

International Trade Shows Tout Sustainability While Offering More Compelling Exhibits

Material and product innovation as well as putting into practice sustainable measures is the focus of most of the trade shows this coming season. BY WWD STAFF

The international trade show calendar for the second half reflects an industry in the midst of unprecedented change as fashion apparel, accessories, textiles and luxury companies – as well as various stakeholders – grapple with increasing their sustainability quotient while delivering innovation to an over-stored, over-produced and over-marketed market.

And while the spotlight sharply falls on what companies and brands can do to increase their sustainable practices, the need for buyers and sellers to convene face to face has never seemed more important. Yet, attendance, globally, has declined as companies cut costs and rely on technology to connect virtually.

In response, event organizers across Europe and Asia are offering more content and market insights while helping exhibitors showcase compelling products that are relevant to the needs and demands of today's end user.

For the Paris trade circuit, things are getting greener as September will see the introduction of a new show under WSN, the parent company to trade shows Who's Next and Première Classe. Running Sept. 6 to 9 in the same space as Who's Next at Porte de Versailles for its first edition – it is expected to run independently in the future – Impact bills itself as a hybrid between a sustainability-oriented trade show and a festival, bringing together eco-friendly brands and designers alongside workshops, conferences, concerts and special events.

In keeping with WSN director Frédéric Maus' strategy of repositioning trade shows as lifestyle concept-stores, Impact will be completely open to the public.

Over at Première Vision Paris, which will run Sept. 17 to 19, the trade show's sustainability offering has been tweaked to fit with visitors' recurrent questions.

Smart Creation, a platform for innovation and responsible fashion that was first introduced in 2015, will now come with its own physical space, named Smart Square.

"Visitors were curious at the time of the introduction of Smart Creation, but we really felt a shift in the industry's engagement in September 2017 with brands buying into our sustainability offering," said Marina Coutelan, fashion manager at Première Vision.

"The first questions came from brands that wanted to build responsible collections but didn't know where to start, so we developed Smart Services, a platform where consultants, specific organizations and auditing companies help companies get more sustainable. At the beginning, buyers were mainly concerned with organic and recycled material; now, we're aiming to help visitors act at all levels of the production chain."

Smart Square, which will debut with the September 2019 edition of Première Vision Paris, will feature new sustainable dyeing and finishing techniques as well as

dedicated software and new generations of machinery geared toward fabric optimization and zero waste.

Tranoï, undergoing a management restructuring since the departure of director David Hadida in June, has announced that sustainable initiatives will feature more prominently in the selection of designers featured in the show, which will run Sept. 27 to 30.

"Our selection process for the upcoming editions will necessarily include upcycling, eco- and ethical responsibility, but also repositioning artisanal craft as the new luxury," said Diane Lepel Cointet, Tranoï's newly appointed marketing and operations director.

Among the selected brands for the next edition are Arthur Avellano, who works with latex as a substitute for leather, alongside Hyères festival finalist and upcycling-focused designer Tang Tsung Chien.

Lastly, after putting the spotlight on zero waste design for its February edition, biotech and biodesign will be the main focus of Avantex Paris, running Sept. 16 to 19.

Meanwhile, in Italy, supporting "Made in Italy," especially the small and medium-sized enterprises, is key to the numerous Italian trade shows. Organizers, in addition to offering business opportunities, also want to act as system-building platforms to effectively face economic uncertainties, a flat domestic expenditure and the need for constant innovation.

Italian tanneries' association Unic, the organizer of the Lineapelle leather trade show, is facing a global downturn of the category, hit by a decrease in sales of automotive-destined hides, unstable international trade agreements and incidental bad weather conditions affecting the quality of leather hides.

"This year opened on a negative trend and it is not showing signs of recovery, which of course is penalizing," explained Fulvia Bacchi, general director of Lineapelle-Unic.

Product-wise, Bacchi contended that "the market is increasingly asking for standardized leather, without flaws, resulting in a de-personalization of the product itself." While acknowledging that a strong attention to alternative materials is also denting the sector, Bacchi underscored man-made substitutes are often more polluting than leather-related processes. To this end, she aims for the fair to be a source of inspiration to address the industry with a green approach.

The upcoming edition of Lineapelle, running Oct. 2 to 4, will put innovation under the spotlight: In keeping with its commitment to show the industry's sustainable efforts, Bacchi noted that the second edition of the Innovation Square project will further showcase innovative solutions for both products and technology. In addition, the trade show organizer plans to install a dedicated corner at the Milano-Rho fairground entirely dedicated to the circular economy,

with a number of exhibiting companies committed to the subject.

Despite the negative circumstance, Bacchi said exhibitors of the fair are growing every season and she expects the number to exceed 1,300 companies in October. "The fact that the fair gathers so many players confirms that Lineapelle represents the ideal place to discover new market trends and the direction the industry is taking," she noted with optimism.

Also acting as a mouthpiece for its associates, Assopellettieri is committed to further spearhead negotiations for the leather goods and accessories sector, while also boosting the relevance of the Mipel TheBagShow trade show, taking place Sept. 15 to 18.

"We are committed to being the right speakers about the system's politics and dynamics, working for a collective negotiation with the government, [driving] the system to act cohesively and for the recruitment of a new workforce," explained Danny D'Alessandro, chief executive officer and general manager of Mipel.

The executive outlined the challenges and opportunities the industry is facing, noting that in the three months ended March 31, the sector "continued to grow at a constant pace, but showed two different speeds with a decrease in quantity and an uptick in value of exported goods," he said. While luxury players drive the increase "for the whole country's economy, not only for fashion," D'Alessandro said, the scenario is affecting especially the small and medium-sized companies running their own brands.

D'Alessandro attributed the struggles to a flat expenditure in the domestic market and the assets required to compete on foreign markets. "As the organizers of the fair, we're committed to supporting SMEs that represent the weakest contingent of the sector," he noted.

In keeping with its support to young talents, Mipel will further expand its Scenario area dedicated to emerging designers and plans to install the third edition of the Tailor Made project, matching designers with established leather-goods manufacturers for the creation of capsule collections. D'Alessandro also said that in September the project would further try to combine the needs of manufacturers, buyers, as well as final customers.

Given that sustainability is a strong focus for the entire fashion and apparel pipeline, Mipel will dedicate its 116th edition to the subject. "We are not stating we're sustainable, but we are definitely committed to that mandate," D'Alessandro said. "It's a crucial issue also business-wise, as you need to be eco-friendly if you want to address certain markets." Asia is a strong focus for the fair's organizer, as one of the best-performing markets, in addition

to the U.S. and Germany.

Innovation and sustainability are also key to the Milano Unica textile trade show and for the fourth edition in a row the fair – running July 9 to 11 – will spotlight these topics.

President Ercole Botto Poala noted that the trade show is committed to delivering the message that "sustainability should be addressed – as much as quality, services and creativity – as a tool that has already secured a place on the market for the companies that embraced it." He underscored that the Italian textile business is often lacking in terms of process-related green assets. "Our clients all implemented different sustainable models and we are constantly asked to align with them, while the goal would be to establish shared and recognized standards," Botto Poala explained.

Product-wise, Botto Poala offered that among the long-term objectives for the industry "the 'megatrend' of customization will play a pivotal role, as end-customers are dictating more and more their needs and companies throughout the pipeline should adapt," he said.

Last February Milano Unica launched a business-to-business marketplace with the digital support of Pitti Immagine and opened to 60 companies aimed at promoting the match between its exhibitors and their clients. According to Botto Poala, the platform, which will be extended to other firms in July, has proved particularly appealing for smaller textile firms and clients unable to meet at the fair.

"Our industry is made up of SMEs, which have a hard time leveraging technological resources and their usability," Botto Poala said.

In addition, as a result of a sector gathering numerous small producers, "there aren't big players which can act as a lobby," to spearhead negotiations and provide answers to face economic uncertainties, especially in Europe.

In order to support a key topic for the textile sector, Milano Unica will partner with Italy's Ministry of Economic Development to host a series of talks and roundtables on the intellectual and industrial property rights.

"System is an articulated concept, a word often misused, which can really be achieved only if the parties involved share the same business goals," said Massimiliano Bizzi, founder and president of the White Milano trade show.

He stressed his commitment to collaborate with the Italian fashion chamber to boost the relevance of the city's fashion weeks has proved successful, "but this is not the case with all the players in the country's fashion industry."

The September edition of White Milano, ▶



Fifth Blossom
Première Vision
trade show in Paris.

International Trade Shows Tout Sustainability

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running Sept. 19 to 22, will welcome Japanese designer Munenori Uemuro – a former Jil Sander creative studio associate – as the trade show's special guest. Bizzi said the move is part of his "ongoing scouting activities, aimed at offering designer fashion that has commercial relevance."

Bizzi noted the moment might be fruitful for contemporary fashion brands to complement luxury labels. "For the fashion industry as a whole it's not a good moment, retailers share negative feedbacks, but the smaller brands that had lost visibility can fill the gap left by fast fashion, which is starting to become less appealing for consumers," he contended.

For the June edition dedicated to the men's collections, White Milano will further adjust its compass. Running June 15 to 17 and expected to attract 15,000 visitors, the White Street Market format will change its name to WSM. As part of a functional marketing move, the 'S' becomes polyvalent acquiring the meaning of street, sportswear, as well as sustainability – three pillars for White Milano.

Partnering with Confartigianato Imprese, the Italian association gathering artisanal SMEs, and with the Italian fashion chamber, White Milano aims to build an integrated fashion system to promote synergic collaborations

between SMEs and big brands, including Vivienne Westwood, which will showcase a range of sustainable-related projects at the fair.

In Germany, there's newfound relevancy emerging. As whatever industry-relevance Germany's flagship fashion event – Berlin Fashion Week – had left is slowly stripped away, the country's various trade fairs remain steadfast and, in many cases, appear to be thriving. Some German events recorded record numbers of exhibitors and visitors, others boasted of new plans and bigger spaces.

In early May, TechTextil, a fair for high-tech fabrics used in everything from garments to vehicles and held biannually in Frankfurt, broke its own records with more than 1,800 exhibitors from 59 countries and 47,000 visitors from 116 nations. Messe München, the firm that organizes the sports and outdoor wear-oriented ISPO shows in Germany as well as China, announced best-ever turnover of almost 418 million euros in 2018. Berlin's mainstream apparel exhibition Panorama saw a 20 percent increase in visitors in January and Beauty Düsseldorf, counted a record 58,000 guests from 76 countries.

Looking ahead, the Gallery Düsseldorf apparel and accessories trade fair will be expanding the hall space dedicated to footwear and accessories by around a third in July. In Berlin, Panorama plans to start a new section for special events clothing, such as balls, graduations and weddings. On the other side of town, local company Premium Exhibitions, which runs three fashion trade shows – Seek, Show & Order and Fashiontech, around the Berlin

Fashion Week dates, is working on various adaptations and innovations. These include expanding the space for sustainable fashion and extending the Trade Union concept at the streetwear oriented Seek show; the latter brings specially curated brands and agencies together in a separate space inside the fair. Premium's managing partner, Anita Tillmann, also told local press she would love an opportunity to bring all of the city's events together in one location, perhaps in the disused airport Tempelhof. The venue was previously used for the Bread & Butter streetwear trade show, which was put on hold by its new owners, the e-commerce platform Zalando, at the end of 2018.

"The business has changed," Tillmann explained to WWD why she and her staff have been pushing exhibitors to be more creative on their stands. "We no longer just trade T-shirts and business cards. We trade content, emotions, relationships. That is something we are doing differently here. The more digital we get, the more important human relationships are."

It's clear that, in terms of German fashion retail, most of the cheques are still signed and business done in places like Düsseldorf, even while the Berlin events always get more media attention. Also clear is that the various Berlin trade shows make the capital's ever-shrinking Fashion Week – it lost sponsors in 2017 and a side event, the Berliner Salon, this year – more relevant than it would be if it was happening on its own.

This may be part of the reason why an inevitable pivot to more commercially viable, in-season runway shows has also started in Berlin. Straight after the summer 2020 shows

in the city, Hamburg-based e-tailer About You will run a special customer-focused event in the city between July 5 and 7. The About You Fashion Week will include in-season runway shows, stylist consultations and a concept store for around 5,000 guests.

Over in Asia, Fashion World Tokyo remains Japan's largest fashion trade show, but for a few seasons it seemed like IFF Magic Japan might be making a play to at least become more desirable to exhibitors and visitors, drawing on the experience and buzz worthiness of Magic's Las Vegas fairs. That all came to an end when organizers abruptly canceled the event that had been scheduled for March of this year.

"Due to industry changes, [we] could not meet expectations for the show, including those of exhibitors, and thus after a comprehensive assessment we made the decision to cancel," the company said in a statement at the time.

Prior to the cancellation, IFF Magic Japan had been held twice a year since April 2017. Its fourth and final edition, held last September, drew only 468 exhibitors, a sharp decline from the 700 it had for its first season. Originally called the International Fashion Fair, it has been organized by the Senken newspaper company since 2000, joining forces with Japan Fashion Week in 2008, and partnering with UBM's Magic in 2014.

Since March, UBM launched Project Tokyo in the place of IFF Magic Japan. That smaller fair, focusing on a carefully curated mix of brands and business matchmaking, will be held for the second time in September. ■

JULY

29 (June) - 1

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30 June - 3

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1-6

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4-6

Shenzhen International Trade Fair for Apparel Fabrics and Accessories

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4-6

Fashion SZ Show The 19th China International Fashion Brand Fair

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6-8

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8-11

Hong Kong Fashion Week

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Intertex Milano/Ready to Show

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10-12

China Wedding Expo

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SPOTLIGHT: PREMIUM

Some 60,000 visitors gather each season for the first look at the next trends in contemporary fashion at Premium. Presenting the spring-summer 2020 collections, Premium is the kickoff show highlighting contemporary and advanced fashion internationally. The show kicks off at Station-Berlin July 2 to 4.

As the first trade show of the season, Premium presents the newest industry trends for both men's and women's wear, tallying some 1,800 highly-curated collections. In addition, the all-in-one access will grant attendees entrance into Seek, Show&Order, the FashionTech Berlin exhibition, as well as master classes and networking opportunities.

Channeling contemporary movements such as ethical fashion, brands such as Raeburn, from British designer Christopher Raeburn, will be on display among other innovative brands in fashion and technology.