

ISPO 2018: footwear review

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The ISPO fair in Munich has broadened its outlook. It isn't just for buyers, and today there is plenty to see for designers and sourcers. While some footwear brands, such as Salomon and Treksta, were absent at the show, there was much more to see on the sourcing and materials side. There was also a wide range of technical textiles and even full machines; Sandonini brought a circular knitting machine that was making socks for shoes at the fair. Framis, from Italy, had brought several stitching and taping machines; the machines are made in the Far East, while the bonding tape is still made in Italy.

Other fun activities included a workshop by adidas, which featured live foot scans, 3D printed outsoles and a demonstration of two simple design programmes by adidas' in-house upper and outsole designers. It offers a simple tool for doodling on the go, such as on a plane, with easy-to-use vectors and full effects.

Internet sales continue to increase, and a technology platform developed by Loadbee has been adopted by Viking of Norway, the first Scandinavian shoe brand to use it. The system is already popular with German backpack maker Deuter. The supplier or manufacturer uploads all technical information about their footwear to Loadbee, such as product profile, background story, foot lengths, etc. Loadbee can push this information onto websites, such as Globetrotter and Schuster, using its system. This saves both the website and the supplier time and money. The master data only needs to be uploaded once for all customers and can be updated regularly. Any changes go directly to all the websites selling Viking boots that are members. The developers claim a conversion rate of 19.7% from views to sales and the marketing manager of Deuter, Gregor Cerwinski, agrees that it works. The service is available in a number of languages, and a unit can be installed in retail stores that offers tourists the opportunity to get background information in their own language while shopping abroad.

The ISPO Gold Award in the Urban Footwear category went to Dachstein's 'Ocean Collection' which integrates Econyl yarn into the shafts and tongues of three new shoes including the Ocean High GTX.

CREDIT: DACHSTEIN



Adidas offered demonstrations of the design technology it uses.
CREDIT: MESSE MÜNCHEN GMBH

The Product of the Year in the Health and Fitness category was the FitStation powered by HP technology. It allows feet to be scanned instore, with dynamic gait analysis that helps find the right shoe to fit. It could be an off-the-shelf solution, customised 3D printed insoles or even fully-customised shoes with variable PU injection moulded midsoles. All this can be done while the customer waits. Running shoe brand Brooks is an early adopter of the technology.

Sustainability and modern materials

'Eco' and 'sustainable' were again the buzzwords at the fair, for both footwear and clothing.

Mountain and outdoor footwear brand Aku has worked closely with chemical supplier Corichem and leather supplier Gruppo Dani to evaluate the environmental impact of its classic Bellamont Plus shoe. This has allowed the company to work together to improve across the entire supply chain. The product has received official Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) certification.

Alpine footwear brand Dachstein was awarded the ISPO Gold Award in the Urban Footwear category for its Ocean Collection. Dachstein has used Aquafil's Econyl recycled nylon fibre in three new models. Researchers claim an estimated 640,000 tonnes of fishing equipment are abandoned in the world's oceans each year. This includes discarded fishing nets, which put marine life at risk. Econyl upcycles this waste material into its regenerated Econyl fibre. Dachstein has incorporated Econyl into the shafts and tongues of three models in its Ocean Collection.

Merino wool has long been popular in ski undergarments, but it is now also finding a place in footwear. South Korea's Le Mouton makes sneakers with pure merino wool uppers on EVA soles. New for the upcoming season is a children's range with melange wool upper and lining. The Woolmark Company from Australia showed circular-knitted footwear made from wool or wool blend, as well as footwear with a wool lining.

Fair trade is also an aspect of sustainability. The Social Mercenary was an ISPO Brandnew award winner in the Social

Awareness category. It makes backpacks from traditionally woven materials from Ghana. They are manufactured in factories overseen by Ethical Apparel Africa. An exciting new development that is in the pipeline is printed textile shoes, but this will require finding African shoemakers able to make enough pairs to satisfy the anticipated demand. A large UK retailer is said to be interested, but the new start-up company does not yet have the capacity to cope with big orders.

German sports brand Vaude showed an 'eco' collection of clothes and boots called "Green Shape Core". The water-resistant leather comes from Terracare, which uses bull hides that are traceable from source. Qmilk fibres and wool felt are used for the collar, while the lining is chrome-free leather and Primaloft padding, which is made from natural kapok fibres. The specially-designed Vibram sole features recycled material and the laces are also recycled.

Jack Wolfskin displayed a range of shoes that are 100% recycled, including outer fabric, insulation, membrane and lining.

Le Mouton merino wool shoes.
CREDIT: WTP





Tecnica's customisable Forge S boot which offers better comfort and fit for the customer, and more service from the retailer.

CREDIT: TECNICA

Anti-slip and water resistance

Water resistance is almost taken for granted today. Even the Australian-style suede boots with sheepskin lining from EMU come in waterproof versions. The leather is not single-layer sheepskin; there is a bootee construction membrane between the suede upper and the wool lining.

Anti-slip is the current buzzword for winter footwear. Vibram's Arctic Grip technology, which prevents slipping on icy surfaces, has been used by many brands, including Reima of Finland. Several other brands are using a specially designed sole from Michelin, including Icebug, which uses it in both summer and winter shoes. Icebug was one of a number of brands to use real ice slopes to demonstrate the effectiveness of their anti-slip soles.

Studs in rubber outsoles also function well on ice and VJ Sport from Finland, which specialises in studded footwear, exhibited at ISPO for the first time. The company has a strong background in technical orienteering shoes, dating back to the 1980s. Climate change has meant less snow and more mud, ice and rocks in the winter in the far north. Whereas cross-country skiing was popular in the past, more people now winter run. Their highly functional shoes are also popular with fell runners in England.

Running and swimming from island to island in Sweden's archipelago is a sport that is growing in popularity and JV designs shoes for this pursuit with Kevlar lugs, sticky butyl rubber and a drain mesh that allows water to run out. They also have carbon steel studs inserted in the soles for hard wear and rough use.

Interestingly, the Finnish government has launched a campaign to encourage senior citizens to wear winter walking shoes with studs and waterproof membranes, by giving them a discount. After all, an active senior is much cheaper for

Reima is collaborating with Vibram to introduce durable Arctic Grip soles in its Laplander range of children's boots.

CREDIT: REIMA

society than one with a broken hip. As a result, VJ sport also makes simple footwear with easy to operate touch-and-close straps for seniors, also with wide fit and plenty of adjustment.

Lasts and hiking boots

New backpacking boots by Garmont use a newly developed last with curved edges that fit the natural foot shape better. They also have more space around the ankle bone to reduce rubbing. The cut of the boots and padding is also slightly higher on the inner side as the inner ankle bone is naturally higher. The mid-cut version features a small elastic gaiter on the back of the boot for easier boot entry and to help protect tendons on tours. Double Damper is their two-part system featuring a PU midsole and a layer of PU underfoot, which work together for superior shock absorption and comfort.

Tecnica of Italy won Outdoor Product of the year for its Forge S boot, which makes use of a CAS (Custom Additive Shape) machine to allow the personalisation of the fit and footbed in 20 minutes. It features a sort of exoskeleton designed to remove any pressure from the ankles. It can also be adjusted to give the perfect fit at the heel counter.

Leather can be modern too. Ecco, despite not exhibiting at ISPO, again won an Outdoor Gold award. The ultra-soft, thin leather that Ecco's boot is made of is bonded to DSM's Dyneema material, which offers superb tear-resistance, a high strength-to-weight ratio and good water resistance. The fact that it is on a dual-density lightweight cushioning sole makes the functional leather boot feel lighter than a sneaker.

Fashion and sophistication

Ski holidays can be expensive, and popular resorts attract well-heeled and sophisticated customers. The ISPO vision hall represented the crème de la crème. Real sealskin boots trimmed with fox fur made in Italy by H:CE are very popular with Russian customers, as are the matching jackets and bags. EA7 by Emporio Armani had fancy moon boots for men, women and children in shiny metallic. Fancy white jackets and pants from Bogner and Vist with cow hair and fur boots from Diavolezza would look great in the après-ski bar. 🍷

