



APPAREL / TRADE TALK

The fabric manufacturers in India are innovating and adapting to newer ways to create a stronger export access. BINDU GOPAL RAO highlights some of the newer concepts the industry is adapting to stay strong on the export graph.

FABRICATING BETTER EXPORT REACH

Apparel exports are set to reach US\$20 billion in 2017-18, 13 per cent higher than a year ago, on policy support from the government and a sharp increase in orders from the US, the EU and West Asia. The government had also announced a ₹6,000 crore textile package last year, which adds to the positive export growth too. Duty exemptions like, the refund of state levies also helped the fabric and apparel manufacturers in India to compete with the global players. Let's take a look at how they are changing the dimensions of the export curve!

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Indian textile and apparel companies are doing things differently, which are contributing to an upswing in apparel exports. Globe Textiles is Oeko-Tex certified and all its production facilities have been set up in an environment-friendly manner. They have over 20 in-house designers on board who keep up with the latest trends in fashion contributing to the domestic and international markets. They have also partnered with few external designers and consultants to ensure that they remain updated on new techniques and knowhow. Bhavin Parikh, CEO, Globe Textiles (India) Ltd. says, "The key differentiator that marked our entry into the international denim market was that we chose to go against the tide. We began exporting denim fabrics to China and Hong Kong at a time when Chinese imports into India dominated the scenario. The masterstroke right at the beginning of what was to become a long-standing journey, came through years of research, delving deep into fabric texture and feel, studying fashion trends and demands of the market and assessing self-preparedness to meet client expectations. Between 2008 and 2013, exports dominated the larger pie of operations". Being in the industry for the last 15 years now, starting from a small shirt



trading business, the company has diversified into trading - yarns, dyed and printed fabrics and, denim fabric; and manufacturing denim jeans and bedsheets catering to the domestic as well as global markets. "Initially when we entered the business we found there were too many players in apparel and textiles, but most of them worked in a traditional and unorganised manner. We sensed an opportunity and the potential this held and built strategies to imbibe a modern and organised working culture. Right from the start, we have followed a policy of partnering with suppliers and buyers to build long-term business relations which has worked in our favour."

PRODUCT MIX

Birla Cellulose, the Pulp and Fibre business of Aditya Birla Group is a global leader in Man Made Cellulosic Fibres (MMCF) and



a pioneer in India in Viscose Staple Fibre (VSF). A versatile and easily blend-able fibre, VSF is used in apparel, home textiles, and non-woven applications. It has increasingly become the fibre of choice for womenswear apparel for woven and knits for the attributes of fluidity and comfort, leading to fashion. Liva stands for high quality fabric made using natural cellulosic fibres of Aditya Birla Group delivered through an accredited value chain for guaranteed performance. Liva imparts softness and comfort to the fabric. "We are into manufacturing Cellulose Fibres i.e. Viscose, Spun dyed Viscose, Modal and, Excel. These are raw materials for the textile industry which attributes for, absorbency and comfort in addition to being a natural raw material. We have a robust team for value chain management who have created a forum, called 'Liva Accredited Partner Forum' (LAPF) to support them for the usage of our fibre. Some of our key support areas to our partners in value chain are, design & development, technical support, vendor management, marketing and buyer link support, and market intelligence support," says Aseem Doda, VP- Hub Marketing, Grasim Industries, Birla Cellulose. The Globe Textiles textile business is divided primarily into two segments - dyed, printed fabrics and home textile. "We have partnered with almost seven to eight, different processing houses in and around Ahmedabad and Surat. This has helped us to reduce our lead times, right from designing to deliverance. The second is Denim Garments and we are currently manufacturing 1.80 lakh pieces per month. In-house manufacturing is strong with, over 500 machines, more than 800 workers, and the latest machinery and equipment from leading Japanese company - Juki. We have a unique set of machinery, especially tailor-made with an eye on details,

as per our product requirement. We also work with engineered fabrics. We do a detailed analysis on yarns and fabrics, based on which we propose different possible base qualities to our buyers,” says Parikh.

CHALLENGES GALORE

With the changing times, customers have started shifting their business practices from traditional methods to a more organised method. More and more systems are coming into place and people have started following international standards. Secondly, social

compliance and fair trade compliances are becoming a necessity for every business to grow. Customers have become more quality conscious, demanding and requiring faster conversion from design to deliverance. “It has become difficult to maintain exclusivity, so we have strategies to invent and re-invent all the time. New products and new ideas are encouraged rather than opting for a limited portfolio. We always try and focus on creating something new, so that our clients gain from being a first mover,” says Parikh. “At Birla Cellulose there are continuous challenges, which are usually resolved by co-creating solutions for customers. Exclusivity is maintained by constant innovation, we are committed to deliver the best of the products. Also we have invested a lot in building the brand which also helps us in maintaining the exclusivity for the consumer,” says Doda.

NEW VISTAS

In a bid to capture new markets textile companies are innovating. “At Birla Cellulose we have always had a strong endeavour to offer something new to our customers by creating differentiation in fibre, yarn, grey fabric construction and finishing of fabric in line with consumer demand. All our product innovations have strong consumer insights as base. Such that these innovations cater to specific consumer needs. We have recently launched ‘Liva Sno’ which is an optically bright fibre wherein, the consumer will have a white garment. Even after repeated washes the white tone of the same will not fade. Next in line are our ‘Anti Microbial’ fibres which fall under the functional fibre category,” says Doda. Globe Textiles is doing printed and dyed fabrics for end use in kaftans, sarongs,

dress materials and shirting for men. Denims for men, women and kids have been a success and they are also planning to come up with their own brand by January next year.

EXPORT TALK

Exports have grown gradually and have been commendable over the years for business. “For the last few years, government policies and technological advancements have also helped exports holistically. We export dyed and printed fabrics to Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar, South America, and the Gulf. Denim Jeans are exported to Poland, Portugal and GCC countries. Bedsheets are exported to Israel and Germany. As of now Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cambodia, and Vietnam are big competitors to India. Those countries are preferred countries to import as compared to Europe and the US due to GSP, FTA, and

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incentives. This has taken away a large pie of the business from India. This has also hindered new businesses from entering India. India also needs to get into such agreements to boost exports. Secondly, compliance has been a major game changer where India has to work very hard in order to get the business. Furthermore, government agencies push exporters to meet standard compliance requirement,” says Parikh. Viscose has seen a definite growth in exports, with categories like women tops being one of the highlights. “One of the key reasons behind this upward trend is that globally customers are looking at innovation and quality products and we are working in close coordination along with our entire value chain to ensure we meet these critical demands. We have our seasonal collections coming out twice a year and these are made along with WGSN such that they are in line with the international trends. Add to it, we are working with the value chain to take care of issues like, shrinkage and pilling, etc. Working closely with our LAPF partners to create a pull for their products from international markets, has borne fruit even in these difficult times. We are also working on chemical management with leading process houses for reducing green house gas impact,” says Doda. The world is moving towards fast fashion as well as differentiating in functional performance. Again, due to increased exposure to the international brands and markets, the consumer has started demanding the latest trends and the best quality in the garments. The industry, recognising this factor, has left no stone unturned to ensure they are on the top, when it comes to delivering to the consumer. This thirst for excellence is driving exporters to give the best of their service to their consumers. ■

