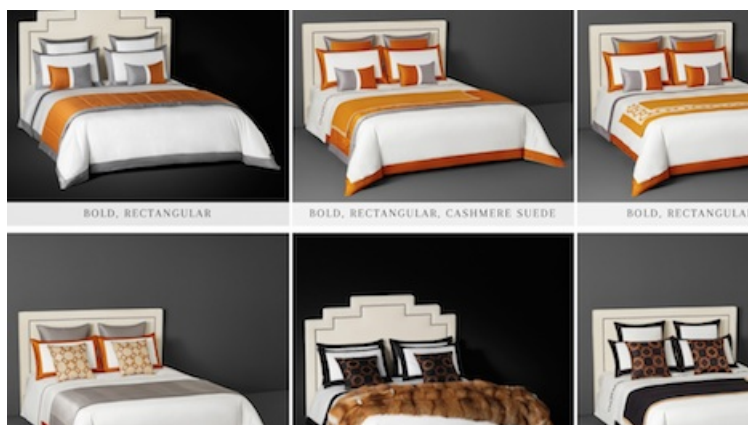


HOME FURNISHINGS

## Frette CEO on why seasonal collections are out as linens brand contemporizes

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*Not content to rest: Frette's bold new look. Image credit: Frette*

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

Seeking to match heritage with contemporary needs of the market, Italy's Frette is transforming itself into a global lifestyle brand that goes beyond bathroom and bedroom linen to appeal to consumers and hospitality brands.

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The 158-year-old home linens maker has introduced a new Style of Living concept centered around a lifestyle and eliminated the industry practice of introducing seasonal collections. Not only has the design sensibility changed, but so has the offering expanded to appeal to affluent younger consumers blankets, throws and decorative cushions in addition to bed-sheet sets, towels, table linen and night wear via more retail and digital touch points.

"Through this new design journey, Frette has adapted to the needs of its clients by offering a modern approach to the home linens category while still maintaining the artisanal design pedigree that the brand is known for," said Filippo Arnaboldi, CEO of Frette.

"With the arrival of the Style of Living, the approach has changed, but the style, quality and craftsmanship details have not," he said.

Dividing his time between Frette headquarters in Monza, Italy, and New York, Mr. Arnaboldi is charged with reinvigorating a brand in a category that is under pressure from evolving lifestyles.

Appointed to the top post in August 2017, he is now targeting new markets and opportunities to grow Frette's share in a luxury linens category where a fellow Italian competitor, Pratesi, is rumored to be under pressure. Other linens brands competing with Frette include Yves Delorme, E. Braun and Matouk, all of which face the same issue of contemporizing their offerings and expanding distribution and marketing via digital channels.

In this dialogue, Mr. Arnaboldi spent some time explaining Frette's focus going forward, the approach to meeting evolving customer needs, how the brand is adapting its marketing and retail practices, maintaining the luster of the "Made in Italy" label, nurturing talent and the new design philosophy that will drive product assortment. Please read on:

What is the thinking behind the new Style of Living idea for Frette?

The idea behind Style of Living was to move from a seasonal product offering to a timeless concept that allows our clients to buy sensational single elements which reflect the style of their homes, that work together in harmony.

It was also to develop a new range of products that work together create infinite design possibilities and product combinations to offer elegance within diverse living spaces.

Frette is one of the oldest luxury linens brands and certainly one of the survivors. What explains its longevity?

Frette has been able to offer products that speak to the evolving tastes of its clients.

Additionally, it has grown into an omnichannel global company that allows its clients to shop in its own retail stores, online, wholesale partner locations, or during a stay at one of our hospitality partners.

Does Made in Italy still hold its cachet?

The quality and luxury handcraftsmanship that "Made in Italy" products are known for producing will always be admired.

This, in combination with Frette's expertise in fine linens elevate these products to a league of their own.

Frette is synonymous with quality craftsmanship and extraordinary design.



*Frette's luxury fox fur throw in powder pink, price \$34,000. Image credit: Frette*

How has the market for linens and home furnishings changed over the years?

The market has become more digital.

The approach to connecting with clients and to selling has become more diverse. It is now a multichannel approach that includes ecommerce, mobile shopping options and social media communications, all of which are important in addition to complement the brick-and-mortar experience for our products.

What explains the new pivot? You talk of a new design formula and product agility, and introducing an all-season line, which is a stark departure from industry practices.

This new approach allows Frette to speak to a broader audience of clients and offer more design possibilities for different style and tastes.

This season-less approach allows Frette to introduce a more robust assortment of products that transcend trends as well as offer more pieces: blankets, throws and decorative cushion options that allow Frette more visibility in the home in areas beyond the bathroom and bedroom.

As consumers gravitate to a more casual lifestyle, both in dress and living, as well as attitudes to work, how does that affect a brand such as Frette that has long stood for quality and heritage?

Through this new design journey, Frette has adapted to the needs of its clients by offering a modern approach to the home linens category while still maintaining the artisanal design pedigree that the brand is known for.

With the arrival of the Style of Living, the approach has changed, but the style, quality and craftsmanship details have not.

What do consumers these days want from their bed sheets, covers, throws, pillowcases, blankets and table linens as well as nightwear apparel?

Clients want options and versatility. They are looking for decorative pieces that complement the decor of their space in a contemporary way.

What kind of innovations is Frette introducing in terms of design, color schemes and product quality?

The design placement on the shams, boudoirs and sheets sets for this new collection are more strategic striking yet subdued and offer the modern client a touch of design and style for their spaces.

The color palettes were deliberately considered so that they work together, but also individually are impactful and diverse.

The patterns found in the jacquards and embroideries are more intrinsically linear and geometric-based, so that they can be styled together to offer many combination options.

The excellent fabric quality still remains the same and we have introduced new fabrics and textures that were missing from our assortments suedes, taffetas and velvets.



*New bold motifs and vivid colors stand out, adding a youthful sensibility to Frette's collections. Image credit: Frette*

What about marketing to women and men how will Frette adjust its marketing to address these different markets?

Both markets are equally important to Frette and we are confident that through this new design journey, we offer a bigger assortment of products to appeal to all.

How is Frette adjusting to new channels of distribution that appeal to a younger affluent demographic?

With a larger portion of our online business coming from mobile purchases, we are revamping the store's layout to include a technology bar where guests can shop on their device or on our in-store tablets.

We have also diversified the methods through which clients can pay for their items digitally which include Apple Pay, Amazon Pay and Paypal on our Web site and look for ways to modernize and improve our brand experience digitally as well as in-person.

How is the corporate market performing for Frette hotels, resorts and cruise liners?

The hospitality division is a key component to the business and is our largest marketing opportunity.

Thousands of clients each year interact with and discover our collection through their stays at five-star hotels, resorts, boutique properties and on cruises worldwide.

What role will the retail store continue to play?

The stores are an important part of showcasing our products.

It is the experience in our stores not only working with our specialists to help clients design the bed of their dreams, but the tactile and personal interaction with our products help clients understand the difference in the production of our products and the variety of textures we offer.

As we also offer monogramming and bespoke, the store offers an intimate occasion for clients to personalize their purchases.

*Frette's Style of Living concept seen through the eyes of its characters as they make the brand an integral part of their lives*

What about department stores do they continue to be a key wholesale channel?

Absolutely. Our esteemed wholesale partners allow us to bring Frette to markets where we do not have our own retail stores.

Ecommerce is one of the brightest stars in retail growth. What is it like for Frette?

The same is true for Frette. It is our largest, round-the-clock, global store.

What percentage of sales does online and mobile account for at Frette?

It accounts for a significant and growing percentage of our business.

As the world becomes more digitally focused, we continue to make sure that Frette is available to serve our digitally-inclined clients.

What kind of products sell via online and mobile versus the physical store? Is the average price point vastly different?

As our core products sell more online, we see slightly lower average order value for our products distributed for this channel.

How are you changing your marketing mix?

We are investing more in online marketing than through traditional advertising methods.

To complement this, we devote a portion of our outreach to direct mail.

Which new markets are you looking to identify for Frette to expand?

We are looking to expand our presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

People often matter as much as product. What is Frette doing differently under your leadership to attract and retain corporate, store and artisanal talent? What are you doing to make them not only more productive but think differently while being fulfilled by their work experience?

More than ever, we are working towards building one global team, with the same mentality.

I am looking to empower my team to own their individual tasks and to work together.

I want each employee to feel that they belong at Frette and that they are integral to Frette's future.

What is your goal for Frette going into 2019 and the year beyond?

To further grow within existing markets, enter new ones and further establish Frette as a lifestyle brand, reinforcing the idea that it is more than a linens manufacturer.

*Introducing Frette's Style of Living concept*

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