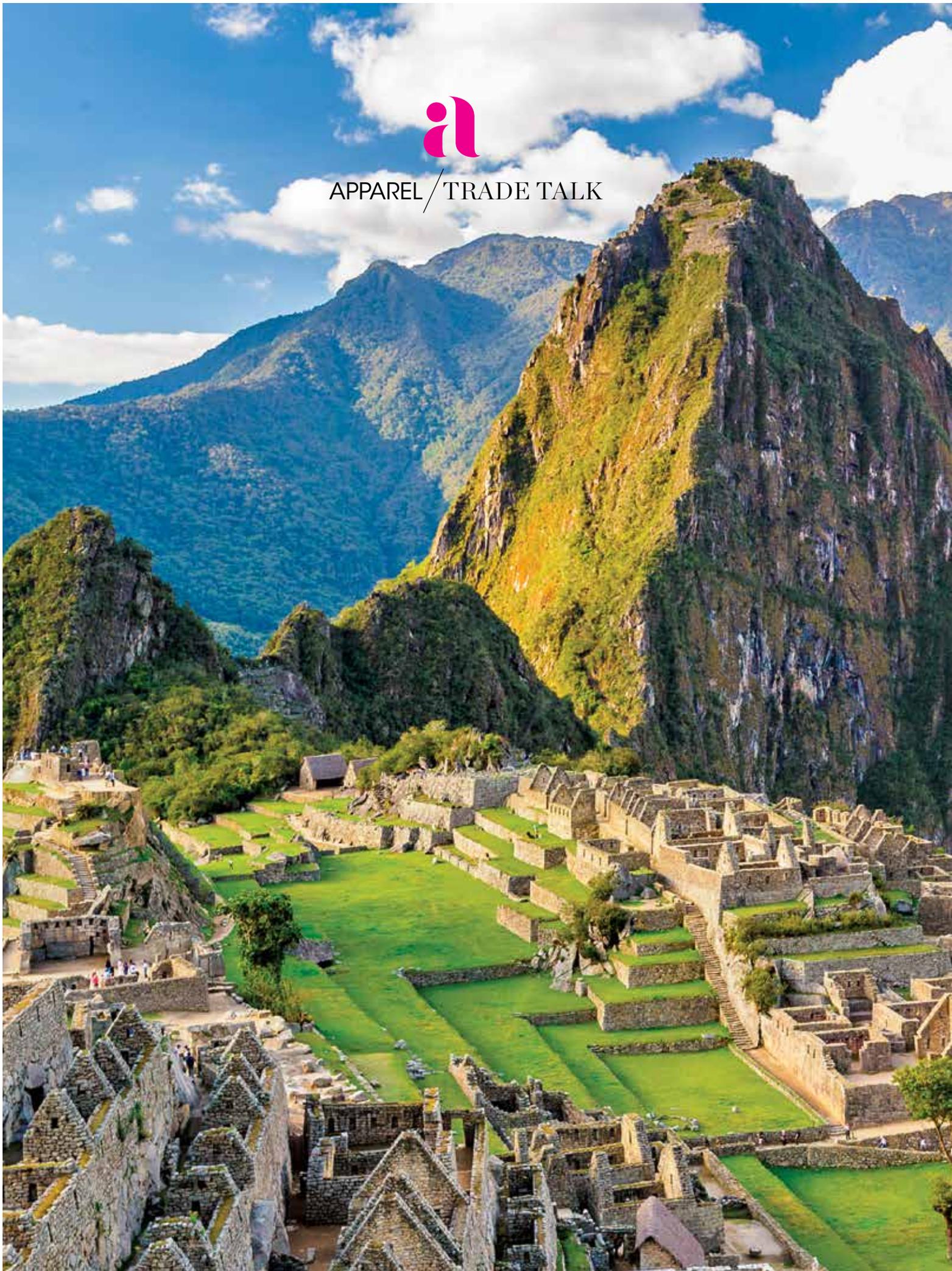
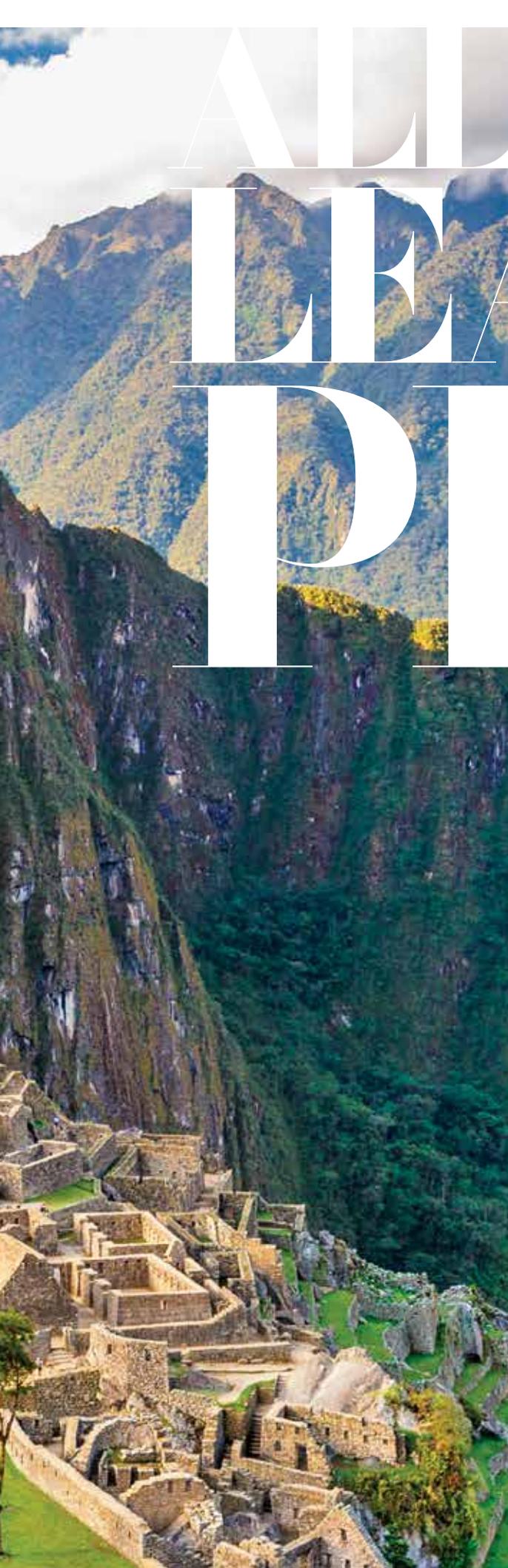




APPAREL / TRADE TALK



# ALL ROADS LEAD TO PERU



**Peru has been in the news recently, for something quite different and this is related to apparel. Well, the country is now a popular sourcing option for brands looking for quality garments at great prices. Bindu Gopal Rao dissects the reasons, leading to Peru's upward journey.**

**I**nternational brands with the most renowned and prestigious labels are increasingly associating with Peru for developing their collections with domestic manufacturers in the country. According to statistics, Peru's textile industry employs approximately 250,000 people, and textiles and garment manufacturers account for more than 30 per cent of the non-traditional exports in Peru. Peru also provides 80 per cent of the world's supply of alpaca wool.

## **MATERIAL MATTERS**

A key factor that is driving this trend is the fact, that Peru has high quality yarns and availability of prime materials. Coupled with good service standards and a quick response time, the designs are creative and manufacturing and delivery time standards are quite impeccable. The main materials here include the alpaca and cotton fibres which are of superior quality standards that have naturally become very sought after. In fact, Peru makes 80 per cent of the world's alpaca yarn and the softness of the Peruvian fleece - the ease with which this fabric is amenable to dye and weave gives it an added advantage. Alpaca, in fact, is known for its thermic properties and is light with a silky



touch. Additionally, this fibre does not contain lanolin, and does not cause any skin allergies and is also more durable than cashmere. Additionally, knitted cotton garments made with Pima cotton is another speciality here. This fabric gets its softness from both its length and silky texture. Also the Tangüis cotton has a high degree of dye absorption, which makes it the perfect choice for printing. With ideal growing conditions for Pima, Peru is one of the few countries that can grow it on a large scale. This is why brands like Lacoste, Ralph Lauren, Vineyard Vines, Hanna Andersson, Lululemon, Under Armour, Armani Exchange, Hugo Boss, L L Bean, Lands' End, Life is Good, J Jill, Tommy Bahama, Guess, Kirkland, Vince, Zara, Express, and Ragman have Peruvian partners. Siddharth Saigal, Entrepreneur & Head of Wrap Studio, opines, "Peruvian

garments are made from alpaca and cotton fibres. This textile is a superior fabric that is extensively used to produce garments. The speciality of the Peruvian textile lies in the softness and ease of dyeing and weaving of the cloth. Iconic international brands are also demanding for this supremely artistic fabric because of these reasons. Since, Peru as a nation is known for its fine craftsmanship, tourists from other nations are also inclined towards this fabric and it's always interesting to learn about this traditional textile from the natives. Although, it's a small country of South America with a rather uneasy history – courtesy to the fact that it was conquered by the Spanish Empire in the 16th century, however people managed to save their rich traditions, customs and beliefs. It's a good idea to promote growth through something that the nation is superior in."

## FABRIC FIRST

Almost synonymous with Peruvian apparel, sourcing professionals relate to Pima cotton. The fibre is ideal for making eye-catching, modern garments and is a favourite with U S consumers who recognise and appreciate the fabric as it is both soft as well as durable. In fact, the Peruvian Pima cotton garments hold up mainly because it does not peel and manages to retain its bright luster. The main difference is the staple length as compared to others as Pima cotton staple length is around one inch, while ordinary cotton measures about half an inch. Also, the Pima fibre is harvested only by hand, which brings a cleaner fibre compared to industrial harvesting methods, which is a big added advantage. Peruvian Pima cotton is also more versatile as compared to regular cotton which is not possible to spin into fine yarns. With Pima, the fibre can be spun into 100 singles, 120 singles or 140 singles. And even though Peruvian Pima cotton costs 10 to 15 percent more than regular cotton, the quality is so good that that these garments can be sold in the retail market at higher prices which gives manufacturers a good profit margin too. Naturally this fabric finds favour with major companies like Armani Exchange, Tory Burch, Kenneth Cole and Rebecca Taylor as it becomes a natural fit for products in a premium market. This fabric is also seeing a niche in baby clothing, which takes advantage of Pima's softness and natural anti-allergy properties, both of which are ideal for this segment. "Peruvian fabric is an interesting fabric made from alpaca and cotton fabric. The texture of the cloth is extensively and widely used to produce garments like dresses, ponchos, shawls, sweaters, etc. This textile is colourful and bright and comes in a striking colour that is rather thick and warm, perfect



**Peruvian fabric is an interesting fabric made from alpaca and cotton fabric. The texture of the cloth is extensively and widely used to produce garments like dresses, ponchos, shawls, sweaters, etc. This textile is colourful and bright and comes in a striking colour that is rather thick and warm, perfect for the winter season. Also, the most authentic Peruvian fabric is supremely lightweight and it feels cold when one first touches it, and if it does not, it is probably not real but rather fake.**

for the winter season. Also, the most authentic Peruvian fabric is supremely light-weight and it feels cold when one first touches it, and if it does not, it is probably not real but rather fake," says Saigal. To ensure consumers get appropriate value for their money, the Peruvian Trade Commission has been doing much to promote and market the Peruvian Pima cotton. As part of this, they have also created a Peru Textiles brand to promote the sale of garments using the fibre. The Commission also continues to support Peruvian designs and brands around the world and participates in trade shows that showcase the fabric's versatility. Peru has positioned itself as a high-quality textile country thanks to good workmanship and premium materials such as Pima cotton, the Alpaca fibre and Tanguis cotton which is also a long staple fibre highly valued by manufacturers as well as by consumers.

### **ADVANTAGE PERU**

Apart from its fibre advantages, the manufacturing sector in Peru is technologically advanced, especially as far as textile based machinery as well as development and processes are concerned. In fact the best part of the industry is that it still manages to be true to its roots and supports local artisans who have expertise in hand-knitting which is a great way to merge technology with age-old craftsmanship to give the country's fabrics a unique touch. The other factor that augurs well for Peru is the fact that in spite of having these wonderfully superior fibres and innovated processes, the Peruvian manufacturers have a competitive pricing policy. Also, Peru has duty-free status when shipping into the U S, Canada and Europe which is a huge cost advantage for the international market.



### **LOOKING AHEAD**

Peru plans to double its textile and apparel exports by 2017 and invest over US\$60 million to promote its key designer brands in international markets. In fact, the country's value-added exports totaled US\$11 billion last year, of which US\$2.2 billion came from textiles, apparel and footwear. Apart from promoting its exports abroad, the country is also looking to strike free trade deals with Australia, Brazil, and Russia, in the near future. And as Peru works to promote itself in new markets in the US, Europe and Asia, it is likely that its exports should double to US\$4.4 billion by 2017. Also, exports to Asia have been growing 15 per cent a year and the country is looking to build stronger brands to combat the highly competitive Vietnamese and Bangladeshi brands. Peru's Production Ministry will team with private





India can offer Peruvian entrepreneurs high quality products at competitive prices," says Saigal. Peru also wants to enter new markets by participating in trade shows where the designers will be able to show their collections on the runway. It will also strike commercial alliances with shopping malls to launch promotion campaigns enabling designers to show their best cotton, vicuna and alpaca wears. The strategy calls for these designers to eventually open mall boutiques. With so much going for Peru, it is little wonder then that the fabrics of this country are finding an audience worldwide. ■

investors to finance the global expansion of a string of established and emerging designer brands. These trademarks include Kuna and Michelle Belau, in addition to those being created by emerging star designers Meche Correa, Sergio Davila, Jose Valdivia, Harumi Mamoto and Sumy Kujon and Peru will work to promote these designers in trade fairs around the world. "Due to the Make in India initiative by Modi government, today, the textile and apparel sector is the second largest employment provider in India. Hence, it is an advantage for India and Peru - if Peru imports textile and raw materials from India.

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