



UKFT Berlin Fashion Week Report

27-30 June 2016

Berlin Fashion Week is a loose collection of independent trade shows in Germany's capital. In addition, there is a catwalk activity alongside, organised by the Fashion Council of Germany. Very few trade professionals are based in Berlin and the static shows are their main reason for travelling to Berlin. Until a few seasons ago, this was a vibrant international fashion week with buyers and press coming from around the world. With the demise of the Bread and Butter tradeshow in 2015, Berlin Fashion Week has become more regional and national. The Japanese and American buyers have all but dropped away, preferring Florence and Paris with its broader offer and even the UK buyers had decided it was probably not worth the trip. Over time this has affected the international brands at the show with fewer of them opting to show. As a result, there were approximately 20 fewer brands in Berlin this season from the UK, making a total of 80.

Whilst the traffic was down on previous seasons, Berlin remains an important meeting point for German and Eastern European buyers. Most agreed that the show dates were two weeks too early, playing into the hands of the competition in Munich and Düsseldorf but the Germans like Berlin and there was much interest in the news of a B2C Bread and Butter event in Berlin in September which many said they would like to visit. A vibrant Berlin Fashion Week brings prestige to the capital and Germany wants Berlin to be an international fashion capital.

The main events at Berlin Fashion Week:

Panorama (mainstream and commercial womenswear with some menswear)

The show has a very German feel to it but has managed to keep a number of UK brands including the Oxford Shirt Company and much of the commercial high street. Almost all the stands were organised and run by German agents. This show is not part of the Premium Group and operates a separate entrance policy.

The Ethical Fashion Fair and Green Showroom

The world's only serious remaining ethical fashion shows. Organised by Frankfurt Messe in Berlin it has a strong UK following and a very loyal German and Northern European customer base. UK exhibitors included People Tree, Komodo, Braintree and Beaumont Organic. Many of the stands were organised and run by German agents. The British group was smaller than in the past and the show has become a little more mainstream. There is a common entrance arrangement with Premium/Seek/Bright.

Show and Order (quality mainstream womenswear and accessories).

This is a smaller mainstream show but with slightly more expensive collections. The show also feels very German but there is a good selection of accessories and jewellery unlike many other German shows. UK brands include Amadoria and Leju Jewellery, Glen Prince, Hayley Menzies and Onjenu. There is a common entrance arrangement with Premium/Seek/Bright.

Premium (premium womenswear, sportswear, accessories and jewellery with a small edited menswear section).

Still the new anchor for Berlin Fashion Week, this show has a broad mix of brands from the UK from Alex Monroe, Daks, Harris Wharf, Johnstons of Elgin and French Connection. Many of the stands were organised and run by German agents. There were two new additions from the UK: Saltwater Sandals and Temple London who worked very well. This season saw the launch of a very good Premium Group App to help buyers to navigate their shows.

Seek

The casual show for menswear and womenswear in Berlin albeit with a stronger menswear and heritage presence. UK brands included Afield (formerly TukTuk), Gola, Burd's, Solovair and Icon Brand. There is a shuttle bus connecting Seek with Premium. The show also interconnects with Bright. This was probably the busiest of the Berlin shows and, for many, it represents the future Berlin Fashion Week: casual and urban with a string international flavour.

Bright

The skatewear show connected with Seek but, strangely, it remains the poor relation in terms of presentation and communication. Traffic was much quieter than at nearby Seek and yet it was less than 10 steps away! UK exhibitors include Mi.Pac, Hype and Jeepers Peepers.

In addition, there was a very well presented high-end heritage and jeanswear show named Selvedge Run in north-east Berlin. This show is already popular with UK brands such as Private White VC, Croots England, Trickers, Universal Works and Simmons Bilt. The show is different from the others as it is very niche, appealing more to Japanese and American tastes and budgets. The show was well laid out and organized and was reminiscent of the heritage-inspired L.O.C.K. (labels of common kin) section at Bread and Butter.

Whilst traffic was down at most of the shows, the UK exhibitors reported that they had made good new contacts. This was the first major fashion event following the UK's IN/OUT referendum on the EU and nearly all the conversations at the shows revolved around Brexit. In Germany, the general feeling from most of the buyers was they were very sorry see the UK vote to leave the EU and struggled to comprehend the reasons. Almost without exception, the UK companies were shocked and bewildered with many of them concerned for their businesses. In the end, buyers did not boycott the UK but many of them wanted reassurances on currency volatility and how the UK would access the market in the longer term.

UKFT spent a lot of time helping companies to understand the ramifications of Brexit (both the negative and the positive) and explaining the reasons behind the vote to local contacts. UKFT advised the companies on the importance of protecting themselves from exchange-rate volatility and, for those manufacturing outside the UK, on how to plan their distribution to enable them to access the single market in the (likely) event that a UK-EU free trade deal were possible. For many that might be the creation of an EU distribution hub but some might also have to reconsider where they manufacture and domicile their business.. On a more positive note, many Germans said they were looking forward to visiting the UK this year as London, in particular, will be a cheaper place to be and shop – especially this year.

Paul Alger, director of international business development at UKFT said: *"Berlin Fashion Week remains a key date in the German fashion calendar and I have been delighted at the positive and friendly way in which German retailers continue to work with UK brands. Brexit is a huge shock for our industry and the UK needs to reaffirm its role as a trusted fashion and business partner. There will inevitably be rocky times ahead but it is essential that we remain engaged and alert to what Brexit means for business"*.

On the subject of the German market, Alger continued: *"The German market is changing. There are now fewer multi-brand retailers and agents than before but there is huge amount of interest from online retailers as well as buyers from Eastern Europe, including Russia. It is important that we take a long-term view of our presence at Berlin Fashion Week and possibly other markets including Düsseldorf and Munich which are major players"*.

For further information about exhibiting in Berlin, [contact us](#).