

Brits In Florence



UKFT Pitti Uomo Report

June 2017

The summer edition of Pitti Uomo has always been the quieter of the two for most brands, added to which global terrorist attacks, concern about the US economy and uncertainty around Brexit had made for an uncertain business outlook in the run-up to the SS18 shows. Whilst the January show had ended on a euphoric note, many of the orders promised did not materialise. For all these reasons, companies had modest expectations of the summer edition.

It was therefore received with great delight that the 92nd edition of Pitti Uomo took place in a spirit of positivity and optimism with a large number of companies reporting that orders had been written at the show. One important reason for this could be the reluctance of some buyers, especially from the USA, Japan and China to commit to travel to London and Paris which are seen as targets for terrorism. To date, no major Italian city has been subject to a major attack, to the advantage of Florence.

Whilst the general feeling was that there was not the buzz of the previous winter edition, the organisers recorded over 30,000 visitors to the show, of which 19,400 were buyers. The international attendance was up on the previous year - itself a record - but the Italian presence was down by -9%. Most of the growth came from outside Europe: Japan was up +4%, South Korea +5%, Australia +9.5% and Canada +13%. Russia was up by +10%, an encouraging sign from a market which has underperformed for a few years, due to the US and EU sanctions. This increase came as especially good news for Italian brands who used to depend on Russia for an important part of their sales and production and hoped that this would be so again.

The downturn in Italian numbers had been predicted as the Italian retail scene continues to suffer from sluggish sales and an aggressive tax regime. Raffaello Napoleone, CEO of Pitti Uomo also claimed that the transport strike which took place on the Thursday and Friday of the show impacted on the numbers of Italian visitors. Certainly, Italian day-trippers who had planned to visit the show on Thursday or Friday would have had to review or cancel their plans. The strike also affected the exhibitors themselves, who were due to leave Florence on Friday afternoon and evening. The drop in Italian visitors and the corresponding drop in buzz also explains why many UK exhibitors felt that this was a more business-like Pitti.

The EU markets remained largely stable in terms of numbers with buyers reported as being cautious but there are encouraging signs of growth throughout most of the Eurozone, with the exception of Italy. Spain and the Netherlands increased by +2% and +3% respectively. With these figures, Pitti Uomo remains the largest and most important international menswear show.

This year saw a summer record of 100 UK exhibitors at the show, 10 of which received TAP grants from the Department of International Trade through the UK Fashion & Textile Association. The UK is the largest international group after the host country, closely followed by France with 82 brands. However, in the run-up to the show, UKFT noted that there was a downturn in the number of new brands applying for space at the show. One possible explanation for this is that companies have been consistently rejected by Pitti Uomo on either stylistic or, more frequently, space grounds. Some of these companies have now likely lost faith in the Pitti selection and space allocation process, concentrating on Paris - where we have seen an increase in new exhibitor interest - precisely because the application process is quicker and easier. Lack of space for new talents and a complicated application process is Pitti Uomo's main Achilles heel. Whilst Pitti Uomo still has a reputation for being the home of menswear, Paris still attracts most of the new cutting edge designer collections, particularly in the shows and showrooms in the Marais - see UKFT's report on Paris Men's Fashion Week.

The buyer figures for the Pitti Uomo top 20 were: Germany (825 buyers), Japan (↑825), Spain (↑640) United Kingdom (↓507), Netherlands (↑435), China (↓385), France (↑363), Switzerland (↑296), Turkey (↑369), United States (↑276), South Korea (↑241), Belgium (↑268), Russia (↑219), Austria (↑174), Portugal (↑148), Sweden (↑144), Greece (~128), Denmark (~116), Canada (↑103). Poland was a new entry at (↑96) and Hong Kong fell out of the top 20.

There were a number of layout changes at Pitti Uomo this year. The *Touch* section moved to the Padiglione Medici, placing it immediately after the turnstiles and substantially increasing the flow of traffic. *Make* was moved out of Sala Alfa into the Sala della Ronda, between the popular Sala delle Nazioni and *Open*. Both moves were popular with exhibitors. Overall, the traffic worked well at the show and the changes to parts of the layout had the advantage of obliging buyers to walk the show a little more than usual. Very unusually, one new UK exhibitor was placed in the wrong section of the show, alongside cheaper and more casual collections. UKFT is in communication with the show organisers to remedy this for next year.

Overall, the trend of the show remains less about formal and tailored collections and more about accessories and mono-product. Ready-to-wear collections at Pitti continue to be predominantly casual and designer, in that order, rather than formal although there remain some Italian tailored collections on the top floor of the central pavilion and in the small but nevertheless competing Baglioni Uomo show at the Grand Hotel Baglioni. The *Classico Italia* Italian men's tailoring section shows little sign of growing and the number of British companies featuring tailoring is small.

Of special importance to the UKFT Brits In Florence group of exhibitors this year were the PS by Paul Smith installation at Pitti Uomo attended by Sir Paul himself and the Save the Duck collaboration with Christopher Raeburn. There was also a JW Anderson catwalk show. Paul Alger, leading the group said: "This has been an extremely positive and enjoyable summer Pitti Uomo. Most of our exhibitors have been delighted with the contacts they have made and some have reported the best summer Pitti ever. Not only have they seen great buyers and agents but most have also written orders at the show!"

Drapers interviewed Sir Paul Smith, who summed up many of the challenges facing the industry and how Pitti Uomo offers a ray of hope for the future of menswear: "Pitti attracts a large quantity of people who have individual shops and...they can just find a beltmaker or a shoemaker – that's what makes shops interesting. Most of the main streets around the world are so homogenised that you don't know whether you are in Paris or Milan or New York, so I'm a big supporter of individual shops. I love independents." This sentiment was echoed by a number of UK companies working hard in a market which is increasingly reluctant to invest in new brands. The universal consensus remains that the market is challenging for newcomers, as Department Stores do not habitually buy into new collections and the smaller independents which traditionally do give brands their first breaks are ever fewer in number.

But tradeshows still have an important role to play and Pitti Uomo is an excellent meeting place for overseas stores looking at new and existing brands, as it attracts the best wholesale, retail and online buyers.

UK exhibitor quotes

Hilary Freeman of UK footwear manufacturer Edward Green, a regular exhibitor in *Salone M*: "This Pitti Uomo was a fabulous fair. We saw lots of new and existing customers. Each year it gets better and better!"

Jonathan Boston of accessories brand Ettinger, showing at Pitti for the first time in the *Piano Attico Pop Up*: "This was a truly international show for us with positive outcomes all round and buyers from 13 different countries. We saw the best independent and department stores and had some interesting conversations with potential agents for the brand".

Nosa Kingsley-Osa of Nosakhari in *Make*: "Nosakhari accessories had a great show at Pitti Uomo and our products and our brand were well received by the buyers. We also met a number of agents and distributors. Upon our return to the UK, the follow up has been really positive".

Maurice Greig of Hardy & Parsons in *Salone M Pop Up*: "Pitti was great, I loved the location of my pop-up stand and took some very nice orders from new and existing customers. I shall definitely be back.

Roshini Aluwihare of Codis Maya, recently relocated to *Salone M*: "Showing at Pitti Uomo is absolutely essential if you want to meet the world of international menswear. Where else could you meet so many influential buyers from around the globe under one roof?"

The many British brands exhibiting in Florence during fashion week make up the Brits In Florence group. For information on show grants and to become one of the Brits In Florence, [get in touch](#).

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