

10 tips for finding buyers in the European jewellery sector

The European jewellery market is known worldwide for its high-end, wildly glamorous and creative jewellery. Even the middle segments are highly sophisticated and highly priced. But growing consumer demand for bridge jewellery means buyers are in search of lower-cost sources in developing countries. This is just one of several trends creating new opportunities for jewellery producers in developing countries. Here are ten tips on how to find jewellery buyers in Europe.

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1. Determine your unique selling points on the basis of market research

Once you have a good product line, the most important next step is to invest time and effort in market research. First of all, use research to find out your unique selling points. You can determine your strong selling points by looking at the market, checking what other suppliers are doing and identifying what kind of product captures the attention of buyers.

First, look inside your organisation and map out your strengths and weakness. When engaging in sales, focus on your strengths. Next, investigate which countries and customers match your company culture, collection and production or quality standards. The fastest way to profitable business is to find a customer whose company matches yours on as many points as possible.

Additional recommendations:

- Spend time looking around in European stores and on the Internet as part of your research.
- Study products, quality and price. Ask yourself which companies and products are doing well, and why.
- Look at your own company and products and ask yourself how they will match – or complement – what you see on the market.
- What makes your product and organisation stand out? Is it design, material, price, quality, functionality, production capacity or speed? Or is it that great story behind your product regarding its origins, or the traditional craft or recycling processes involved in making it?
- Study potential target segments. Do not simply try and reach 'the European jewellery market', but learn to recognize its many different segments. Then find out which segment best suits your offer.
- For more detailed information, see our study on channels and segments in the European jewellery market.
- Contact Chambers of Commerce in European countries, for example by using [the website of the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry](#). While they do not usually offer active matchmaking services for suppliers based in developing countries, their websites and databases often offer useful market information.
- Contact your country's consulates in European countries, as they often have good sourcing contacts and may well be eager to help you promote your business, find prospective buyers and invite them to connect

with you.

- As a part of your market research, look at current trends. To learn more, see our [study on European jewellery trends](#).
- Understand where the demand lies in the jewellery market in order to identify your own selling points. For more information, see [our study on European jewellery demand](#).
- Get a clear understanding of European buyer requirements. To read up on this topic, see [our study on buyer requirements on the European jewellery market](#).

2. Look beyond your own product to understand how European buyers think

The global and European jewellery market is changing rapidly and is under continuous economic pressure. Buyers need to differentiate in order to boost sales and beat the competition. This creates opportunities for you as a supplier. The more you understand the needs of buyers and can provide matching services, the more business you will get.

One crucial part of understanding buyers is to investigate needs and trends on the target market. Good examples are the growth of sustainable business and the need for more transparent supply chains.

Additional recommendations:

- Whenever you meet European buyers, ask a lot of questions about their collections, strategy, communications and business attitudes. This will help you align your business with their needs and wishes.
- Spend time and effort in getting to know who your buyers are: having identified the right market segments, make sure you get in touch with the right businesses and the right people within those businesses.
- For more insight into how European buyers think, read our study on [Ten success factors for exporting jewellery products to Europe](#).

3. Create an attractive presentation before approaching buyers

Presentation matters in every market. In jewellery, it is of the utmost importance. Before approaching buyers, prepare yourself properly. Use an attractive, comfortable showroom for visitors. If you're on the road, make sure you have a good presentation folder or iPad/tablet presentation.

In your presentation, focus strongly on all the possibilities and unique selling points of your company. Show products that are unique or that represent a specific technique. If you show trendy products and new developments, be aware that buyers today want to launch a new collection every six months to take the pressure off collections that are not selling as well anymore.

Your presentation should include at least the following:

- A clear company profile
- Up-to-date business cards
- Handouts, such as brochures or leaflets
- Quality images of your products
- Product samples
- Up-to-date price lists, terms and conditions (in English or in the language of the country you are visiting). Do not print prices in a brochure, but have them available on a separate sheet for seriously interested buyers

Additional recommendation:

- For more information on product design, see our [Jewellery Design and Inspiration Guide](#).

4. Make sure you have a professionally designed website, or you may not be taken seriously

If customers cannot find you online – or if your online presentation is fragmented and shabby – it will be

challenging to get a meeting planned with a new prospect. The Internet is usually the first place a prospective buyer will go to find out more about you and your offer.

Once a prospect finds you online, the first impression he gets may well determine whether he pursues contact with you or not. Treat your online presence like a digital showroom. More than that: realize that it can give your business visibility on a worldwide scale.

Additional recommendations:

- Design and maintain your website and online activities carefully, knowing that if you do this well, it can capture the attention of your prospects and, more importantly, generate business.
- Place the design of your website in professional hands. It is usually not advisable to hire a European website development company. They are often expensive and communicating via email throughout the development process will likely lead to misunderstandings. Instead find a partner near you who will understand your needs and wishes as well as being aware of web trends in Europe.
- Make sure you have frequent contact with your website builder during its development to ensure a satisfying end result.
- Be sure your website is up-to-date to show visitors that you are a pro-active entrepreneur. This may cost time and money, but it will pay off in the long run.
- Hire a professional photographer and use only high-quality pictures on your website and in your other materials. Most fashion people are sensitive to attractive visual impressions.

5. Use social media and SEO to broaden your company's exposure

Using social media is a good way to get your business exposed to a larger circle of potential buyers. Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, SnapChat and Twitter all offer access to new circles.

If you're not familiar with working with social media, invest time in reading up on how to use them for your business. LinkedIn, for instance, offers many helpful articles on this topic.

Additional recommendations:

- Consider giving a trained staff member the task of taking care of your social media activities.
- SEO, or Search Engine Optimisation, is another good tool for getting more attention online. Use the Internet to find out which 'keywords' will give you a higher Google ranking.
- Realize that the end consumer can have a lot of influence on your business, even though you do not sell to the end consumer directly. Make sure your company name is branded and your company ideas and mission are known, even to end consumers. This will add value to your business. Do not underestimate the influence of the Internet in the buying behaviour of the end consumer.
- For more information and tips on e-commerce and the use of Internet and social media, see [our study on European jewellery trends](#).
- Note that advertising in jewellery magazines will rarely be possible. Jewellery magazines serve the high end of the market and usually only show interest in the world's premium brands. For most developing country producers advertising in these magazines is too expensive.
- If you have a good copywriter who can write an editorial on your company or product, try to get it published in a jewellery- or craft-related magazine or website to get some exposure. The way to do this is to make sure you have a product with very specific properties, such as a unique material or production technique or a highly innovative collection.
- Have excellent (high-resolution) photographs made of your products and facilities and send them to magazines or websites that match your profile. This is another precondition for getting free publicity.
- To get an idea of what the digital trade magazines are like, check these two examples: www.jewellerymonthly.com, www.accessoriesmagazine.com.

6. Make use of online trade platforms

Finding buyers and being found is not something you have to do on your own. There are many tools and

websites available online that have been designed especially to connect buyers and sellers.

There are general search engines like Google, of course, but there are also trade and e-commerce platforms, such as www.alibaba.com, www.ebay.com and www.decofinder.co.uk (which focuses on interior decoration, but can still offer you interesting connections). There are also sector-specific online trade platforms, such as Etsy.com or www.ethicalfashionforum.com. All you have to do is create an account, present your company and let the website present you to the rest of the world.

Additional recommendations:

- Visit the trade platforms mentioned above and look at how other suppliers present themselves to get an idea of how it works. For example, look at this profile of [Ziko Afrika](#).
- If you use trade platforms like these, make sure you have good photos and/or videos and also catchy, short texts to present your business and products.
- For more information on how you can reach different market segments in Europe, see our study on channels and segments in the European jewellery market.

7. Exhibit at international trade fairs

International trade fairs are a good way of showing buyers that you are serious about exporting. Again, preparation is the key to success here: getting the most out of a trade fair involves a lot more than just 'signing up and showing up'. Here are some preparatory steps that will improve your chances of generating business when you get to the fair – and when you go back home afterwards:

- Make a rough cost estimate of exhibiting at a fair.
- Identify what you think may be your key selling point in the eyes of trade fair visitors.
- Look for what might be trendy about your products: recycled materials ('green' is hot), innovative applications et cetera.
- Visualise your stand in the form of a model or drawing to make sure it is as attractive as possible for people passing by at the fair.
- Before the fair, invite companies to your booth.
- Find the right balance in offering buyers value for money – avoid under-pricing as well as overpricing.
- Think of a good 'attention grabber', for instance a strong visual eye-catcher, a giveaway, or an event. Remember, trade fair visitors will only have a couple of seconds to be attracted as they walk past your stand.
- Once visitors have decided to take a closer look at your stand, give them some freedom and let them look around before approaching them – but don't let them walk in and walk right back out again without making contact: the art of selling is all about choosing the right moment.
- When you have made contact, exchange business cards, if possible, and take notes of the information you have gathered about your prospect so that you can reconnect after the fair.
- Make sure your business cards and handouts are accurate, attractive and contain up-to-date information, so that your company will be (correctly) remembered after the trade show.
- Whether you are an exhibitor at the fair or a visitor (see the next point), make sure you are polite and pleasant in your dealings with the people you meet. Remember, even a random contact may become a customer or may put you in touch with future customers.
- Prepare a basic questionnaire to ask new customers questions about things you need to know about, for example: payment conditions, minimum order quantity (MOQ), the scale of their business.
- Offer visitors a small gift related to your company to help them remember you favourably.
- Make sure visitors see that you understand their requirements.
- Make sure that by the end of the fair you have a list of leads you can follow up on after you go back home: most business generated by trade fairs occurs in the follow-up stage.
- Make sure your follow-up includes basic communication, such as a 'thank you' mail or letter and confirmations and status updates on orders or inquiries. Also, keep the promises you made at the fair.
- Always answer your e-mail, even if you do not have a full answer or time to compose a full answer: let your client know he has your attention.

- Consider sending out a newsletter to prospects, but always ask them to sign up first, as they will take unrequested newsletters as 'spam'.

Here is a list of trade events to consider:

[Hong Kong Jewellery and Gem Fair](#)

[Bangkok Gems & Jewellery Fair](#)

[Tendence, Frankfurt, Germany](#)

[Ambiente 2016, Frankfurt, Germany](#)

[Chibimart Fashion Accessories and Bijoux Exhibition, Milan, Italy](#)

[MAISON & OBJET, Paris, France](#)

8. Visit international trade fairs without exhibiting

If exhibiting is too expensive for you, attending international trade fairs as a visitor rather than as an exhibitor is also a great way of finding buyers.

The best way to make use of this option is by pre-arranging to meet up with prospects during the fair. The advantage of this approach is that you can meet multiple prospects at one and the same location, reducing travel cost, and combining your meetings with catching up on the latest trends at the trade fair.

Additional recommendations:

- Make a Top 25 list of people you would like to meet at the fair and invite them to make an appointment.
- Develop a brief, attractive invitation with a strong focus on the benefits you can offer prospects (your unique selling points).
- Prepare a short, strong presentation to use when you meet, including materials and samples you can give the people you meet.
- Do research on the businesses you will be meeting, so that they will notice you are interested and serious about doing business.
- Prepare a list of questions that will help you get important information from your prospects.
- Invite the most interested prospects back to your hotel for a more in-depth presentation.
- End each meeting with a brief summary of what you've discussed and a clear list of actionable follow-up agreements.

9. Create clusters of colleague companies to make a bigger impression

Your company may not be very big. Joining forces with other companies like yours – offering either similar or complementary products – is a good way of gaining more visibility and recognition.

You can use your own network for this, or connect with a sector association in your country or region. Registering with an association offers other benefits in addition to a wider network, such as access to market information (see also Tip 10).

Additional recommendations:

- Consider joint participation at international trade fairs, or sharing an exports office and/or showroom. Having a broader range of products to view will make it more attractive for prospective buyers to look in on you. Also, sharing facilities may help you cut cost.
- If you do collaborate with other businesses, be sure to make clear agreements in order to avoid arguments

of any kind.

10. Get involved in business associations and use your involvement as a promotion tool

If you have a small production company or a start-up, it can be difficult to gain credibility and build your reputation on the European market. A good way of becoming more credible in the eyes of buyers, is to become a member of a recognised branch association.

This can be a national association in your country, a Chamber of Commerce or some other (inter)national trade organisation. Benefits will include access to trade fairs, trade missions and other events and networking opportunities.

Additional recommendations:

- Check your own government, Chamber of Commerce or national jewellery association for registration and support options.
- If you become a member of an association, make sure you publicise your membership, for instance by placing the associations' logos prominently on your website. This will strengthen your credibility in the eyes of buyers.
- To find out more about how associations work, see these random examples of national associations in [India](#), [Bangladesh](#), [South Africa](#) and [Peru](#).
- You can also check this online [overview of many different jewellery associations worldwide](#).
- Check the membership lists published by some branch associations in Europe for potential buyers.
- Consider using an agent who knows the European markets and can get involved in your promotional activities. For more information on the role of agents, see our study on channels and segments on the European Jewellery market.

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).