

## NY and Love at First Step....

Michelina Zambella (September 30, 2007)



In the city where everybody wears the notorious I LOVE NY shirt, Italian shoes have found their own way into the American market. One such logo recalls the Big Apple, made up of two red shoes that cross to make a heart, and so does the brand "I LOVE ITALIAN SHOES." From September 5th through 12th, as the fashion industry came together at the tents at Bryant Park to view and celebrate the



newest trends for Spring 2008, Mercedes-Benz has launched its own new supermodel, the all new 2008 C-Class Sedan.

In this scenario, the exhibition "I LOVE ITALIAN SHOES", made possible by the Italian Trade Commission in collaboration with the Association of Italian Footwear Manufacturers (ANCI) showcased the creativity, flair, sophistication and exquisite craftsmanship and style of Made in Italy shoe design and production. These beautiful shoes were presented in shining windows arranged around the central fountain, the obliged pass to the evening's events..

The aim is to create an original and unique product, capable of distinguishing itself from the other ones. The Made in Italy label is going to become both a reason of diversification and a certificate of warranty; it reminds the consumer that it's with paying more for a better product. That's why the Italian fashion industry, and then Italian footwear, is going to concentrate on a productive strategy unique and rare, refined and sophisticated. It seems better to produce goods impossible to copy, limited to a middle to high level of consumers. "Quality still keeps on protecting our goods from competition but this protection is going to finish as long as the competitive (Chinese) middle quality goods will get better. So, the real issue is what's the best way to sell our high quality goods?" says Director of The Italian Trade Commission in NY, Aniello Musella.

The National Association of Italian Footwear Manufacturers (ANCI) groups Italian footwear manufacturers together. Its purpose is to examine, support and promote projects of an economical, technical and scientific nature in the interest of the shoe industry and to represent the same on all institutional levels.

The association is particularly dedicated to promoting the category on the most important foreign markets in order to ensure the good image and the presence of Italian footwear - renown for its creativity, style, original design, and precise workmanship of an artisan nature, as well as for the use of carefully selected materials. This event is part of a greater campaign against counterfeit goods, launched at the beginning of 2007. Italy is not just one of the world's biggest destinations for fake luxury goods, but also the place where they are being made or assembled. This is one of the dark sides of globalization. The counterfeiters have become multinational operations. But what do a brand, counterfeit products and the new footwear Italian strategy have in common?

A brand, often communicated through a "trademark," can be a company's most valuable asset. Trademarks, simply put, are "source-identifiers;" they are a means of identifying brands. Notorious brands are so highly valuable because the public immediately recognizes them, and the products sold under them. Companies frequently obtain this instant brand recognition through successful and omnipresent advertising and promotion. However, to maintain the value of a brand, it always must be distinctive and in consumers' minds. To achieve this goal (and even to increase the value of a brand), the trademarks identifying the brand must be continually policed and, if necessary, defended. Without vigilant policing of a brand to prevent others from misusing or diluting the brand, passing off a product as the brand, or counterfeiting the brand so as to confuse consumers into thinking that they are purchasing a genuine branded product, a brand can flounder and even die. If a brand has lost its distinctiveness, its owner has no competitive advantage. When a brand name means nothing to consumers, it is worthless. It has no selling strength and it lacks the ability to draw in the consumer and tip the balance in the purchasing decision. Consumers who cannot identify a brand generally have no particular reason to buy it. The aim of the campaign I LOVE ITALIAN SHOES answers to all these doubts. It aims to further promote Italian footwear on the most important foreign markets, like they well have done in the American one. Make the consumer more conscious of his purchases strengthening the Italian brand. The creativity, the inspiration, the quality of the materials and the skilled workmanship, in short, the inimitable style that gives Italian footwear its unmistakable character, however, date much further back in time.



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