

Utilising DTG to transform Vietnamese fortunes

By Joe Link 23 October 2019

Joseph Link reports on the relationship between Vietnamese duo MessUp and Fluxmall DTG and how they plan to revolutionise the fashion and textile industry in the south-east Asian nation.



Dmitry Sarbaev, Fluxmall DTG managing director, trains the MessUp team on how to utilise DTG technology

The print-on-demand (POD) and customisation trends are often associated with western economies, but according to Fluxmall DTG's sales account executive Dang Pham, the mandate for a POD business model, and the customised products it affords, have always been present in Vietnam. But the issue, Pham says, is neither business model nor trend has been executed effectively in comparison to western markets.

To combat this and to gain ground on prospering western economies, where POD start-ups are emerging more frequently, Fluxmall DTG has teamed up with MessUp to "enrich the lifestyles of Vietnamese people by providing a tool that allows them to create their own outerwear". The aim of this collaboration is to not only create its own POD production setup in two major cities – Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City – but further enable new print businesses to fulfil MessUp's orders locally in smaller cities. This idea finds its inspiration in the success of US-based Inklocker.

MessUp, which in Vietnam plans to serve the north of the country from Hanoi while Fluxmall will focus on the south out of Ho Chi Minh City, is a brand of HT Digital Global and the brand's founders, Dao Hoang Tung and Nguyen Thai Ha, are well travelled. They have lived and worked in the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Russia and New Zealand – as well as Vietnam – and have also spent time in the US, Japan,

France, Netherlands, Belgium, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. Experiences in these countries have enabled Dao and Nguyen to acquire detailed information on how to make a success of the POD business model and customisation trend. They state that the market's potential in Vietnam, and the cost of production, were two contributing factors for embarking on this journey.



A MessUp delegation was invited to Fluxmall's headquarters to learn more about DTG

INTEGRATING SOFTWARE

Consequently, MessUp has taken on the responsibility of creating a web-based platform and mobile phone application, while Fluxmall has been entrusted with providing DTG solutions which are fast and reliable enough to meet a growing demand.

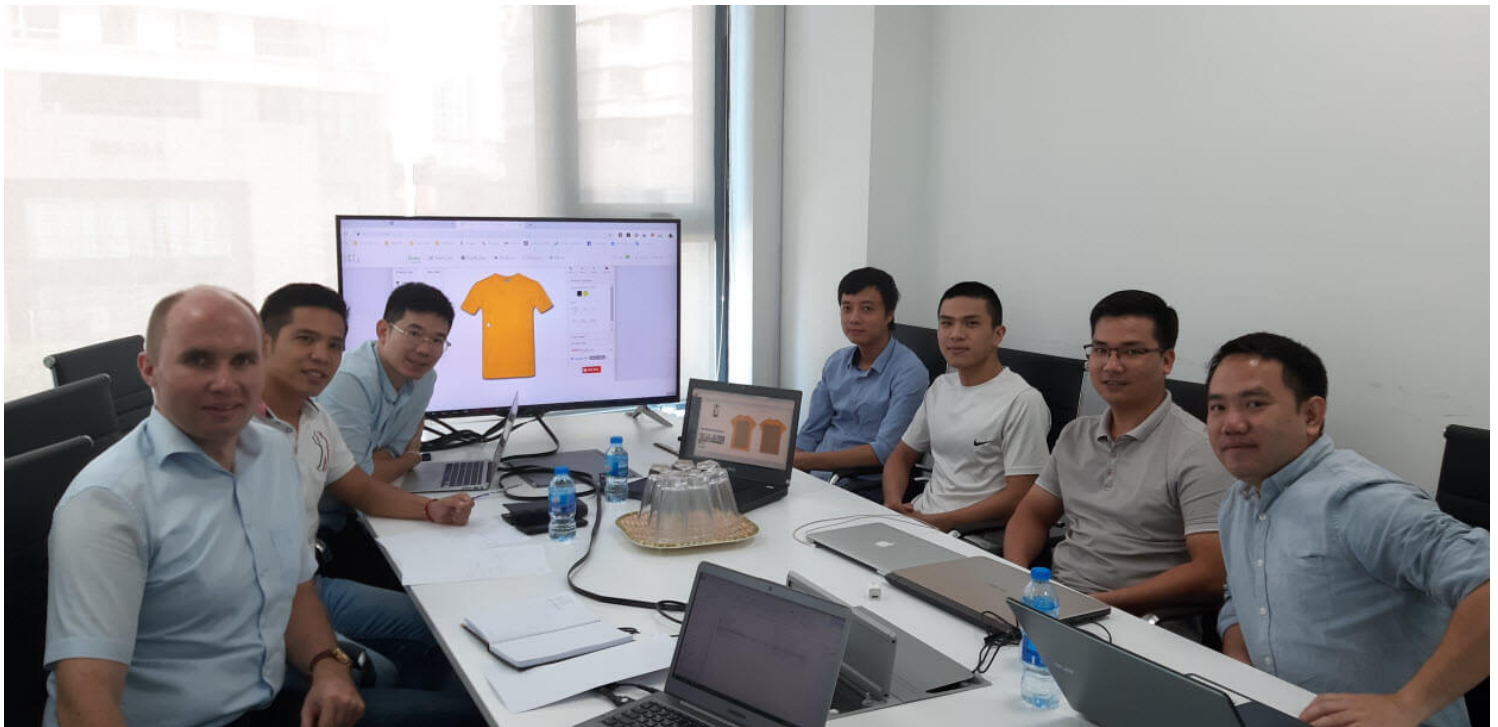
MessUp purchased its first digital DTG printer from Fluxmall in October 2019 – the Polyprint TexJet echo² – which, according to Fluxmall DTG managing director Dmitry Sarbaev, “offers MessUp the lowest real cost per print along with great quality”.

Sarbaev adds: “The solution that we have proposed is fully scalable and will allow MessUp to add more machines to the production line in the future as printing volumes increase.

“The POD business model that MessUp has chosen implies the necessity to process a lot of metadata: the garment's colours and the positioning of the artwork, for example. Through manual labour, this is almost impossible because human error will lead to a high number of misprinted shirts – especially if, or when, production volumes increase.

“Therefore, we have proposed to integrate the app and use the automated features within Cadlink's Digital Factory v10 Polyprint Edition: barcodes; sending XML data with precise location of the artwork on the platen to minimise the manual labour; and let the DTG operator focus on the print quality.”

Without digital printing technology, the POD model would struggle to get off the ground. It relies on the flexibility of inkjet solutions. With digital technology, complex designs can now be printed at a rate faster than was ever possible with analogue alternatives. Additionally, it is more affordable to print one-off products and, generally speaking, the entire production process is much cleaner. But according to Dao and Nguyen, the two standout benefits of digital DTG printing are shorter lead times and better-quality artwork.



Fluxmall officials travelled to a meeting with MessUp's IT team Hanoi

COLLABORATION

To last beyond its infancy, it was always going to be advantageous for Messup to find a distributor that applies the same innovative approach to manufacturing as MessUp does to business operations. Dao and Nguyen admit, thanks to Sarbaev and his team at Fluxmall DTG's headquarters in Ho Chi Minh City, they have learnt a great deal about digital textile printing and why DTG is the technology which suits their needs.

"Fluxmall DTG has been very supportive to MessUp so far," says Nguyen. "At the very beginning, Fluxmall introduced its DTG offerings with detailed presentations and guidelines. Until now, Fluxmall also assisted us with technical issues and comments on developing the platform further."

But the arrangement between the two companies brings with it benefits for both parties. Sarbaev says: "It's been a pleasure to work with MessUp and share our industry experience, both as DTG solution providers and printers as well.

"We also learn a lot together with them: how to optimise the workflow and how to integrate their back-end software with our RIP software and machine interfaces. It's been a good journey so far. We have proposed to them how to improve production as we run printing tests with them, and we are also training their operators so they know how to maximise their machine's potential."



Fluxmall officials travelled to a meeting with MessUp's IT team Hanoi

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Education and transparency is critical in emerging markets if digital textile solutions are going to take off. Investing in what is an expensive piece of kit and not knowing how to use it effectively could negatively impact on the number of inkjet textile printer installations in the country. Word of mouth plays an important role in this: if businesses report difficulties following the implementation of an inkjet textile printer, the technology's reputation – and that of the OEM and distributor involved in the sale of the machinery – will be negatively impacted upon.

For that reason, Sarbaev has adopted an honest and transparent approach to sales which he believes “gives his customers the best possible chance of success.”

So, other than initially providing ‘detailed presentations and guidelines’ to its customers, Sarbaev often visits leading industry events and conferences, such as FESPA Asia, to share his expertise with start-ups that could benefit from inkjet technology. The fact that Sarbaev has witnessed “a big shift from screen printing to digital DTG among young fashion brands” contributed to his decision to attend key industry events across Asia.

Sarbaev adds: “This shift is happening in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City areas, but we expect in the next few years that this trend will penetrate into smaller cities because the young generation in Vietnam is very entrepreneurial. This trend is driven by fast fashion and it helps to expose what DTG is capable of doing – namely very small runs (even individual one-offs) of printed garments with full-colour artwork.”

Currently, the retail sector, despite being heavily influenced by the fast-fashion trend, does not provide consumers with enough variety, critics argue. Shoppers are becoming bored of what high-street retailers, in particular, are offering. POD and web-to-print businesses have since emerged so that consumers can dictate what is printed on their clothes. It is also argued that customised clothing will help to reduce the quantity of fabric that goes to landfill each year.

“Surely, once young people become aware of this, they would also want to use their own full-colour artwork and customise it. Everyone wants to wear something unique, which will highlight you in the crowd or bring you good memories once you put it on,” Sarbaev says.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Sarbaev, along with MessUp founders Dao and Nguyen, are confident that Vietnam's textile industry is on the brink of a significant breakthrough. And, if successful in its quest, MessUp plans to expand into home furnishings and other markets that can benefit equally as much from inkjet solutions.

"We are absolutely blessed to live and work in a country that is doing so well," says Sarbaev. "The economy is growing and, more importantly, Vietnam is home to many young talented people who have earned their degrees abroad before returning home where they are now establishing new businesses which often follow new emerging models.

Fluxmall, since day one, has had the vision to become the number one DTG solutions provider. By earning that tag, the company hopes to bring value to such entrepreneurs and teach a younger generation how to use state-of-the art machinery and software.

"MessUp is a prime example of a fresh innovative business that wants to transform the fashion and textile industry in Vietnam," says Sarbaev. "So far, our efforts and their enthusiasm have created very good synergy. This is key to running a successful business which, if executed correctly, will help make Vietnam an even better place to live and work."

In order to increase the speed of this vision, Fluxmall DTG has welcomed a number of delegates from western markets who were keen to learn more about Vietnamese fashion and textile market. "This is the path we take to increase Vietnam's exposure to the Western world and help DTG businesses thrive in the country," Sarbaev concludes.

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