

# Sergio Tacchini plans international expansion and increased brand visibility



By [Dominique Muret](#)  
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Sergio Tacchini has made its ambitions clear. After the brand's relaunch in 2013 with an all new structure and organisation, the well-known mainly male-centred Italian sportswear brand, which has consolidated its business model in recent years, is now looking to expand into new international markets, namely Russia and the US. The brand also plans to strengthen its visibility through collaborations and new projects.



Two looks from the brand's spring/summer 2019 collection - Sergio Tacchini

Founded in 1966 by the Italian tennis champion Sergio Tacchini, the brand has always invoked the image of sport superstars such as John McEnroe, Jimmy Connors, and Pete Sampras with success. However, due to the financial market crisis and increased competition from sportswear giants, the label gradually lost ground and was bought out by the Chinese entrepreneur Billy Ngok in 2007.

Following a critical period in the face of a difficult market, Ngok, who owns the brand to this day, decided to turn the label into a "brand company". In 2013, Ngok joined forces with other private investors around the entity Wintex Hong Kong which controls Wintex Italia, a company they created in Italy that same year to manage the Sergio Tacchini brand and its licences under a lease management formula.

Wintex established itself in Milan with around 15 employees and kept only the healthiest and most profitable part of the business from Bellinzago Novarese in Piedmont, namely its design office with the brand's archives, product development, and communications. Business, production, and a large portion of the brand's personnel were shelved along with all of its stores, which were closed. Sergio Tacchini currently develops its own collections and then sells them to its 13 distribution partners under licence. The collections are designed by the brand's internal studio led by the brand's head of design Gaetano Simeone, who has been in charge since December 2013.

The brand offers a line of casual sportswear with polos retailing between €50 and €60 and tracksuits retailing at around €100, which make up the most part of the brand's sales. The brand produces a sportswear line dedicated to tennis which is distributed at clubs and specialist stores and a more fashion-focused line named Archivio which is inspired by the brand's archives and reproduces pieces from the brand's infancy which had brought it success through the glory years of the 1980s. The line also replicates a lot of the graphic styling that was popular in the 1990s.

For production, the business has chosen to use suppliers, primarily in Asia, China, and Turkey. The suppliers take orders for all of its licensees at the same time which allows Sergio Tacchini to order in volume to negotiate a better price for production. The brand's partners then pay for and recover the garments directly from the producers.



A look from the brand's « Archivio » Line - Sergio Tacchini

Apart from the brand's e-commerce site, which mainly serves as a showcase, Sergio Tacchini/ Wintex does not own any brick-and-mortar stores and focuses its activity solely on wholesale retail. The brand therefore concentrates on producing a limited selection of easily identifiable products instead of a total "look". This model may change as the brand further enters the Asian market, especially in China where the brand plans to launch in the coming five years. The brand also retails in multi-brand sports stores such as Intersport, JD Sport, Tennis Point, and Foot Looker as well as in department stores and more high end boutiques such as Antonia and LuisaViaRoma in Rome.

In France, shoppers can find the brand in a corner of Bon Marché amongst high-end brands but also in Citadium and sports goods chains. France is an important market for Sergio Tacchini and makes up €6 million of the brand's total wholesale sales. Its main market Italy makes up €13 million of its total sales.

In terms of the brand's total aggregated wholesale sales, meaning what licensed distributors sell to the wholesale channel comprising around 1,500 multi-brand customers, the brand's sales increased from €35 million in 2014 to €50 million in 2018. Sales in 2018 were up by 10 percent compared to 2017. In Europe, growth was at 20 percent while the brand took a beating in South America due in part to the financial crisis in Argentina. In 2019, sales are expected to rise by another 10 percent to reach €55 million and the brand's goal is to reach €100 million in the coming five years. Wintex alone generates around €6.5 million in revenue from royalties paid by licensees.

"For approaching China and Korea, we are riding on our visibility in Japan where we retail at Billy's and Beams among other stores," the brand's general manager Patrizia Bolzoni told FashionNetwork.com. "This is our second largest market and makes up 26 percent of our total sales after Europe which makes up 63 percent." Bolzoni joined the business in 2012 after gaining experience leading marketing and communications at Giorgio Armani and Dolce & Gabbana. This is the first time Bolzoni has spoken to the press since being appointed as general manager in 2013.

"We have recently signed a licensing agreement with GMI USA to enter the American market potentially starting from spring/summer 2019 and we intend to enter the Russian market potentially starting from spring/summer 2020," said Bolzoni. "We are close to concluding negotiations with United Brands Company which is already our partner for footwear distribution." The brand also has a licensing agreement with Tamurakoma for footwear in Japan and with Argentina's Latin Shoes for South America. With UBC, Wintex is in the process of negotiating an agreement to retail the brand in Israel and the United Arab Emirates.



Patrizia Bolzoni has managed the brand since 2013 - Sergio Tacchini

In order to push these new markets, Sergio Tacchini needs to gain visibility and a focus on its clothing which best conveys its brand image. This category represents 49 percent of the brand's total sales and he category experienced 30 percent growth in 2018 with over a million pieces sold for the first time ever. The rest of the brand's sales were attributed to footwear and accessories. "We are very focussed on clothing with more research, content, and visibility on social media," said Bolzoni. "Compared to big brands like Fila and Lacoste, we are considerably smaller and cannot make such colossal investment plans."

"Sergio Tacchini has a real passion about it that has allowed us to collaborate with fashion brands including Gosha Rubchinskiy, Andrea Crews, Band of Outsiders, and Les Hommes. This gives us a real visibility that makes us attractive internationally and has generated a real buzz around our more sporty products," said Bolzoni.

For example, the Swedish watch brand Triwa decided to collaborate with the Italian brand to launch a special edition watch in November. The brand has also created capsule collections in collaboration with the French brand Still Good and the Californian brand Stampd which are expected to hit the market soon.

Another big project for the brand is the upcoming launch of a line of sunglasses which will be unveiled at the French trade show Silmo in September. The brand originally announced an agreement with GEM Eyewear in 2017 for the launch and re-defined it in 2019 with Mondottica which had bought out GEM Eyewear and renamed it GEM Optics.

Sergio Tacchini also recently signed an agreement with Spain and Portugal partner Hot Pink to produce and distribute Padel rackets under licence. The brand also recently changed its licensed distributor for children's wear and left the French business Sun City for the Italian business Marbel. The brand launched inner-wear a few years ago with the Puglia-based lingerie specialist Igam, has entrusted its footwear to the Italian business Unipro, and develops its fragrances with Perfume Holding.

"Today, we are not looking to further diversify our products, our goal now is international expansion," concluded Bolzoni.

By [Dominique Muret](#)  
Translated by [Isabelle Crossley](#)