Zegna boss says suits aren't dead but ties are

By Sandra Halliday - May 20, 2022

Ermenegildo Zegna — CEO of the Italian luxury menswear house that bears his family name — declared this week that the suit isn’t dead as some people have suggested.
However, the executive did say that the tie has had its day.

Speaking at the Financial Times' business of luxury conference (reported by City AM), he said: “Let me be clear – the suit is not dead. But the tie is!”

He said that knitwear is the “new tie” and that demand for luxury leisurewear shows no signs of slowing down.

Suit sales were challenged pre-pandemic but fell though the floor as lockdowns and work-from-home orders meant traditional business clothing wasn’t needed.

Post-pandemic, there’s been a debate about how much life the traditional suit still has with once-formalwear-focused firms like Hugo Boss now focusing heavily on casual clothing. Many M&S stores have stopped stocking suits and they’re no longer included in the UK’s basket of goods that produces the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). But some suit specialists have nonetheless reported buoyant sales. And ASOS said it sold 280,000 suits in the AW21/22 season.

Interestingly, a Charles Tyrwhitt consumer survey late last year found that “the timeless suit and shirt still lead the way when it comes to making a strong first impression – over 65% of men believe this and almost a third feel more productive when they’re dressed smartly”. But there was no mention of the tie in that.

It seems that just as people have now embraced hybrid working, they’ve also embraced hybrid business dressing, using items other than ties to add the finishing touch to a suit.

Zegna told FT editor Roula Khalaf that there are ways to make a suit feel less formal. Combining one with sneakers is one option that adds “colour to a suit to make them more fun,” he said.

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