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## PROGETTO DI RICERCA

International retail and branding strategies: italian products with high symbolic value in the chinese market

### Abstract:

The purpose of this project is to analyze, evaluate and define the role of retail distribution in setting up the brand strategy, in building the brand image, in developing and reinforcing the brand equity in the Chinese market. The made in Italy products with high symbolic value is the focus of the work.

The theoretical framework of the project, analyzes deeply three main aspects: features of the Chinese market, both from a social and a managerial point of view, branding strategies and retail role in their implementation.

The first step is therefore about the understanding of Chinese market and consumers; these information are necessary to define the best strategy to reach Chinese consumers with Italian products.

The point of sales is a critical element in branding strategy, because it communicates brand values to consumers, right during purchase time. From previous research, came out clear that the point of sales communication is often a lack of Italian offer in Chinese market.

In this context the aim of this research project is to analyze the ways through which the retail distribution lever can strengthen and, in some cases, create a strong brand equity for high symbolic value made in Italy products for Chinese consumers.

We aim to define the paths that companies, in particular small and medium-size Italian companies, could cover in order to shift from typically Made in Italy product-oriented strategies, to a wider and value –oriented ones that is not focused only on the product itself.

In particular, researches that will be carry out to identify which best practices and business models could be suitable for Italian companies in the Chinese market will concern:

- the analysis of brand value of “Made in Italy” in a context of increasing globalization of supply chains, where the Italian goods is often produced out of the national boundaries, causing a relevant impact on the brand value perception;
- the analysis of “Italian sounding” products in the Chinese market, aiming at identifying some possible actions to fight the phenomenon that has a double negative impact on Italian companies, since it reduces the value of Made in Italy and their potential market;
- how European brands (especially the French ones) of the top class products have been able to succeed in the Chinese market, through the intensive control of retail channels;
- the role and relevance of distribution choices that can affect the brand value creation of made in Italy products with high symbolic value;

The research aims to identify a theoretical framework to define some guidelines and best practices that could support Italian small and medium-sized companies. Some structural factors of Italian companies, such as their small size, deeply affect their efficiency and their capability to understand and operate on the new emerging markets. The purpose of providing information is going to be fulfilled thanks to academic and national institutions researches.

In this context, we plan to collect a set of best practices developed by Italian and European companies in that market, to understand the possible causes of failure in brand management strategies, in order to understand the cultural differences in business activities concerning retail and communication strategies that aim to create brand equity.

The project starts with a detailed review of the most recent researches concerning brand strategy and retail role within brand strategy in international markets, especially in the Chinese one. After this step, interviews will be carried out to retailers, experts and managers of communication and brand; the Chinese market and perception of Italian products will be analysed, as well as the retail choices, focusing on products with high symbolic value.

The project includes the collaboration coming from experts of the Department of East Asian Studies, of this University, which are also involved in this research as a unit of the project. They will provide the socio-cultural analysis of the Chinese market, about the consumers behavior and their perception of brand values. The intercultural work will be continuous and strong related and it aims to develop a research experiment, based on the cooperation between two different academic culture, business-economics and cultural-linguistic.

### Team di riferimento:

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