

As part of its global strategy, Triumph International is about to embark on a retail expansion programme in the UK. **ZABIAN SOUTHWOOD** caught up with Triumph UK's new general manager, sales and marketing, Petri Haikola to discover what this will mean for the consumer.

# Fresh impetus to a changing market



■ Petri Haikola

**Triumph International, one of the world's largest manufacturers of underwear with 42,500 employees and an annual turnover exceeding £1bn, has its sights** set firmly on growing its UK and Irish business. Enter Petri Haikola, newly appointed UK general manager, sales and marketing. He has clear ideas about winning market share for the brand.

Between them the UK and Ireland represent

one of the biggest target markets for the whole group, surpassed only by Japan and Germany. So Haikola sees plenty of potential.

"The UK lingerie market is extremely competitive, with a high share of private labels and numerous branded suppliers," says Haikola, who stepped into the role in April to replace the joint managing director, marketing and sales, David Hornbuckle. "Still, we have all the good reasons to anticipate an increase in our market share in the

UK and Ireland in the future. My role encompasses the strategic sales and marketing planning for Triumph UK and Ireland and the responsibility to implement the chosen strategy with the local teams. I put a major emphasis on understanding the consumer better and thus identifying the target groups we can best serve with our developing brand portfolio. It sounds all fine and theoretical, but it's actually a very down-to-earth approach: who should we really address, where and how?"

Haikola already has an in-depth knowledge of the lingerie market in Europe having acted as managing director for Triumph International in Finland for the past five years, which combined with a strong branded background, should stand him in good stead at the group's UK headquarters in Swindon. "I started my career in the textile industry in Finland, moved over to the advertising industry and then to fast-moving consumer goods marketing with Mars Inc. The common element in my career has been the sales and marketing for international, branded consumer goods."

**One of the immediate challenges facing him in the UK is an increasingly competitive** high street, which has already led to a diluted number of distribution points. However, he says he's focusing on the "great market potential" offered by the fact that the UK lingerie market has one of the top European per capita consumption figures, plus boasts a large number of consumers.

Haikola says, "The end consumers are the true queens or the kings of the business, but retail channels play an extremely important role for a product category bought impulsively and with a strong link with visual merchandising. It's of utmost importance to be in the consumer's eye, one way or another."

One way Triumph means to ensure this happens is through standalone Triumph International stores, which unify the entire brand portfolio and are already a hit in countries

