

# Tanning Company Innovates the Industry Using Sustainable Chromium Free Technology and by Digitizing its Material Samples

## Customer Profile Information

**COMPANY NAME:**  
Italeather Company Limited

**COMPANY WEBSITE:**  
[www.ital leather.com](http://www.ital leather.com)

Material Exchange  
Public Digital Profile:

<https://library.material-exchange.com/show-company-profile/129>  
Material Exchange Public Digital

**PROFILE QR CODE:**



Italeather has been at the forefront of innovation within the leather industry for many years. The company aims to create a more sustainable leather industry through the incorporation of metal free tanning solutions. Italeather has a global network of partners including, H&M, Reformation and Jack Rogers, and are well recognised within Chinese markets for their approach to sustainability.

*“We understand the earth’s resources are depleting at an alarming rate, we are committed to help build a more sustainable and transparent leather goods supply chain for the future,”*

**Francis Tsang,**  
owner of Italeather.

*“The traditional leather industry is a recycling process; the industry uses raw hides, a bi-product from the meat industry that would usually be wasted. We understand that vegetarians would not use leather products, but we see it as a more eco-friendly alternative to man-made products,”*

**Francis Tsang,**  
owner of Italeather.

*“If we can comply with the rules of sustainable initiatives and work successfully, it will influence other leather producers to follow, we can set a good model for others to be more sustainable. Many brands are now looking for more sustainable products because of pressure from consumers. The world is changing, we work with a leading baby stroller company in the US, and they only buy chrome free materials because it is more ethical and safer for babies,”*

**Francis Tsang,**  
owner of Italeather.

## **Chromium Free Leather Reduces Metal Waste and Environmental Pollution**

Italeather (owner of EcoCare Leather®) specialises in Chrome Free™ leather products for the footwear, apparel, baby stroller and luggage industries. The industry is currently undergoing a dramatic change in technological advancement. The industry has a problem with pollution, mainly metal waste going into landfills and the environment. Chrome Free™ leather moves away from traditional chromium tanning systems to use a chromium and metal free tanning system. This significantly reduces metal waste and environmental pollution.

## **Challenges Facing Leather Producers and Manufacturers**

Currently, many organizations are running focused campaigns to take products away from traditional leather and create leather substitutes. These organizations make claims that synthetic leather or Vegan Leather is more environmentally friendly. In this case, many of the chemicals used to create synthetic leather are harmful and generate a lot of pollution. The life span of these products is also much shorter than of real leather products, meaning not only is the initial creation more harmful, but they are required to produce more and more of these products to keep up with demand.

## **Requirements to Achieve Sustainable Development**

The mission of Italeather is to accelerate China’s tanning transition to sustainable leather through chrome free tanning technology, this means to adhere to strict requirements of multiple sustainability initiatives such as ZDHC, to protect water suppliers and reduce the amount of water waste. These initiatives limit the number and amount of chemicals that can be used during the tanning process. Many Chinese leather producers don’t comply with these standards, therefore Italeather, together with Guangdong Tannery, consider it its duty to educate other leather producers and create a sustainable change within the industry.

*“Traveling is not fun anymore!” expresses Francis. Italeather can be just as productive working remotely. “Even when the covid-19 crisis ends, there will be more travel restrictions in place so working digitally and remotely will be a necessity,”*

**Francis Tsang,**  
owner of Italeather.

*“There is no norm anymore, digital technologies will help level the playing field for all businesses, small suppliers can compete with larger ones and have the same opportunities, it will help us all in the future.”*

**Francis Tsang,**  
owner of Italeather.

*“The Material Exchange platform will be a significant part of future plans. Italeather have the ability to produce Chrome Free™ leather in great numbers, and Material Exchange will give us the ability to expand our network and create more business opportunities outside of China.”*

**Francis Tsang,**  
owner of Italeather.

## Future Challenges

Pricing is so competitive in China which means margins are so small, therefore there is limited investment in R&D. This is frustrating for many businesses in China, because they have very innovative products, some that are superior to those produced in Europe, but they have limited success selling these products and limited investment in further advancing these materials. Pollution is also an issue, there is much pressure to change the way the industry operates, the current situation cannot continue. Consumers are increasing pressure on the industry to change and move to more sustainable products like Chrome Free™ leather. Small changes can make a big difference, we need to make a change.

## The Market Has to Adapt to the New Norms

Francis anticipates. The footwear and apparel industries, may reconsider if travel is really necessary for their staff. In addition, global economies will take a number of years to recover, meaning the investment and budgets set aside for travel will not be available. Furthermore, a growing number of people are now environmentally oriented and understand the impact on the planet. Francis adds:

## Opportunities are Realized Through Innovation

Italeather decided to make a step towards its digital transformation and get ready for the future of the fashion industry. It joined Material Exchange to continue its international trade and connect with brands even in times of restricted travel. It also contributes greatly to reducing costs and the environmental impact of sending physical material books across continents. “The Material Exchange platform will be a significant part of future plans. Italeather have the ability to produce Chrome Free™ leather in great numbers, and Material Exchange will give us the ability to expand our network and create more business opportunities outside of China.” Francis concludes.