



Cosmoprof Marks Return to Physical Format With Special Edition

The ever-increasing speed of time-to-market, natural cosmetics and synergies across distribution channels were the main topics at the OnBeauty by Cosmoprof event. BY SANDRA SALIBIAN

BOLOGNA, ITALY — “This is the first step toward a full restart,” said Cosmetica Italia’s president Renato Ancorotti at OnBeauty by Cosmoprof Worldwide Bologna, the special format the beauty trade show hosted Sept. 9 to 13.

While the official fair has been postponed until next year for March 10-14, to be followed by the first edition of the Milano Beauty Week slated for March 15 to 21, revealed Ancorotti — Cosmoprof’s organizers decided to stage a smaller, physical event to encourage and restore IRL business opportunities among beauty operators.

Yet many exhibitors and visitors considered this more a symbolic moment rather than a real business occasion. Entering the halls of the Bologna fairgrounds confirmed the feeling, as the size of the show was even more scaled back than expected and a considerable number of key beauty companies were missing at the only five pavilions dedicated to the show.

On the other hand, organizers smartly created critical mass by combining and running OnBeauty by Cosmoprof simultaneously with two other fairs: the Sana exhibition of organic and natural products and the Cosmofarma ReAzione show spotlighting health care, beauty care and all services related to pharmacies.

The move proved to be strategic in

facilitating an exchange of contacts and new synergies across different channels, enabling buyers of different shows to discover new brands. The three platforms combined involved 1,150 exhibitors and attracted roughly 50,000 attendees. In comparison, the 2019 Cosmoprof event alone registered over 3,000 exhibitors and 260,000 attendees from 154 countries.

Travel restrictions and strict regulations — the fair was accessible upon the showing of the “Green Pass” certifying that the holder has been vaccinated, received a negative test or recovered from COVID-19 in the previous six months — didn’t stop international guests from gathering in Bologna, including a strong presence of visitors hailing from Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

“I’ve attended Cosmoprof for seven years and this time couldn’t be an exception,” said Nader Ali Al-Abed, executive manager of Al-Abed Cosmetics, a Saudi Arabian distributor of natural skin care and hair care products. Al-Abed said that the pandemic hit his business hard, as sales almost halved over the last two years, but he was at the fair to look for innovative natural products to offer to a “wider and increasingly competitive market for this specific sector.”

Bouchra Motaqrine, managing partner of the Moroccan wholesaler

Cos-Mell, echoed his words as she was on the hunt for new, clean formulations in both makeup and hair products to sell in the country.

While an entire pavilion was dedicated to professional hair care, the trade show lacked a compelling offering in terms of makeup brands compared to its usual standards. The absence of areas such as Cosmoprime — in which organizers spotlight a selection of international emerging beauty brands — significantly impacted the format.

Although it might have mirrored the general hit color cosmetics’ sales took during the pandemic in favor of skin care — a very strong category at the fair, too — the scarcity of the offering didn’t correspond to a lack in its demand, as a number of buyers didn’t only look for makeup brands but also expressed interest in creating their own ones. One young Moroccan entrepreneur, Soukaina Rguibi, attended the fair for the first time to meet manufacturers to develop “an accessible, sort of Kiko-inspired” private label makeup and nail polish products to launch next summer, for example.

Not coincidentally, the pavilion showcasing cosmetics and packaging manufacturers was the buzziest one. Chromavis’ senior vice president of marketing and business development Cecilia Schena was positively

impressed by the number of new businesses and indie brands she had appointments with, hailing from the U.K., France, Germany and Poland.

The company is in a favorable position to answer to these new players’ demands thanks to its Atelier project introduced earlier this year, which enables clients to create a customized product or an entire makeup range in one day and take it to market in just three weeks. “This project is going well, the schedule is already intense and the demand is significant,” said Schena, underscoring that it targets different types of clients, encompassing “big brands that want to test the market and start-ups, celebrities or influencers keen to launch their brand but with a small initial investment.”

“This is like a school for us, we can learn by doing and apply these lessons on a bigger scale, even for more established brands,” she continued. “The way of launching a product has completely changed... Now all launches are one-shot, with little to no prevision: You launch a product online, see how it goes and then scale up the production. There’s no longer a classic timeline and there is no way going back to before,” she said, adding “This is becoming an increasingly fast industry, and speed is now a central necessity.”

Boosted by the online push, such a process has repercussions on the sourcing of raw materials — leaving all companies at the fair dealing with skyrocketing prices, as well as on the image of products.

“Now more than ever you have to deliver an emotion visually through the product itself, and not just the pack,” said Schena, referencing customized lipstick bullets and pencils and revealing the company is investing in developing patented solutions, including one for a holographic effect on a lipstick. “Trend-wise, there’s a return to vibrant, strong colors, like neon ones. It’s all about the rebound effect,” she said.

“There’s been an odd curve in terms of consumptions. Now everything has to be very Instagrammable and easy to use,” echoed Eleonora Tauriello, marketing manager of Italian beauty manufacturer Pink Frogs. The company presented 12 new skin care formulations in a ►



Cosmoprof photograph by Elettra Bastoni



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variety of colorful textures through a concept targeting the needs of four different generations — encompassing Gen Z to Baby Boomers.

While Schena forecasted sales to return to pre-pandemic levels next year, Tauriello said Pink Frogs managed to increase revenues of 30 percent to around 10 million euros last year, thanks to mainly focusing on skin care and the successful combination of natural formulations and eco-friendly packaging.

Attention toward more sustainable practices was also core for packaging suppliers. For one, Cosmei developed a whole range of practical, mono-material compacts in polypropylene, crafted without glue and refillable. “Agility and refillable packaging are what the market is demanding, as well as the possibility to give second life to objects,” said Cosmei’s business development director Catherine Duraj while showing other compacts in which mirrors could be easily disassembled and repurposed as purse ones.

The company also introduced micro lipsticks intended as mono-use testers for stores — since COVID-19 impacted the way customers can experience products — as well as samples on e-commerce platforms, enabling end



consumers to try new items without committing to full-sized products.

The increasing switch from plastic to glass encouraged Baralan to enhance its offering of glass packaging, including a new airless, refillable option that answers the need of keeping clean formulations intact. Elsewhere, aluminum and paper were seen as more resistant and lighter materials compared to glass, often perceived as too fragile, unsafe and possibly problematic for shipments.

Italian company La Saponaria opted for including all these options in its vast assortment of products, ranging from skin and hair care to oral care, which also comprise solid formulations

that further help tackling packaging issues. Founded in 2007, the company was showcased as part of the Sana show due to its natural ingredients sourced from small local farmers.

“In 2007, only a few fundamentalist consumers were demanding this kind of products and they were willing to accept a lower level of performance for it. Now the market share is exponentially growing and consumers are expecting the same results as other cosmetics,” said the brand’s founder Luigi Panaroni.

Sana displayed plenty of options for this target of consumers, ranging from L’Erbolario, an Italian institution for natural products counting 180

stores in the country and 5,000 doors globally, to emerging brands that are increasingly eyeing new distribution channels to add to their presence at herbalists stores and pharmacies.

For newcomer Alia, a natural skin care brand based on ingredients solely sourced in Sicily, the goal is to grow internationally and “bring a piece of this region abroad,” said founder Debora Pollina.

This mission was shared by hair care brands Nerà and Riàh Sicilia, showcased at Cosmofarma. “In Italy being distributed at pharmacies is useful because it confers credibility and prestige to a brand, but elsewhere we’re aiming to spas and beauty salons,” said Mattia Gattolin, export manager of both brands’ parent company Azienda Agricola Zighidi.

One of the highlights at Cosmofarma, Hino — a skin care label with a highly scientific approach to formulations — was also eyeing other distribution channels to add to its 1,000 premium pharmacies across Italy and Switzerland, while the digital marketing strategist of the Rouj makeup brand Clarissa Pirillo rejected the idea underscoring that “pharmacies are the most democratic place at the world, so we will continue to be extremely loyal to this channel.” ■

