

Ningbo Companies on the Global Stage

Ningbo Manufacturers Navigate Global Shifts with Innovation and Adaptability

By Jin Lu

As the first major trade show of the year for China's foreign trade sector, the 33rd East China Fair reflected shifting dynamics in the global market. With the latest round of U.S. tariff hikes taking effect and consumer trends evolving at an unprecedented pace, 232 companies from Ningbo, spread across 352 booths, pressed ahead despite the challenges.

Forging Ahead with Innovation

At the Xinhai Technology Group booth, curious visitors repeatedly flicked a lighter that was just 2.83mm thick. Each time, its flame remained steady, unwavering at exactly 2cm in height.

Behind this precise, stable flame is the resilience of one Ningbo manufacturer. After eight years of research and a 60-million-yuan investment, the company mastered advanced flame stabilization technology, becoming the first in China to produce lighters that meet European and American safety standards.

"But this is just one of our many products," the sales manager said with a smile. Committed to both safety and style, the company has expanded into kitchen and outdoor ignition tools, producing flames that burn at up to 1,300°C—ideal for grilling meats and caramelizing desserts. By introducing new applications, the company has sparked fresh demand and unlocked new growth opportunities.

Breaking barriers isn't just about technology—it also requires bold decisions and the willingness to start over.

In another conversation, a representative from Ningbo Qisen Technology recalled a pivotal moment in the company's history.

In 2018, the company invested 5 million yuan to develop 5G smart vending ma-



Private enterprises in Ningbo. [Photo by Yin Cong]

chines for hotels. But as market demand shifted, so did their strategy. They pivoted to household goods, a move that redefined their business.

Today, Qisen holds more than 100 patents and has built a consulting-based sales model tailored to Amazon sellers.

"See? What seemed like a forced transformation was actually a fresh start," the representative said with a grin.

Adapting to New Demand

At the Yuyao Jadeshine Company booth, a crowd of Japanese and Korean buyers gathered around, inspecting a pet bed made from cooling fabric, running their fingers over its texture. One Korean businessman said to his colleague, "This fabric—it feels like touching freshly-fallen snow."

His words, translated into Chinese, brought a smile to sales manager Xiao Zhu. She knew it: another potential order was in the works.

"The pet industry has seen rapid growth in recent

years, and demand for pet supplies is booming. While we originally focused on home textiles like cushions and rugs, we've expanded into pet products," Xiao explained.

The pet market is booming globally. In 2020, Japan's pet industry was valued at \$11.8 billion, spanning everything from medical care to food and supplies. The pet supplies sector alone accounted for \$1.679 billion, with steady growth set to persist.

South Korea is witnessing a similar trend. According to Gmarket, a popular shopping site in South Korea, 69% of sales in the pet food and infant formula category came from pet products in the first five months of 2024. Interestingly, sales of pet strollers surpassed those of baby strollers for the first time in the first three quarters of 2023.

A few booths away, at Ningbo Createvalue Holdings Group, a nylon folding spoon was catching eyes. With a flick, the handle collapsed like a falling leaf, neatly nesting a spoon, spatula, and ladle into one compact piece.

"Camping enthusiasts love

this design—it saves space. We also love it because it reduces shipping costs by 60%," the sales manager said, showing a product demonstration video on his phone. Even after 2,000 instances of high-temperature exposure, the handle remains in perfect condition.

These product innovations highlight Ningbo manufacturers' ability to think outside the box and stay ahead of emerging global trends

Finding Certainty Amidst Uncertainty

In the face of tariff barriers, shifting consumer trends, and stringent international certifications, some see crisis, while others spot opportunity.

Innovation, all-in-one solutions, diversified market strategies, and the ability to tell a compelling story during negotiations—these are the keys to future success.


At the fair's opening ceremony, Ji Shengjun, President of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export, noted that business practice innovation has strengthened China's

export resilience in today's ever-changing global economy. He emphasized that to compete in established markets like Japan, businesses must refine their market positioning, differentiate themselves through strategic product selection, and focus on material and design details to stand out.

Meanwhile, Liu Guangjun, Vice President of Alibaba.com for the China region, underscored the role of digital intelligence in cross-border trade.

"AI-optimized product listings see a 37% increase in overseas exposure, significantly boosting their chances of discovery and purchase by international buyers. This is a direct example of how technology is transforming export trade," he said.

As the interview concluded, a remark from a Jadeshine executive stood out, "Young people love raising cats and dogs these days—so isn't that just another new market?"

Turning social shifts into business opportunities—this quiet yet powerful survival instinct is what drives Ningbo's private sector towards success. 

Made in Ningbo: The Factory Producing Official Oscar-Themed Statuettes

By Zhao Yu

While the 97th Academy Awards unfolded in Hollywood on March 3 at 8:00 AM Beijing time, across the Pacific in Ningbo's Qianwan New Area, production lines at Ningbo Fasibo Sports Goods Co., Ltd. were running at full speed. One by one, Oscar statuette replicas rolled off the assembly line, destined for film industry celebrations and collectors worldwide.

"The company produces 5,000 to 8,000 statuettes, with an annual output of 1.2 to 1.5 million," said general manager Xie Xiangyu, overseeing the production facility.

Fasibo is the world's only authorized manufacturer of Oscar-themed commemorative statuettes. Since late last year, the factory has been working at full capacity to meet soaring orders. These statuettes are shipped to Hollywood as decoration at the award ceremony and sold as official licensed merchandise.

"While these figurines aren't made of real gold, their production process embodies the highest standards," said Xie. Each statuette, approximately 16 centimeters tall, features a radiant finish and weighs over 700 grams (about 1.5 pounds).

To ensure premium quality, both the base material and coating must meet strict safety standards. "Each statuette undergoes more than ten specialized processes, including vacuum coating, ion cleaning, and cold work hardening. These steps ensure a uniform color, a durable finish, and a flawlessly smooth surface," Xie explained.

Founded in 2008, Fasibo specializes in trophies, medals, commemorative sculptures, and other sports and cultural memorabilia. Its products are sold in dozens of countries and regions and are used in high-profile international events.

Last year, Fasibo-made trophies were exported to France as official merchandise for the Paris Olympics, further cementing the company's global presence. With an annual output value exceeding 70 million yuan, the company continues to expand.

"To meet growing demand, we've added two flexible production lines this year, set to go into operation this month," Xie revealed.

SPOTLIGHT

Humanoid robot takes a stride in Ningbo

By Jin Yuhan

The Zhejiang Humanoid Robot Innovation Center, located in Haishu district, Ningbo, has made significant strides with its "NAVIAI 2" humanoid robot.

Co-founded by Professor Xiong Rong of Zhejiang University and several industry partners, the center announced that the robot, which is roughly the same size and weight as an adult, has achieved stable bipedal walking, placing it at the forefront of national technology.

In early March, "NA-

VIAI 2" was seen walking near Ningbo Railway Station, moving with natural arm swings and graceful steps. Passersby were amazed, with some commenting on the potential for robots in elderly care.

While other humanoid robots have displayed dance moves, "NAVIAI 2" has still only mastered walking, which is complex due to its full-sized design. According to Mr Zhang, an algorithm engineer at the center, creating a humanoid robot that matches an adult's size presented significant technical challenges. Their team worked tirelessly to overcome these hurdles, successfully ad-

vancing their timeline by two months.

The training process involved capturing human motion data and mapping it onto the robot through algorithms and physical simulation technology. This advancement allows the robot to navigate surfaces such as concrete and asphalt at up to 1.5 meters per second.

Since its debut last August, "NAVIAI 2" has already been equipped with a "brain" capable of drawing inferences and "dexterous hands" that can screw bolts and carry objects.

The center's next target is the robot's abilities to run,



The "NAVIAI 2" humanoid robot works at a factory.

[Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

jump, and interact with people, ensuring stability and safety. The "NAVIAI 2" robot is also being integrated into research, education, smart retail, and in-

telligent manufacturing sectors.

This year, the center opened a factory in Haishu, set to start mass-producing hundreds of humanoid robots by April.

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