

CITE JAPAN 2019

Next stop Japan: Intercos targets 'sleeping beauty' after China and Korea success

By Amanda Lim

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Cosmetics contract manufacturer Intercos is looking to expand its footprint in Japan to strengthen its presence in the Asian markets, on the back of strong growth in China and Korea



The Italian firm, which specialises in colour cosmetics, pencils, nail polish, skincare and personal care products, exhibited at CITE Japan for the first time this year following its joint venture with Japan's Sumitomo Corporation Group in 2018.

Make-up strategic marketing and account development VP of Asia, Anna Dato said it was imperative for the company to build its presence in Japan considering the rising popularity of J-Beauty.

"Japan is a leading market for prestige. Japan has been a sleeping beauty and now it's waking up again. It's very important for us to be here right now."

She added that the deal with Sumitomo was integral to its entry into Japan.

"[Sumitomo] is our vehicle for promotion in Japan. We have the same clients in common and we believe this collaboration can bring a lot to the clients."

She added that company was eyeing further expansion into Japan. *"We are starting to be more present in the market and we are looking to expand locally soon."*

Intercos presence in Asia

The company currently has five commercial offices, five production sites and three research centres in Asia.

Four of its five production sites are located in China, where Intercos has been growing rapidly.

"Our footprint in China is growing very fast and it's because of our make-up. Not only are they beautiful, our make-up is very high-tech. The Chinese consumer is becoming more sophisticated and they are demanding for more."

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"That's why we innovate from China as well. We don't think only from Italy to the world, we think more and more locally so we can [cater] to the needs of the local consumers. It helps us authenticate our message of innovation with a local taste."

Dato stressed that the company does not just work with international brands, but local players in beauty as well.

"At the beginning, local brands in China addressed the lower-tier market. But today, they take pride in things being made-in-China, and local brands are becoming more prestige."

In 2016, Intercos partnered with South Korean retailer Shinsegae to solidify its presence in the country.

The company has both production facilities and R&D centers in South Korea.

"South Korea is the pillar to create innovation at a high level for the Asian markets. From our facilities there, we have created a lot of skin care-make-up hybrids, sun care products and skin care as well."

Emerging trends in Asia

Intercos also forecasts trends it sees in the market two years in advance.

It believes the Asian market will continue to see more products that emphasise on glow.

"It's about how glow can be transformative. We see the idea of custom glow, which has a lot of layering."

Lipstick will continue to rise in demand, especially in China.

Dato said the company's lipsticks with intricate embossed designs has proven to be very popular in China.

"In China, the trend is now about heritage. We have interpreted heritage with high-tech innovation to make these incredible 3-D effects. We've patented this technology so we are the only ones that can do it."

Additionally, the social media scene has driven the development of visually appealing products.

"In a world where everything goes through WeChat or Instagram, you need to make a product that shouts innovation. It's not enough to be high-tech, the visual also needs to express that. Consumers react more with visuals and we work to deliver the message of technology from a visual aspect."

Lastly, another trend the company believes the market will see more of is what it dubs the '5G' trend.

As 5G is defined by its technology, Dato believes it will resonate with Asian consumers.

"The 4G era was about high-definition products. 5G brings us towards amplified reality. It's not just about perfection, it's also about volume, like you're popping out of the screen. For instance, it's why lip gloss is coming back."

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