

Sustainability and a handful of trump cards!
In an exclusive interview with textile network,
Tomas Vucurevic gives several tips for
improving ingredient branding.
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market

Braind

Sustainable, great product, what now?

Sustainability is clearly the most crucial topic in the field of textiles, above all for suppliers of raw materials, new textiles or specific production processes such as dyeing.

The concept of eco-design requires that we plan for the re-use or disposal of the products as early as during the design and production phase so as to come one step closer to creating a circular economy. Tomas Vucurevic, Founder and Managing Director of Braind and one of the world's leading experts in ingredient branding, states: "We're witnessing a paradigm change from the purely performance-based ingredient brands of the first generation to a more value-based generation of ingredient brands. The performance aspect remains, of course, at the heart of it all." With so many new sustainable labels appearing on the fashion

The Ingredient Branding model offers innovative companies a golden opportunity to market new technologies through the complex textile supply chain. Generating a pull effect through the media, influencers and consumers are, of course, of paramount importance. Ingredient Brands that have relied solely on the "push effect" in recent years are increasingly losing visibility.

In an industry career spanning over 20 years, Tomas Vucurevic, Managing Director of Braind, previously held various managerial positions in the fields of brand management and marketing & sales for global brands such as Swatch, Motorola and Gore-Tex. © Braind



market, textile network asked him for a few tips for suppliers of sustainable materials and technologies – particularly for newcomers.

Thomas Vucurevic: "The major labels, retailers and fashion brands are, of course, acutely interested in new sustainable materials as a way of improving their life cycle assessment and, above all, their marketing and branding position. At Braind, we have identified five main points which may be of importance to suppliers of sustainable materials or technologies. Companies who fail to carve out a clear definition or preference in their field will find it difficult to assert themselves in the 'jungle of sustainable products and labels'."

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1. Overcoming inertia

First of all, the inertia of the current supply chain has to be overcome. The processes used in the processing and production of textiles are well over a century old. Raw materials are processed into yarns, yarns into fabrics, fabrics into garments, then products are dyed, finished and finally marketed and sold. The machines and processes are all tuned to this pattern. So if, for example, you wanted to change the dyeing process of polyester by dyeing not the finished product but the polyester chips before they are even spun into yarn because you want to make huge savings in water and chemical consumption, this would require a significant change to the process sequence within the supply chain. A company that wishes to succeed in this area not only has to supply its customers with new dyeing technology but also has to help them adjust or change their production process accordingly.

Since 2011 Braind has consulted over 30 projects, in 13 countries and on three continents. One example is Amsilk.
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2. Brand first

In the past, companies would initially develop and test a product and then start thinking about how to market it. Today, this trend is largely reversed. Many new startups and suppliers of sustainable materials develop the brand long before the corresponding product or technology is even available in sufficient volumes. This is partly to do with the media and influencers who have an insatiable appetite for new stories on the topic of sustainability. A strong brand profile, and also the ability to create a desire around the product even before it is available naturally helps when negotiating with potential customers or when looking for possible investors.

3. No exclusivity

Avoid the exclusivity trap. As already mentioned, fashion brands and retail chains are always on the look-out for new sustainable materials to improve their life cycle assessment and thus also their market position in the ever more fiercely contested and critically viewed textile market. This is why these companies go scouting for sustainable innovations with a view to capturing them early on and if possible clinching exclusivity. Although at first glance exclusivity with a major, reputed brand manufacturer sounds promising and is a great reference, it can also lead to a certain amount of dependence on one supplier. Brands also have a tendency to monopolise the emerging sustainability story for themselves, leaving very little room for the material manufacturer to develop its own brand narrative. Another disadvantage of exclusivity is that only the wide availability of innovative or new materials encourages consumers to place their trust in them, gradually changing their buying behaviour. As soon as a new, sustainable technology is offered only by one manufacturer, it is quickly accused of performing a "marketing stunt" or "greenwashing".

4. Quick availability

One of the central problems of almost all new sustainable textile technologies is the ability to guarantee quick and reliable delivery in the quality and volumes required. If you have managed to spread the word about an idea or a technology, it is imperative to supply the market with corresponding volumes quickly so that you can capitalise on the interest you have generated among consumers and the media. Companies face a huge technical challenge when trying to integrate new and innovative materials into the long and complex supply chain. If this does not succeed, there is a high risk that the initial euphoria will wane and the market will go in search of other solutions.

5. Jockeying for position

In the meantime, there are hundreds, if not thousands of new developments for sustainable solutions in the textiles industry. There are solutions for raw materials, for yarns and fibres, for further processing and for finishing. The list continues in the field of process control and transparency with respect to authenticity, production, working conditions and environmental impact. All these solutions are competing with each other to gain a slice of the resources held by brands, retailers and consumers.

Harold Weghorst,
Lenzing AG:
"For us Braind is
much more than
just a consultant."
Picture: Lenzing
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