In the last few years, French fashion group SMCP has put new countries on its map at breathtaking speed. The group, which owns the Sandro, Maje and Claudie Pierlot ready-to-wear labels, isn’t slowing down either, and it continues to make inroads into new countries, while keeping an eye out for high-potential regions. It intends to sustain its current revenue growth rate of about 13%, which is the group’s target for 2018, now virtually a certainty after the positive performance in the third quarter.

“It’s worth reminding ourselves that, four years ago, France accounted for 70% of SMCP’s revenue,” CEO Daniel Lalonde told FashionNetwork.com. “Nowadays, it accounts for 36% [of the €247.7 million revenue generated in the third quarter]. The group has been growing very fast outside France, but it continues to gain market share on its domestic market too, as it did in the third quarter. The three labels’ consolidated revenue in France lost only 0.1% in the last three months, and it remained stable in the first nine months of the year.

“If we compare this with the figures published by the French Fashion Institute, which recorded a 6.5% sales slump, we are on track with our objective of increasing our market share in France,” said Lalonde. To do so, the strategy of Sandro, Maje and Claudie Pierlot is to keep working on the over 400 monobrand stores it operates in the country, with a focus on quality. “A practical example of this would be the closing down of two small stores to open a much larger one, in a better location and featuring our most recent retail concept, in one of our major cities,” said Lalonde.

While a handful of flagships will be opening at select locations in France, SMCP is expanding its monobrand store network outside France at warp speed. In the course of 12 months, SMCP opened 118 stores - bringing the total beyond 1,400 (between shops and concessions) - of which 32 opened in the last quarter alone. Specifically, 21 new stores were inaugurated in the Asia-Pacific region, 11 in EMEA region (chiefly in the four priority markets, Germany, Spain, Italy and the UK, with new flagships planned on London’s Regent Street) and five in the Americas.
In the last quarter, the two labels present in the Americas, Sandro and Maje, opened several strategically located branches in the US, such as the Maje flagship at the Rockefeller Center in New York. The group’s sustained growth pace is confirmed by its figures: in the third quarter 2018, sales grew by 41.8% year-on-year. In addition to net new openings, e-tail was the group’s other main driver. Its share of SMCP’s Americas business is the largest across the whole group, accounting for over 25% of revenue. Both Sandro and Maje also launched a new e-store for the Canadian market, via the e-commerce platform of their partner Hudson's Bay Company. And Claudie Pierlot is available online in Russia, via the Aizel e-store.

Is SMCP well and truly on its way in the Americas? "We are very happy about our performance in North America," said Lalonde. “The growth rate looks very robust, also because, at the same time last year, our sales were strongly impacted by a hurricane. But this is only half the story. The other half is that the investments we made are paying off," he added. The group is set on a positive trajectory in North America, and it hopes to maintain it with more openings in the fourth quarter. And “in the medium term” it could launch Claudie Pierlot in this region too.

But for now, Claudie Pierlot, the label which joined the SMCP group most recently [in 2009], is now busy in another new market, Asia. In the last few months, the label opened its first Asian stores, in Hong Kong and more recently in Shanghai and Beijing.

In total, the group, whose majority shareholder is the Chinese giant Shandong Ruyi, currently operates 153 stores in Greater China. The target is to treble the number in the next few years, with 35 to 45 openings per year.

In Asia, SMCP is also looking at China's neighbouring markets. It has already indicated it wants to expand in Japan and, like many of its counterparts, has set its sights on Southeast Asia, where it's currently only present in Singapore, though Lalonde emphasised this is a “medium-term” objective. “Right now, we are most keen to exploit the opportunities in North America and China, because they seem to us the biggest in the short term,” he added.

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