

# Eyewear Intelligence

News and analysis of the international market

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PUBLICATIONS

## Gentle Monster focuses on own retail in Europe

Gentle Monster, the big and creative eyewear brand from South Korea, opened its first European flagship store in London at the end of July, stirring a lot of excitement in the retail scene, way beyond the eyewear sector, because of its very special design and the development strategy behind it. It also opened a few weeks earlier a permanent concession at the Selfridges department store in the capital, after running a temporary store at The Corner Shop.

Gary Bott, a brand-building expert who has been appointed as Gentle Monster's managing director for the U.K. and Europe, told us that his company wants to focus primarily on the development of its own controlled retail spaces, working eventually with "strategic" wholesale accounts in cities where it doesn't have its own stores.

The wholesale segment currently represents less than 5 percent of the total annual turnover of around \$200 million that is being generated by the brand globally - after only seven years in the market, and that ratio is not expected to grow in the future. Online sales made through its international web store account for less than 10 percent of sales.

Aside from the new London store, the bulk of the revenues has been coming from the 17 Gentle Monster flagship stores that have sprung up around the world since 2012, plus 18 concessions in department stores - most of them in Korea - and eight dedicated corners in airport duty-free shops - all of them in Asia. They have been mostly responsi-

ble for the brand's annual growth rate of around 25 percent in the last few years.

Six of the flagship stores are in South Korea and seven in China. Before attacking the European market at the retail level, Gentle Monster opened a store in Hong Kong, one in Singapore, one in New York and one in Los Angeles.

Bott says that there is no fixed target for the number of stores and concessions that Gentle Monster will have in the future. In the shorter term, six new store openings are planned before the end of 2019, but only four are confirmed for the moment: a second store in Singapore in October, followed by the first one in Taiwan in November, a second one in Hong Kong and one in Dubai in March.

While planning to open also new stores in Hong Kong and Singapore before the end of next year, Gentle Monster is about to sign a lease for a flagship store that should open in Paris around the middle of next year. There are no other plans in Europe for the time being, Bott indicated, although the brand has been approached by some department store operators in the Continent.

The brand has no intention to set up franchised stores or shop-in-shops in existing optical retail stores because it wants to create a unique and differentiated physical brand experience for customers in every city. Every Gentle Monster store around the world is different from the other, inviting the global traveler to come in and inspect the assortment. Each one of them has a different artistic design, appealing to customers with different imagery and different scents.

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### Management & Distribution

**Alain Afflelou, Coburn Technologies, Edel Optics, Eyewear Designs, Hoya Vision Care, Michael Pachleitner Group, Moleskine Eyewear, Pramaor, Raen, Rodenstock, Vision Express**

### Product

**Altair Eyewear, Boarding Ring/ Citroën, Essilor, Microsoft, Safilo**

### Others

**Hal, Lunor, Luxottica, Marks & Spencers Opticians, Opti, Safilo, Selfridges, Spectaris, Vision Expo, Vista Outdoor, Waldo, etc.**

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**Köksal**, currently CEO of **Atasun Optik** in Turkey, another banner that belongs to GrandVision.

**Coburn Technologies**, the American provider of processing systems and ophthalmic instruments has appointed **Marina Vaynberger** as its international sales manager for Russia, Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa. An industry veteran, Vaynberger had previously spent 16 years as international sales manager for **DAC Technologies**.

Following the appointment of **Steve Horowitz** as its president in the spring, **Eyewear Designs** announced that **Ken Clay** joined the company in the position of vice president of business development. Clay spent more than 25 years at **Marchon Eyewear** as regional vice president for the central U.S. region, before becoming a vice president at **VSP Global**, in charge of relations with key doctor alliance groups, buying groups and management groups, **Vision Monday** reports. He will report directly to Horowitz in his new position. Eyewear Design is a New York-based eyewear company that licenses a number of brands such as **Elizabeth Arden**, **New Balance**, **Perry Ellis** and more.

+++ **Greg Barbour**, an industry veteran previously in charge of **Allergen UK's** eye care, is replacing **Niels Jensen** as country manager for **Rodenstock UK** +++ **Pramaor**, the Italian eyewear company behind the **Blackfin** brand, has appointed **Simone Favero**, a former manager of an Italian outdoor shoe company, **Calzaturificio Scarpa**, as its new marketing manager +++ **Frédéric Poux**, former CEO of **Alain Afflelou**, has been appointed president of **Sport 2000 France**, a voluntary group of sporting goods retailers +++

## Distribution

The **Safilo Group** has moved its head office and showroom for the German-speaking countries to a new central location in Cologne, in a building designed by **Sir Norman Foster**. It covers 600 square meters on two floors. It's one of more than 20 sales offices operated by the company around the world.

After the appointments earlier this year of **Formelli 1945** and **William Morris** as their distributors in Italian and U.K. distributors, respectively, **Moleskine Eyewear** has signed a new distribution deal for France with **Seaport Odjm**. Germany and other European countries are scheduled to start in 2019. The brand is also represented in America by **WestGroupe** in Canada, **Eyewear Designs** in the U.S and **Grupo Europeo** in Mexico. Mostly famous for its iconic black notebook, the Moleskine brand was successfully launched in 1997 by a small Italian publishing company that developed a whole range of stationary and travel-related products, and quickly became a global hit. The eyewear range includes readers, sunglasses and optical glasses, the latter retailing at an average €130-€150. First signed in 2017, the global eyewear license for Moleskine belongs to the **Icare** group, a Hong-Kong based manufacturer. In Asia, Moleskine Eyewear is already distributed in Indonesia, Malaysian Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong and India with more countries in the pipeline for next year.

**Raen**, a U.S. brand of eyewear, is creating a subsidiary in Germany as a platform for its expansion in Europe. It will either be called **Raen**

**Optics** or **Raen Europe**. **Christian Grund**, founder of Raen's former European eyewear distributor, **Eyegents**, will manage the new subsidiary. He was responsible for the growth of the brand in Germany and France in the past two years, and he will continue to fill this role, handling sales, marketing, distribution and operations in the two countries and reporting to the company's vice president of sales, **Scott Chantos**. Additionally, Raen Europe will house a distribution facility that will eventually supply all European markets outside France and Germany, which are currently managed by Raen's network of distributors.

**Edel Optics** and **Jérôme Boateng** have renewed their license agreement for a line of optical frames and sunglasses named after the famous German football player. The Austrian-based **Michael Pachleitner Group** remains in charge of product development and distribution to opticians in the German-speaking countries. Founded in 2009 in Hamburg, Edel Optics started as a pure internet retail player before moving to a multi-channel strategy. It currently owns two stores in Germany and has plans to reach 25 doors in the country within three years. The company, which expects annual revenues of €23 million this year, boasts a total of 53 web shops in as many countries. It claims to have the largest eyewear inventory in Europe with 20,000 frames for which it guarantees a delivery within 24 hours anywhere in the continent.

## Retail

**Selfridges**, the British department store, has opened a big eyewear store in the country as part of the revamped accessories hall on its ground floor of its flagship store on London's Oxford Street, which has been enlarged to cover a total space of 5,580 square meters following an investment of £300 million (€334.6m-\$390.2m) in the last five years. Covering 372 square meters, the eyewear space displays more than 2,200 styles from 50 brands, with two-thirds of the surface devoted to sunglasses. According to Selfridges, some of these brands such as **Fak by Fak** and **Project Product** are exclusive to the store, while other brands such as **Grey Ant**, **Retrosuperfuture** or **Thierry Lasry** have created exclusive designs for the department store. The new eyewear retail space also includes a dedicated area for **Chanel** eyewear, and a laboratory for the mounting of prescription glasses within one hour. It offers advanced optometric services with pre-screening and treatment rooms.

The U.K.'s first **Marks and Spencer (M&S) Opticians** was officially inaugurated at Westfield London in White City on July 31. The company said that right after opening, bookings for the following two weeks filled up quickly. The practice is run by **Galaxy Optical**, the former operator of **Tesco Opticians**. Customers attending the opening day could get discount vouchers for glasses and a free eye test. The next M&S Opticians practices are scheduled for opening in Derby, Bolton, Manchester City Centre, and York.

+++ **Luxottica** plans to open its first Australian mono-brand store in the Westfield Doncaster shopping center of Melbourne in October, similar to the experience stores it recently inaugurated in New York, London, Tokyo and Milan +++