

ukft

Show Report | Pitti Uomo

9th – 12th January 2018



UKFT's 2018 round-the-world tradeshow tour started with Pitti Uomo and another record-breaking 106 British exhibitors. Pitti Uomo is well established as *the* international menswear tradeshow with key buyers coming from all over the world. Pitti Uomo is the key trend show for the menswear industry and space was especially tight, with a long waiting list for show space.

The British exhibitors showed in all sections of the show with especially strong numbers in the Touch, Salone M and Pop Up areas. There were a number of interesting British newcomers at the show: Tyler and Tyler accessories from Birmingham, Workhouse England, Bav Tailor and Monc London to name but four and this season Belstaff launched its return to UK manufacturing which was well received.

Attendance at the show was generally very good. Key international buyers were out in force and buying, with many actually placing orders on the stands. This trend is confirmed by the organisers' official figures which highlight a net increase (+2.5%) compared to last January, making a total of almost 25,000 buyers at the fair (over 600 more than a year ago), with the overall number of visitors exceeding 36,000.

"It was a very positive outcome in terms of the numbers and the extremely lively atmosphere we have experienced over the last few days", says Raffaello Napoleone, CEO of Pitti Immagine. "The immediate feedback emphasizes the dynamic feeling in the Fortezza. Obviously added to this is the solid satisfaction for the number and importance of the buyers attending: all the best shops and international department stores were here. A new international fashion season has started from Florence and has done so in the best possible way".

+4% growth was recorded for foreign buyers - with over 9,200 +international buyers in total - with excellent performances by South Korea (+14%), Russia (+31%), France (+3.5%), Netherlands (+15%), Japan (+3%), United States (+20% in terms of the number of shops), Turkey (+23%), Austria (+8%) and Portugal. Relatively new markets like Mexico, Australia, Brazil and India did very well; as far as the countries in northern Europe were concerned, the results for Norway and Finland stood out in particular (the latter was this edition's Guest Nation), but probably most surprising were the exploits of the whole area of Eastern Europe (Poland doubled its buyers, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia), followed by the Balkans (Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia), ending with Estonia in the Baltic area.

There was also a comforting growth in the figures for the Italian market (+1.5%), with around 15,750 registered buyers.

The ranking of the 15 most important Pitti Uomo markets saw the return of Japan (823 buyers) to first place followed by Germany (816), United Kingdom (604), Netherlands (575), Spain (565), Turkey (472), France (429), China (320), Switzerland (307), South Korea (302), United States (301), Russia (273), Belgium (255), Austria (176) and Sweden (171).

British exporters generally reported good contacts and excellent business, which surpassed their expectations. Some said that they had experienced a feeling of reluctance or caution from new EU customers to engage with them in the context of Brexit and many are now quoting their business in Euros. Next season, some have also started to follow UKFT's advice to look at alternative shipping strategies to mainland Europe and give reassurances to customers about their willingness to work together to surmount any obstacles which come their way in 2019.

There was a lot of interest and exceedingly positive feedback from press and buyers for the new features at the Fortezza da Basso – such as the Athlovers project in collaboration with Reda, Guest Nation Finland, the up-and-coming brands in the Tokyo Fashion Award, as well as this edition's many premieres and debuts in the various fair sections and the finale of the International Woolmark Prize, of which the menswear winner was the UK's Matthew Miller.

UKFT had its usual stand in Salone M where we saw a number of key international buyers including Shins Japan, United Arrows, Saks Fifth Avenue and others. The Department of International Trade (DIT) in China and the USA also organised specific events aimed at targeting and encouraging buyers

from their country to visit the UK brands. Both were extremely well received and very popular with exhibitors.

DIT China launched its WeChat App for the Brits in Florence, building on a soft launch at London Fashion Week Men's the weekend before. The promotion was the brainchild of Lexie Morris of the British Consulate in Shanghai and supported on the ground by Ben Goodwin and Xinyun "Max" Jiang. WeChat is used by all private and professional individuals in China and is an extremely powerful tool, performing similar functions as WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram, including a B2C sales function. Unlike its Western equivalents, it can operate both sides of the Great Firewall of China. With active support and collaboration from UKFT, DIT China invited all 106 British brands to have a page on the App, for Chinese buyers to visit. The page was translated into Chinese and each participating exhibitor was given a WeChat QR code for their stand so that buyers from China could immediately access the pages in their own language and connect. In addition, DIT China hosted a party at the Grand Hotel Baglioni, where the participating brands were given the opportunity to meet and connect with approximately 20 buyers and decision-makers from China.

DIT USA accompanied a number of buyers to the show, including the new men's and accessories teams from Saks Fifth Avenue. The buyers were looked after and accompanied by Ashley Bell from the British Consulate in New York and they were given information by UKFT on all the British brands showing.

Paul Alger, director of international business development at UKFT commented: "This has been another very positive Pitti Uomo with most of our exhibitors reporting excellent contacts with new and existing buyers and press. The UK remains the second largest group after the home country and we add something edgier and quirkier to the show, alongside some wonderful British heritage and design. All the signs are that UKFT's Brits in Florence are here to stay."