



SPORTSKITCHEN
SELECTED PRODUCTS

SPORTSKITCHEN E.K.
GÄRTNERPLATZ 6
80469 MÜNCHEN
TEL +49.89.2601 1965
FAX +49.89.2601 8296
MAIL@SPORTSKITCHEN.DE
WWW.SPORTSKITCHEN.DE
INHABER: SEBASTIAN BERG

WWD // 18. JULI 2007

SPORT-FASHION SPECIALTY STORES THRIVE IN EUROPE

By Emilie Marsh

Fashionable Europeans are giving their credit cards a workout at a new wave of innovative sports apparel boutiques.

These ubertrendy specialty stores — selling everything from technical mountain apparel to edgy denim brands in a cozy atmosphere with dim lighting and catchy tunes — are the latest expression of sport-fashion synergy and are a bright spot in an activewear industry roiled by climate change and low-cost activewear from Asia.

"We felt there was a demand for high-end sports styles with a concept-store vibe," said Sebastian Berg, who last March opened Sportskitchen, an 1,100-square-foot store that serves up cool sports styles from brands like Peak Performance, Canterbury of New Zealand, J. Lindeberg and Denim Birds, alongside takeaway culinary specialties. "Our customers want high-quality, authentic mountain wear, but they also want stylish jeans and knits to wear out in the evening."

In Munich alone, two other hip independent stores — Gross and Lucid — have opened within the last four months, purveying board sports or outdoor brands in an ultra urban setting.

"We wanted to create a store for the skaters and surfers who were in their mid-30s and who don't want to shop at the kiddy stores for board sports styles," said Christoph Ziegler, buyer for the Lucid store in Schwabing, Munich's vibrant university district and artists' quarter.

Set in a garage-like locale, Lucid, which is owned by Germany's leading board sports publication, Pleasure Snowboard Magazine, features limited edition lines from leading board sports labels Nikita, Volcom, Fenchurch and Analog.

The stores were a hot topic at the recent edition of the ISPO trade fair here July 8 and 9, which was marred by weak traffic and exhibitor cancellations.

"The melting together of sports and fashion started at the consumer level, then the industry started to provide products and today, the retail market is starting to understand and take action," said Florian Weingaertner, head of marketing for Messe Muenchen, which operates the fair. "There's been a new opening of sports shops based on authentic sports meets high-end fashion."

Boutique sports stores with fashion flair are forcing established sports retailers across the globe to rethink their strategy.

"There is a disconnect with established sports retailers and new consumers; they are not reaching the market," said Kathleen Gasperini, senior vice president of Label Networks, based in Los Angeles, a market research and media firm specializing in global youth cultures and lifestyle fashion who attended ISPO and gave a speech on the sports style retail crossover.

"Smaller, trendier sports boutiques and online retail are filling this gap," added Gasperini, who noted that the increase of hip sports stores was an international retail phenomenon.

And how.

"Board sports and urban wear is extremely popular in Portugal," said Jose Paulo Saramago, marketing manager for Dream Team, a buying office specialized in sports and fashion. "Shopping is part of the social scene. Young consumers hang out in tiny stores that sell streetwear apparel, listen to music and put their names on lists for upcoming limited edition lines."



Concept stores with a sportswear theme are spreading across all sports categories. Claudia Kuppers, for example, opened her fitness-focused concept store, Clauds, last winter in Dusseldorf. It has a feminine ambience and features sophisticated fitness and golf styles from high-end labels such as Casall and Rohnisch, both based in Sweden. "Our customers want to look good and they want service," said Kuppers, who plans to open more stores.

To ride this trend and attract fashion-focused retailers, manufacturers said they were factoring more style-savvy items into their collections.

Florian Steinberger, managing director of Chiemsee, a lifestyle board sports brand founded by two windsurfing brothers in 1982, said last winter was a "real disaster and summer is under pressure." But Steinberger said that the focus on fashion and accessories was helping to buoy sales. "We've always had a lifestyle focus, which is still selling very well, despite the weather conditions," he said.

Sportswear accessories were another key direction at the show. These were seen at a wide range of resources, from Italy's Pantofola, a luxury soccer shoe manufacturer since 1886, to lifestyle newcomers such as golf lifestyle brand Clover or trendy cycling lifestyle line Starshot, whose cycling hats were given a special mention from retailers at the show.

"Consumers are looking for new stories," said Kai Stuhrt von Neupauer, Starshot's managing director, who launched the label this summer to create a new lifestyle cycle category.

Chic sportswear couture continued driving sales at Bogner, where jacket prices reach 7,999 euros, or \$11,028 at the current exchange rate.

"Because of the lack of snow, we put the emphasis on our fashion pieces, which already make up the majority of the overall collection," said Richard Hilverts, head of the company's international sales, who explained Bogner's focus on fashion started with Maria Bogner, who added elastic straps to ski pants to create a more snug-looking fit. Hilverts said sales for the company were on the rise.

Hummel soccer brand was also pushing its high-end business. For the summer it will launch its Per Invitation Only Line high-end jersey collection of pants, tops and dresses embedded with Swarovski crystals.

Ski demon Rossignol also presented an exclusive fashion line.

Dubbed Rossignol 1907, the limited edition, vintage-inspired line was launched to mark the company's 100th anniversary this year and to create more fashionable products that can be worn in any season.

"We need to come down from the mountain and go into the city," said Patrick Werle, Rossignol's sales manager for Europe.

German furniture and fashion designer Philipp Plein took the couture sportswear concept to the extreme by showcasing a silver crocodile horseback riding saddle, which will retail for around 10,000 euros, or \$13,799. Plein said he would introduce couture swimwear in January 2008.