

Digital textile

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ASIAN GATEWAY TO FUTURE SUCCESS

Polyprint's **George Vouliotis** outlines the company's plan to expand its presence in Asia and educate the region on the benefits of DTG printing. **Joe Link** reports

We have already seen a number of exciting direct-to-garment (DTG) product launches in 2019 and with ITMA Barcelona fast approaching we are expecting the DTG market to continue its fast-paced evolution.

Now that OEMs are beginning to iron out some of the longstanding issues associated with DTG printing, such as a restricted colour gamut and problematic rub-fastness, a race is developing to expand the technology in emerging markets.

Greek-based DTG specialist Polyprint has embraced this task by joining forces with Vietnamese distributor and small-scale DTG equipment manufacturer Fluxmall DTG. Following a period of innovation at Polyprint, which resulted in the launch of the all-new TexJet echo2, the company has also undergone a rebrand. With its fresh look and new technology, the company feels it is now

ready to expand its presence in Asia.

"We decided it was time to reintroduce ourselves to our old and new potential customers," says Polyprint marketing director, George Vouliotis. "The first step to be taken towards this was the rebrand. We wanted to showcase the benefits our customers receive, starting with the brand-new TexJet echo2 DTG printer. This machine offers the highest print quality for the lowest cost per print. New additions include the Cadlink Digital Factory Apparel Polyprint Edition v10 software – a complete suite of automation features that make production easier and faster – as well as the new P5003 pre-treatment solution that shortens fixation time and is tunnel dryer compatible. In an attempt to make the TexJet echo2 a personalised machine, we created a range of options that the customer can select to best fit their business needs."

Vouliotis also states that Polyprint is working on new innovations and hopes to be able to make more big announcements throughout the remainder of 2019. This level of innovation is why Polyprint and Fluxmall have agreed to target young and enthusiastic businessmen and women in South-East Asia. In a traditional industry it is challenging for OEM's to sell their tech-infused solutions to a manufacturer that has used traditional technology for decades. It usually works to a decent standard and is relatively reliable, so industry veterans often don't see the value in implementing digitalised solutions.

However, the millennial generation – whose



Polyprint has undergone a rebrand prior to its Asian expansion

lives have been nurtured by digital technology – are much more likely to see the benefits of implementing digital manufacturing technology, according to Fluxmall.

“We know that Fluxmall DTG had its solid strategy of how to best present our machines to the market, working primarily with a younger generation of businessmen,” says Vouliotis. “The echo2 machine has already been exposed on VTG 2018 and several workshops in local and international universities. By watching customer testimonial videos, we are happy with what has been already achieved and have a strong hope in the future for our brand in Vietnam and the surrounding region.”

Target market

Additionally, Vouliotis is confident that Polyprint’s range of digital printers are best suited to small to medium-sized start-ups. He adds: “Be it the low initial investment, low running and maintenance costs, ease of use, and to top it all off the remarkable print quality that comes with the lowest cost per print, the DTG printer models that Polyprint offers are the ideal, safe and dependable choice for start-ups and small businesses that want to scale-up. Considering all the costs involved, what we offer to our customers is a cost-effective solution that ensures a fast return of investment.”

To date, from a sales perspective, Polyprint’s TexJet plus and TexJet echo machines have been the most successful in South-East Asia. According to Vouliotis, this is because “they are characterised by an oversized printable area of 41x60cm and are ideally suited to serving the fashion industry with all-over prints on cut pieces. Their visibility in offering a variety of different sized platens made them the most versatile choice for a wide range of applications to cover every customer’s need. We are expecting the TexJet echo2 to surpass its predecessor’s achievements.”

Knowledge is power

But rising competition from China, the world’s largest digital textile printing market, could hinder Polyprint’s South-East Asian expansion. Currently, DTG solutions have not yet garnered much popularity in China – dye-sublimation printing remains very dominant – but this could change quickly. Vouliotis believes that Polyprint’s knowledge in this field will be key to its success.

He says: “The fact that we are a strong brand known in many countries in the western world, the robust build and outstanding industrial design of our machines, and our European approach to customer service and support means we are starting this journey in a strong position. Traditionally, strong Japanese companies are also around,



The TexJet echo2 is Polyprint’s latest DTG printer

but we trust there is still enough space for everyone in this very young Asian market.”

A reason why Vouliotis believes there is room for everyone in South-East Asia’s DTG market is due to the technology’s importance to the region’s textile industry and future business models. With over three million people working in Vietnam’s textile industry alone, Vouliotis is confident business leaders and governments are going to take the technology seriously when they see how it can enhance the country’s textile market.

“Living in a fast-paced society calls for the most efficient and effective solutions in the least amount of time. Plus, the rapid development of technology points out the advantages of the digital world. DTG technology combines accurate and quality results with short turnaround times making it an economically advantageous printing solution. The ability to easily print multicolour complex designs along with the potential to print on a variety of garments provides unlimited combinations to achieve the desired result, without having to settle for less,” Vouliotis says.

“On the other hand, the public awareness of issues related to the environment urges the use of technologies that are more environmentally friendly,” Vouliotis continues. “While most traditional printing methods waste big amounts of energy and products, DTG printing does exactly the opposite. The simplicity of the process, as well as the ability to only print what is necessary on-demand, significantly reduces the amount of energy waste and the number of products going into the process. In addition, the use of water-based pigment inks introduces a new, more environmentally-safe approach.”

Currently, the DTG sector in South-East Asia remains weak and there is limited choice for textile manufacturers looking to invest in the technology. This means there is high growth potential for larger western OEM’s if they market themselves correctly. Polyprint has already taken measures to do this in an honest and open way, according to Vouliotis.