

Pitti Filati Firms Look to Virtual Presentations

The three-day fair featured digital stations and new paper yarns.

By [Teresa Potenza](#) on January 31, 2017



A trend area at Pitti Filati.

Teresa Potenza

The role of virtual and digital, paper yarns and the importance of customized items in the yarn industry were among the defining features of the 80th edition of Pitti Filati, which took Florence for three days ended Jan. 27.

Organizers aim to increase international attendance at Pitti Filati and it seems the fair is going in the right direction: the first closing numbers of the January edition showed a 2.5 percent increase in the number of buyers, for a total of more than 4,350 visitors.

Nonetheless, a focus on the single figures shows a fragmented patchwork: Russia was the best performing market, with an 87 percent increase; followed by Japan, up 23 percent; France, ahead up 8.5 percent, and Germany with a 6 percent gain. The U.K. and U.S. remained steady.

Regarding the U.S., Italian spinners are watching with interest the potential changes that may involve the yarn industry with the new administration, but they were upbeat.

Silvio Botto Poala, Botto Giuseppe's chief executive officer, said, "It's true in the yarn industry there's much talk about a 'Trump effect,' but I don't believe the yarn industry will be affected."

Tollegno 1900 presented its new concept, "Customize Your Yarn." Thanks to a partnership with Shima Seiki Italia, Epson Italia and Pantone, the Piedmont company has promoted a collaboration that aims to offer their clients a realistic preview of product using technology. At Tollegno 1900's stand, one could see what ceo, Lincoln Germanetti calls "the future of yarn industry" — stations equipped with a programming system allowing clients to choose among Tollegno 1900 offerings. Yarn, processes and dye colors are all visible and mixable at real time, then the result is printed or sent by e-mail.

Pitti Immagine's ceo Raffaello Napoleone believes in this concept, too.

"I am sure the virtual and digital world is vital to yarn companies in order to develop their business," he said. It is essential under many points of view, from e-commerce to market relationships, but "on the other hand, I believe virtual and real should go hand in hand in our industry." "Customized products" are key for companies to overcome a difficult economic momentum.

Botto Giuseppe's summer collection follows the cruelty-free process started seasons ago to produce winter yarns, which now originate from mulesing free sheep in Australia and is produced by Australian company Congi that signed an exclusive agreement with the company. At Pitti Filati, the Valle Mosso, Italy-based firm presented the Tussah silk and its sustainable process: instead of causing the death of the worms, silk is obtained by harvesting the cocoon remains as soon as the butterflies are born.

"It's the first time we use this kind of process," Silvio Botto Poala said. "We are determined to follow this direction as we believe sustainability will always be a key factor for high-level yarn companies to stand out from the rest."

It is not an easy process anyway, "given that the price of silk represents a huge limit," Botto Giuseppe's ceo said. Silk prices have risen because of a decrease in Chinese production. While medium-high level companies used to be important clients, "now the market is mainly made by high-end clients," he said.

Despite this, Botto Giuseppe's 2016 sales were in line with the previous year, around 56 million euros, or nearly \$60 million at current exchange rate, and January is performing better than January 2016.

Lightness was another trend that stood out in Florence. Cariaggi's spring collection's main features are light and sparkling yarns that evoke the lightness of a spring wind: linen, cashmere, cotton and silk often mixed with each other and lit up by sequins or golden Lurex.

"We work for the luxury market as we are focused on noble yarns," said Cristiana Cariaggi, managing director of the eponymous company. "Being so specialized has been our golden ticket in years of economic difficulties."

With sales of 93 million euros, or nearly \$100 million, Cariaggi saw a slight decrease in its turnover, but the 2017-18 period has started better than the two years before. "This is why we haven't cut our investment budget, which will be around 2.5 million euros [\$2.6 million]," she said.

Lightness and complexity are Lineapiù's defining features, as well. The Tuscan spinner presented "Paper knit," a paper yarn inspired by the Japanese washi paper tradition.

"Our design team interpreted the sensations from around the fashion world," said Lineapiù president and ceo Alessandro Bastagli. "Thanks to a percentage of polyamide fiber, 'Paper knit' is a very light yarn which is perfect for a spring summer collection."

But there is another thought process behind this new idea of yarn. "We loved the concept of 'living' a dress just like the pages of a book," Bastagli explained. "You can rewrite on a book, you can color it, you can paint it. You can personalize it."

Lineapiù has registered double-digit increases in the last six years since the company was acquired by Bastagli and this is the first time it sees a slight slowdown. It lost 13 thousand tons, which represent 1 percent of the total production, and the turnover fell to nearly 43 million euros, or \$46 million, down 2 percent compared with 2015. “We are upbeat about the future because we have opened new commercial relationships with the Australian market,” Bastagli said.

At the “Fashion at Work” section, on the lower level of the main pavilion at Fortezza da Basso where Pitti Filati takes place, there was another company that is experimenting with paper. Daniele Boldrini, chief of Dicart yarn department, explained how the Tuscan company has produced paper yarn for accessories like hats and bags for the last 40 years.

“At this Pitti Filati edition we feature paper mixed with materials like viscose,” Boldrini said. “We aim to enter the knitting market, even if this production will represent a very small part of our business.”