

Fiercer competition at Italy's fashion fairs**Fiercer competition at Italy's fashion fairs****Florence gets in stronger / New concepts and dates**

Milan(bfai) – Competition grows in the Italian fashion fair scenario. International purchasing agents demand new dates, also the benefits of defilées as marketing instruments are to be discussed. This implies a possible image loss for the fashion city Milan. Inherently at the Milan Prêt-a-Porter-shows, held in September 2007, the number of visitors from overseas decreased. Reason for this are not only the dates, but also the strong Euro against the Yen and US-Dollar. In contrast to this trend small Avant-garde fairs gain ground.

The arduous remained balance of the Italian fashion fairs is swaying. Up to now the fashion city Milan was calling the tune at the Prêt-a-Porter-shows and the ladies' fashion fairs (Milanovenmoda, Milano Moda Donna). In the future this might change. Not only London, Paris and New York are a fierce competition to the fashion city Milan. From now on Florence wants to get in on ladies' fashion and for the first time organises the Pitti W-Woman Precollection from 9 to 12 January 2008. The fair will flank Italy's most important men's fashion fair Pitti Uomo.

Florence will possibly upstage Milan in the future. So far the fashion cities divided the fashion and fashion show business in Italy clearly. Rome was responsible for the Haute Couture and Florence was the longstanding number one for men's (Pitti Uomo) and children's wear (Pitti Bambino).

The beginning totter of the scenario is connected to criticism levelled at the organisation and the ten-day length of the Prêt-a-Porter-fashion show. A variety of purchasing agents closes deals in the show rooms and resigns from the glamour shows. Also numerous fashion purchasers plead for a acceleration of the dates. Because the fashion has become very fast moving the traditional fair dates are outdated.

"Purchasers of men's fashion demand more ladies' fashion, especially in the sporting sector." Explains the president of Pitti Immagine, Gateano Marzotto, the new Pitti W-Woman Precollection. Parallel Florentine fair organiser Pitti Immagine as of recently organises the three small Avant-garde fairs Touch, Neozone and Cloudnine in the new Milan design-quarter at Via Tortona. Neozone shows the most recent tendencies in the luxury and sporting fashion (69 exhibitors), Touch focuses on innovative street wear (49 exhibitors) and Cloudnine is dedicated to accessories (55 exhibitors). The choice of the represented exhibitors at the small Avant-garde fairs is very strict.

Even the shoe fair MICAM with 1,800 exhibitors, that registered a record visitor number of 44,000 purchasers at the past event (20 to 23 September 2007) has accelerated its fair date for the upcoming spring from March to the last week of February. At the end of February 2008 besides the MICAM simultaneously the Prêt-a-Porter-shows and the leather goods fair MIPEL will take place. The vogueish oriented MICAM will also cooperate with the mass ware focused Expo

Riva Schuh, which, according to purchasers, takes place at just the right time (January and July).

The sporting goods fair, which was held for the first time in Bozen in the year 2007 by the professional association of the sporting goods manufacturer Assosport in cooperation with the Fiera Bolzano, major focuses on winter sporting clothes and goods as well as hiking and climbing sports. It replaces the sporting and clothing fair MIAS, formerly held in Milan, which was closed down because of decreasing exhibitor and visitor numbers. "Nearly all Italian manufacturers and purchasing agents are represented at the ISPO in Munich, in Italy there is no potential for a bigger sports fair, just for small specialised fairs. " say association experts.

Contact address:

Pitti Immagine

Via Raenza 11, I-50123 Florence

Phone: 0039 55/3 69 31

E-Mail: dir.generale@pittimmagine.com, Website: <http://www.pittimmagine.com>

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