

PITTI BIMBO BECOMES AN INCREASINGLY INTERNATIONAL JUNCTION: WITH A RISING NUMBER OF EMERGENT MARKETS

Pitti Bimbo 67, the international clothing and accessories fair for infants and children, has confirmed its leading role on the world scene with another successful, energy-charged edition. Over the three days of the event (Florence, 27 – 29 June), 572 collections were presented at the Fortezza da Basso (a new record in terms of exhibitors), there were full houses for all the fashion shows and calendar events, and over 500 journalists and media representatives attended from all over the world. "We have received very positive comments from both exhibitors and buyers visiting the Fortezza", says Raffaello Napoleone, managing director of Pitti Immagine. "Despite the difficult situation experienced on an international level by the biggest, most important countries, marked by falling sales and negative economic trends, the dynamism of the childrenswear sector was strongly felt at Pitti Bimbo: the new projects and innovations featured in the collections were highly appreciated, a sign that the sector is evolving well in terms of production quality, services and methods of consumption".

This edition of Pitti Bimbo brought 7,647 buyers to Florence, almost the same as at the last summer edition (just over 8,100 buyers were recorded in June 2007). Foreign markets held up well – 3,062 buyers, practically unchanged with respect to the last edition, representing 40% of the total number of buyers – with a slight drop in Italians. "The rationalization of the retail system is a physiological factor", continues Raffaello Napoleone, "a generalized phenomenon that is characterizing the fashion scene all over the world. The difficulties experienced by Italian families in terms of consumer spending are also evident in children's fashion which, however, continues to be the most dynamic sector in terms of domestic expenditure". Looking at the trends for foreign markets, there were very positive performances from countries currently enjoying excellent economic health, such as Austria, Switzerland and Belgium, whilst the buyer figures were confirmed for Arab and Middle Eastern countries, as well as Russia and the Eastern bloc (Ukraine, Poland, Czech Republic and Romania). As expected, there was a drop in buyers from Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, the United States and Turkey, all economies affected by the difficult economic situation and widespread consumer crisis. Whilst the number of buyers from Spain returned to the levels seen in previous seasons following the significant, albeit exceptional growth recorded in 2007, the buyer delegations from the Far East rose strongly, with China and South Korea in the lead. An interesting feature was the increase in new markets such as Australia and Brazil, the first buyers from Indonesia and the good results recorded for Serbia. The total number of foreign countries represented at Pitti Bimbo nearly reached quota 100.

There was a very positive reaction to *BabyWorld*, the new exhibition area dedicated to design and infant care, held in the Sala delle Grotte in the Monumental Area. The companies at *BabyWorld* reported that they had made important commercial contacts with top international buyers, confirming the growing market interest in the expansion of products dedicated to the world of children, moving beyond fashion collections.

Florence, 30 June 2008