



Kilesa is a small brand looking ahead with confidence, boosted by its products' '100% Made in Italy' status. CREDIT: KILESA

Made in Italy, 100%

Leathergoods manufacturers are among those who have benefited from the worldwide success of the 'Made in Italy' label. But it turns out that some bags are more 'Made in Italy' than others.

There is more to 'Made in Italy' that meets the eye (or the hand). Speaking recently about sustainability in the Italian leather industry, Sabrina Frontini, director of ICEC, the leather sector's dedicated certification institute, raised the subject of the distinction between 'Made in Italy' and '100% Made in Italy'. Naturally, we wanted to find out more.

Ms Frontini makes it clear at the start of her detailed explanation that the distinction between the two certifications varies, depending on whether what it is you make is leather or whether a finished product is made from leather. It seems to make most sense to start as close to the beginning of the value chain as possible.

"For leather to be '100% Made in Italy', the tanner has to carry out wet-end processes in Italy," the director of ICEC (which is short for Istituto di Certificazione della Qualità per l'Industria Conciaria), "although the raw material can come from another origin. If, however, a company works from wet blue and only does retanning, fatliquoring and dyeing in a tannery in Italy, the finished leather it produces can be called 'Made in Italy', but

cannot carry the '100% Made in Italy' label."

It's a clear difference and has parallels across many sectors. The thinking behind '100% Made in Italy' is to provide consumers with extra guarantees about the quality of the products they have purchased (there have been scandals over false claims about the origin of products, including olive oil and even pizza). It is a certification programme launched by ITPI, an institute that works to protect Italian manufacturers and which now includes companies making clothes, shoes, furniture, jewellery, cosmetics, food and a wide range of other types of product.

Luxury leathergoods are certainly part of this, but here, Sabrina Frontini explains, there are other requirements for the certification. "When it comes to a bag, things are different," she says. "For a bag there is no restriction on where the leather or the components come from. For the bag to be '100% Made in Italy', what's required is that the assembly of all the components take place in a factory in Italy."

She insists that '100% Made in Italy' certification is already becoming "an important distinction" for leathergoods brands



across the country, big-name brands and smaller, more artisan ones alike. She has worked with Bottega Veneta, for example, and says the company is intent on applying the '100% Made in Italy' label to its top-end products. More than 10% of all products in the range now bear this label, she says. Ms Frontini believes this is one advantage that Bottega Veneta is able to derive from investment it has made in its supply chain in and around its home province in Vicenza; the skills it requires to handle correctly components in exotic leather or expensive calfskin are there.

If anything, less well known bag brands such as Ghibli, from near Florence, and Baiadera and Kilesa, from close to Naples, are making more of a splash about their '100% Made in Italy' status than Bottega Veneta. Ghibli refers to its location close to the tanning cluster around Santa Croce sull'Arno as a "great strength", but it insists that it also pays close attention to shapes, colours and the other details that help bring its designs to life. It calls its '100% Made in Italy' bags "true masterpieces", with each one being not just beautiful but "unique". Unique is a much overused word in fashion and in all business, but in this case Ghibli has a case: as part of the certification requirements, each bag leaves the factory in Ponte a Cappiano with its own serial number. "Being unique for Ghibli means to present a luxury product, on trend and of extraordinary beauty," the company claims.

Two sisters, Anna and Rosaria Supino, founded Baiadera in 2004, determined to focus on innovation both in techniques and in materials, but also to keep alive traditional leather craftsmanship. The company chooses leather carefully and then paints and waxes it in house before cutting the parts and assembling the bags. Kilesa is an even newer brand, founded in 2012 by Bianca Imbembo. Committed also to traditional craftsmanship, it too seeks to bring a fresh approach to high-quality Italian handbags by combining as many ecological materials as it can with the high quality leather in its collections. It says this is part of its determination to look ahead, towards the future of luxury accessories, with confidence.

Having '100% Made in Italy' status and giving it such a prominent place in the way they present themselves is an important reason for the confidence all these brands have in their own future. 🌍



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For bags to qualify for '100% Made in Italy' certification, all the components have to be assembled in Italy. A surprising number of big-name brands' bags do not meet this requirement because part-assembly takes place elsewhere. CREDIT: KILESA