a digitally centered communication strategy rather than reliance on traditional Western marketing tools.

Taiwan has several social media and messaging apps that are different from those in the West (Line, for example). Therefore, Italian companies must learn to explore these new platforms to communicate with potential Taiwanese consumers.

A professional involved in global consumer development at Gucci, based in Milan said: LINE is essential in Taiwan; everyone uses it, even to receive promotions or messages from the brand. In Europe and other parts of Asia, the newsletter does very well, but in Taiwan, it doesn't seem to have very positive feedback, which is why companies have dedicated and invested more time in studying the LINE app.

This statement demonstrates how LINE has become a primary marketing ecosystem in Taiwan. It's not just a messaging app, but a place for effective storytelling and direct interaction with its customers, unlike other places like Japan, where the brand's email newsletter remains very strong to stay in touch with its customers, this suggests that in Taiwan, the communication platforms function as integrated brand ecosystems rather than simple promotional tools.

One interviewee explained that the most effective marketing campaigns are those that combine a global aesthetic with localized communication, meaning the adaptation of communication, services, and branding elements to local cultural and linguistic contexts to create effective customer engagement. The same interviewee further explained: "You have to communicate with customers in a way that strikes a balance. They must perceive in marketing campaigns that the product is international but feel respected in their Taiwanese identity. For example, this is why we combine different languages in our advertising—Italian, English, and Chinese" . One of Gucci's latest advertising campaigns in Taiwan chose Italian for the posters of one of its showrooms in Taiwan. This "bridge" between Italy and Taiwan is highly appreciated, and if done in the right way, it expresses the positive values of Made in Italy that we discussed in the previous sections. On the other hand, it is also necessary to use

communication in the local language. Brands that "speak the language of their audience, of their target customers" as observed by a buyer at La Rinascente in Florence, and are perceived as more authentic and respectful.

A sales assistant at Bottega Veneta in Florence discussed how Taiwanese consumers are highly sensitive to the consistency of marketing campaigns; they follow a brand's message across multiple channels, expecting consistency between advertising, the in-store experience, and post-purchase communication. Another interviewee discussed how communication with Taiwanese customers must always be very respectful and discreet to avoid unpleasant situations. A store clerk reminded us that her company encouraged her, as a Chinese-speaking clerk, to approach Taiwanese customers appropriately, to be careful with the terminology she uses, and to avoid politically sensitive conversations. "You have to understand how to talk to Taiwanese customers. I had to learn how to do it. I pay particular attention when I talk to them to try to make them feel comfortable; I know it's important to them."

These examples illustrate how communication isn't limited to marketing campaigns and advertising, but is something much broader, including interpersonal relationships and customer service. This once again shows how in Taiwan communication also has an important social meaning, it must be polite, indirect and reassuring, avoiding any feeling of pressure to allow the customer to feel at ease, and the customer must maintain this positive feeling over time. This reinforces the idea that, in Taiwan, communication plays a relational and social role that directly affects brand perception over time.

One interviewee pointed out that the lack of localized communication for Taiwan could weaken the brand's presence. The interviewee explained that in her case, the brand she works for has moved its office from Taipei to Hong Kong. A professional involved in global consumer development at Gucci said: "We currently don't have an office open in Taiwan.

Keeping the office open was too expensive, but now we're already seeing the negative effects of this closure, keeping offices open abroad is certainly very expensive, but it is also necessary if one wants to work effectively with that country.". This testimony reveals something important: even the strongest global brands risk appearing distant, standardized, and impersonal if they neglect the nuances of the local audience, in this case, Taiwanese. According to the interviewee, it's therefore necessary to maintain a local perspective even within a small market. In line with these reflections, another interviewee said that it's necessary to find Taiwanese spokespeople for their advertising, and that the intention is precisely to combine Taiwanese and international spokespeople, to express what was said above: an international brand that also knows how to adapt to Taiwan as such.

Effective marketing communication in Taiwan depends on the strategic use of digital platforms combined with deep cultural awareness, allowing Italian luxury brands to position themselves as both globally prestigious and locally attentive.

### **Findings Interpretation**

The ten interviews partially confirm what was discussed and read in the Literature Review. The theory regarding Taiwanese consumers and their relationship with Italian luxury brands is clearly confirmed in the field by luxury brand employees working in stores. Those who work in daily contact with Taiwanese customers speak of clear dynamics, which helps us move beyond the theoretical context and gain a more practical understanding of how to interact with Taiwanese customers. The rest of the interviewees also contribute to a coherent image of this Taiwanese customer: they are people who appreciate the quality and authenticity of the product, rather than the brand logo itself, things the interviewees were clearly familiar with. Regarding the concept of Made in Italy, it remains strongly associated with craftsmanship and beauty, but this is not enough to turn the Taiwanese consumer into an

impulsive consumer; it is clear that Taiwanese people are very thoughtful. All interviewees spoke of how customer service is fundamental to the product sales process, and at the heart of this was the awareness that the consumer's emotional side plays a central role.

## CONCLUSION

The objective of this research was to understand how Italian luxury fashion brands position themselves in Taiwan. The research questions were determined beforehand to provide a clear direction. The results appear to be positive, and all questions seem to be answered. Through a thorough literature review and ten semi-structured interviews with professionals in the luxury and fashion industries, the study provided a qualitative perspective that offers many interesting insights that can also be applied in professional settings.

In response to the first research question: How do Italian fashion brands position themselves in the Taiwanese market? The results show that Italian brands are perceived as symbols of craftsmanship, authenticity, and refined taste; this is how Italian products want to be perceived. Made in Italy maintains a solid reputation in Taiwan, thanks not only to the fashion industry, but also to many other sectors, such as furniture, furnishings, and jewelry. It is strongly present in the Taiwanese imagination as a product of high quality and tradition, rather than ostentation; Italian products should therefore not appear vulgar. It could be said that Made in Italy is almost a brand in itself; it is important to communicate this element in Taiwan to position oneself effectively. The primary target is obviously the island's wealthiest people, who reside in the three largest cities—Taipei, Taichung, and Kaohsiung—where the products are sold. Positioning remains largely influenced by global strategies managed by regional offices, which sometimes limits local adaptation due to a lack of resources. However, the understanding remains that effective positioning requires considering the unique characteristics of the Taiwanese market alone.

The second research question is "To what extent do brands adapt their strategies to local cultural and consumer specificities?" – the research findings indicate that adaptation to the Taiwanese market is still partial. In-store service and customer relationships are localized, even abroad, as in Italy itself, and brands treat Taiwanese customers uniquely. There is an

awareness that these customers need time to shop in stores and must feel attentiveness from the salesperson. On the other hand, marketing and communications are a balance between regional and local standards. Taiwanese consumers value personalized service and cultural respect, but brands also rely on content designed for regional neighbors like China or Hong Kong, which can be a limitation and diminishes the sense of closeness and local identity that Taiwanese customers expect.

And now the third and final question: how do positioning strategies in Taiwan compare with those used in other Asian markets such as China, Japan, and South Korea? The research yields culturally interesting results, revealing that Taiwan shares some characteristics with Japan in terms of discretion, loyalty, and cultural sophistication, and at the same time, it also shares some characteristics with mainland China, where social media plays a key role, as in Taiwan. As for South Korea, where trends are especially youth-oriented, Taiwan shows a slower engagement with luxury. Taiwanese consumers don't change their tastes as often as South Korean consumers, which reflects their appreciation for continuity. These differences confirm that Taiwan cannot be considered a destination equal to its neighbors, or especially mainland China, but rather a different and unique market, requiring specific attention and dedicated studies for this country alone.

In a world where fashion often tends to make as much noise as possible to reach as many people as possible, Taiwan offers a different take, aimed at those seeking something more authentic and informed. This awareness is also an advantage for Italian fashion companies: someone appreciates their products beyond trends.

### **Recommendations**

Thanks to the findings of this research, we could therefore provide advice for fashion companies planning to sell in Taiwan, advice that is useful not only for Italian companies, but are also useful for all those who wish to approach this market and begin to understand the

Taiwanese consumer.

1. Investing resources to localize sales is necessary. Brands must consider marketing to a uniquely Taiwanese audience, integrating unique Taiwanese cultural elements.
2. Continue working on storytelling. Emphasize craftsmanship, tradition, and the significance of products through in-store narratives, digital content, and events. Taiwanese people respond positively to knowledge of a brand's history and product craftsmanship.
3. Train staff on cultural differences. Sales associates should receive training on cultural differences to improve service quality and make Taiwanese customers feel comfortable and respected.
4. Give local teams greater autonomy. Decentralizing some marketing decisions can help brands respond more effectively to Taiwanese consumer preferences, creating a stronger local identity.
5. Use Taiwan as a strategic test market. Taiwanese consumers are well connected globally, with characteristics that can also be found in other parts of Asia, this is an ideal environment to test new products and promotions before extending them to wider Asian markets.

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Perception and Positioning of Italian Luxury Brands in the Taiwanese Market

##### **Interview Type**

Semi-structured interview with professionals in the luxury and fashion industry (sales assistants, marketing specialists, buyers, and export officers).

##### **Purpose of the Interview**

To explore the perception of Italian fashion brands among Taiwanese consumers, the values associated with Made in Italy, and the communication and adaptation strategies adopted by Italian brands in Taiwan.

##### **Main Questions**

1. Could you briefly describe your role and experience in the luxury fashion industry?
2. In which Asian markets have you had direct working experience (for example, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, China)?
3. How are Italian fashion brands generally perceived by consumers in Taiwan?
4. Which values of “Made in Italy” (craftsmanship, luxury, heritage, status symbol) do you believe are most appreciated by Taiwanese customers?
5. Have you noticed significant differences between the Taiwanese market and other Asian markets you have worked in?
6. Which communication and marketing channels seem to be most effective in Taiwan (social media, events, collaborations, retail experience)?
7. In your opinion, what are the main motivations that drive Taiwanese clients to

purchase Italian luxury products?

8. In Taiwan and more broadly in Asia, how important is the “Made in Italy” label compared to other factors such as price, design, or brand visibility?
9. What are the main challenges that Italian brands currently face in Taiwan?
10. What future opportunities do you see for Italian brands in the Taiwanese market in the coming years?

#### **Additional Notes for the Interviewer**

Each question was followed, when necessary, by short follow-up questions to encourage deeper reflection. The interviews were conducted in Italian and later translated into English for analysis. The average duration of each interview was approximately 30 minutes. All participants gave verbal consent to participate and to have their answers used anonymously for academic purposes.

## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

The following table presents the list of participants who took part in the ten semi-structured interviews conducted for this research. All interviewees are professionals in the luxury and fashion industry, with direct or indirect experience in the Taiwanese market. All participants gave verbal consent for their statements to be used for academic purposes.

Interview No.	Participant	Position	Location
1	Daniele	Store Manager – Emporio Armani	Rome, Italy
2	Maria	Sales Assistant - Prada	Florence, Italy
3	Giulia	Global Consumer Development - Gucci	Milan, Italy
4	Elisa	Sales Assistant – Miu Miu	Florence, Italy
5	Chiara	Globaal Consumer Specilist - Gucci	Florence, Italy
6	Alessio	Buyer – La Rinascente	Florence, Italy
7	Davide	Sales Assistant – Bottega Veneta	Florence, Italy
8	Francesca	Sales Assistant – Valentino	Florence, Italy
9	Angelo	International Sales Manager – Gucci	Florence, Italy
10	Giovanni	Sales Assistant - Gucci	Roma, Italy

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