

HOME FURNISHINGS

Italy's Pratesi seeks return to old splendor as linens purveyor to the affluent

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Pratesi relaunches its legacy and new lines in a highly competitive linens market contested by French, Italian, British and American brands. Image courtesy of Pratesi

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

Italian linens brand Pratesi is making a market comeback after a brief hiatus, aiming to recapture the hearts and minds of wealthy homeowners weary after a day's work of toil and spoil.

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The 116-year-old brand, now under ownership of Italy's Sferra linens company, debuts with legacy and new collections, first online at Pratesi.com, then a store within London department store Harrods and finally through corporate retail partnerships and interior designers. At its highpoint, the brand's products adorned the beds and bathrooms of Coco Chanel, Elizabeth Taylor, Ernest Hemingway, Yves Saint Laurent and Lee Radziwill, as well as palaces in England, Monaco, Greece, Belgium and Spain.

"The Pratesi brand will be positioned at the very top," said Michelle Klein, New York-based CEO of Pratesi and **Sferra**.

"We have taken great care into all aspects of the production of every piece, ensuring it is produced with the best raw materials," she said. "The craftsmanship with artisans in Italy ensures every item is at the very highest level of quality."

With its return, Pratesi goes head to head with Frette, D. Porthault, Yves Delorme, Peter Reed, Matouk and E. Braun & Co., along with the linens lines of luxury and fashion labels.

The brand will offer bedding and bath sets under collections such as the three-line Tre Righe, Vivaio, Treccia, Federico, Icona and Raso Rigato all made in Italy. The brand relaunches Jan. 11.



Pratesi's Federico collection. Image courtesy of Pratesi

In this detailed interview, Ms. Klein expounds on **Pratesi's** market strategy, consumer targeting, positioning, manufacturing process, retail approach, marketing tack and corporate relationships. Please read on:

Pratesi is a storied linens brand that was a favorite of royalty, old money and the top hotels. How will the relaunched brand differ in its new iteration?

Pratesi will be coming back into the marketplace better than ever.

We studied all of the archives and past collections thoughtfully, from the raw materials used to the finishing processes that had been used in the past so that we could improve on those and bring back this sleeping giant with an even more elevated level of products than before.

An example of that is Angel luxe, one of our two main base cloths. It is even softer to the touch and more beautiful using only the very best Egyptian cotton available in the market.

We wanted to remain true to the DNA of the brand and so our product is still woven, cut and sewn in Italy by the best craftsmen in the world.

The product is completed with a special finishing process which will ensure these linens make customers fall in love with Pratesi all over again.



Pratesi's Treccia collection. Image courtesy of Pratesi

Who do you envision as the new customer of Pratesi? How will you reconnect with the old clientele?

The new customer of Pratesi is very similar to the loyal existing customer in that they appreciate the very finest things in life.

We are launching the brand on our Web site, www.pratesi.com, to start, and for months now we have been teasing the relaunch on our social media platforms and via a sign-up portal which has now amassed quite a large number of email addresses which we have been using to update existing and potential customers on the launch of Pratesi.

We also have a robust print and digital campaign which started last month and have worked on editorials in national and overseas publications.

What lessons can we learn from Pratesi's story in the past few years as the market changed?

Pratesi did not have an ecommerce platform and we feel that is an integral part of the brand experience for our customers.

Customers today are quite savvy. They like to be informed and educated on the brands they like and so our Web site is crucial to us telling the Pratesi story and providing the type of information the luxury consumer is looking for.

We have also added a concierge program, with a dedicated Pratesi representative so our clients are able to reach out and be given the excellent customer service they expect to aid them in their shopping experience.

Today, the customer wants to have access when it is convenient for them and their lifestyle. They expect that one-on-one experience which we aim to provide with this concierge service.



Michelle Klein is CEO of Pratesi and its new owner, Sferra. Image courtesy of Pratesi

How will the merchandise change under new ownership? What sort of lines will you introduce this year and next? We felt it was very important to launch legacy designs showcasing the level of quality that we are bringing back into the marketplace.

The existing Pratesi customer that still has our products, some for many years, has been waiting patiently for the return of the brand and will be able to find the beloved and iconic classics in bedding and bath, with color updates to reflect today's trends.

We also felt it was important to introduce new bedding designs to capture the changes in the retail design landscape ensuring that Pratesi remains very relevant and on the design trends.

Where are you manufacturing the products?

This was incredibly important to us and the DNA of the Pratesi brand to have everything produced out of Italy. It is a big differentiator for us and something we felt could not be compromised.

What type of marketing and social outreach have you planned for Pratesi?

We have created a comprehensive marketing plan with a 360-degree approach which includes print and digital advertising, direct mail and email campaigns, as well as a designer outreach program which we will be implementing in the coming weeks.

As far as social media is concerned, our platforms will function as a channel to not only learn about the world's most prestigious linens, but also as a resource for design inspiration.

For the past few months leading up to our launch we have and will continue to utilize content created in Italy to present new and legacy collections to our audience, educate about our innovative craftsmanship process, while also focusing on the rich heritage of Pratesi.

The linens market is highly competitive at the top, with brands such as Frette, Matouk, E. Braun & Co., Yves Delorme, D. Porthault, your own Sferra and all the home furnishings lines from luxury labels competing. How will the new Pratesi stand out and with what positioning?

The Pratesi brand will be positioned at the very top.

We have taken great care into all aspects of the production of every piece, ensuring it is produced with the best raw materials. The craftsmanship with artisans in Italy ensures every item is at the very highest level of quality.

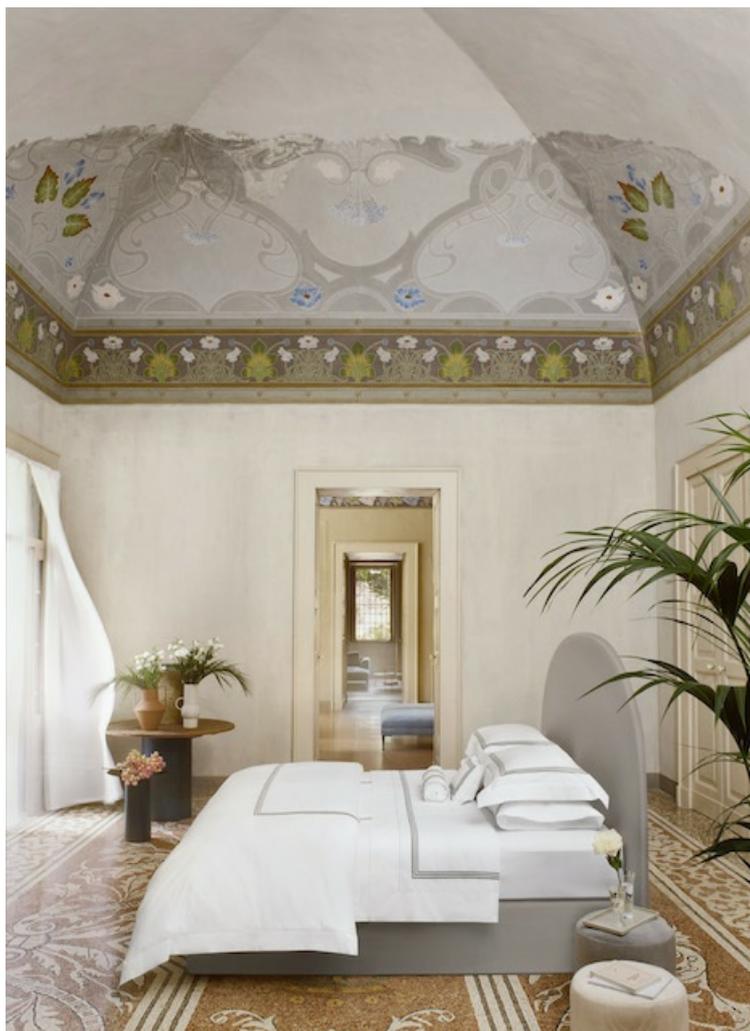
Every Pratesi product will be boxed with a beautiful branded box and, as we reenter the marketplace, it was important that this heritage brand be relevant with today's world.

Our boxes are covered with recycled and ethically sourced orange paper, which is the signature color of the brand.

Do you plan to have brand-only stores or rely on wholesale channels? What will your retail strategy look like?

We will start with the launch of our branded ecommerce platform at www.pratesi.com, followed in late April by a shop in the luxury linens floor at Harrods.

We are also hard at work looking at strategic cities for corporate retail along with considering wholesale partners to add in the coming months and years.



Pratesi was known for its much-copied three-line bedding line, also known as the Tre Righe collection. Image courtesy of Pratesi

What type of corporate relationships are you looking at?

We are looking forward to working with architects and designers on special projects, whether it is residential or commercial, as well as looking at private aviation and yachting industries.

We most certainly are also reviewing the hospitality industry as Pratesi was successful in this channel before.

Seeking the right partners for this future phase of our launch is of utmost importance to us and so we are diligently working towards this goal.

What need are you filling in the market with the relaunched Pratesi?

There is always a place for a beautiful heritage brand like Pratesi in the marketplace.

Today's luxury consumers are more and more discerning and really appreciate the heritage of the brands and the story of how products came to be.

We take pride in ensuring that every sourced material, except for the Egyptian cotton, comes from Italy. This is something we are very proud of and unique to the Pratesi brand.

Our designs, cut and sewn details, and the strict quality controls we have in place are like no other currently available in the market.

Pratesi left a void in the market when it closed its doors and so it is our hope that with this revamped brand we are able to fill in that void.



Pratesi

PRATESI IS LOVE

Pratesi's tag line is "Pratesi is Love." Image courtesy of Pratesi

What's your goal for Pratesi this year in terms of market and customer acceptance?

We are all so very excited to be a part of this beautiful brand and feel very honored to bring it back to the marketplace in such grandeur.

When both loyal existing customers and new customers receive their first orders, I think they will all be taken aback with the beauty and artisanship that lays in their Pratesi box.

These products, when cared for, will last for years and years to become heirlooms.

Pratesi was born out of a love story and thus our mantra, "Pratesi is Love."

We feel Pratesi connoisseurs will fall in love with the brand all over again, and if new to the brand, it will be love at first touch.

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