

Innovation drives outdoor sector growth

Product innovation is the key driver of ongoing growth in the outdoor sector if the recent US Outdoor Retailer show which took place in Salt Lake City is anything to go by. Our US correspondent, **Linda Keppinger** reports.

An estimated 22,000 people attended this year's annual Outdoor Retailer event which took place in Salt Lake City. 1,060 brands exhibited at the show, with 19 per cent of these first-timers – a sign, possibly, of the ongoing strength of the outdoor sector in the USA.

"Outdoor Retailer is the gathering place for specialty retailers and industry brands," Marisa Nicholson, VP and Outdoor Retailer Show director. "This event is the epicentre of our industry, where the entire community can come together to not only conduct business but to celebrate the people and the accomplishments, and to collaborate and engage in a more personal, face-to-face

way. The outdoor industry is connected by its passion, and Outdoor Retailer is the heart."

Figures from the NPD Group back-up the notion that the outdoor industry is in robust shape right now. NPD reports that outdoor industry sales in the US were up 6.7 per cent in dollars to US\$18.8bn in the year to October 2015.

Matt Powell, sports industry analyst, The NPD Group, said: "Millennials embrace the values of the outdoor industry and want to share those values in the way they dress, play, work and express themselves. This trend has been working to the advantage of the outdoor apparel, footwear and equipment industries in 2015."

A glance at some of the offerings on show at Outdoor Retailer would suggest that it is innovation which is doing most to drive sales in this sector.

Among the highlights this year were Italian thermal insulation company Thermore unveiling its 'Thermal Booster' insulation line to the US market. Thermal Booster reportedly becomes 20 per cent warmer as the weather gets colder.

"Unlike phase-change materials or battery powered heaters, [the Thermal Booster's] effect is continuous and never runs out," said Thermore. "Independent test reports prove that when temperatures from from 20°C to -10°C, the Thermal Booster actually becomes 20 per cent warmer."

An overlooked opportunity: product lifespan

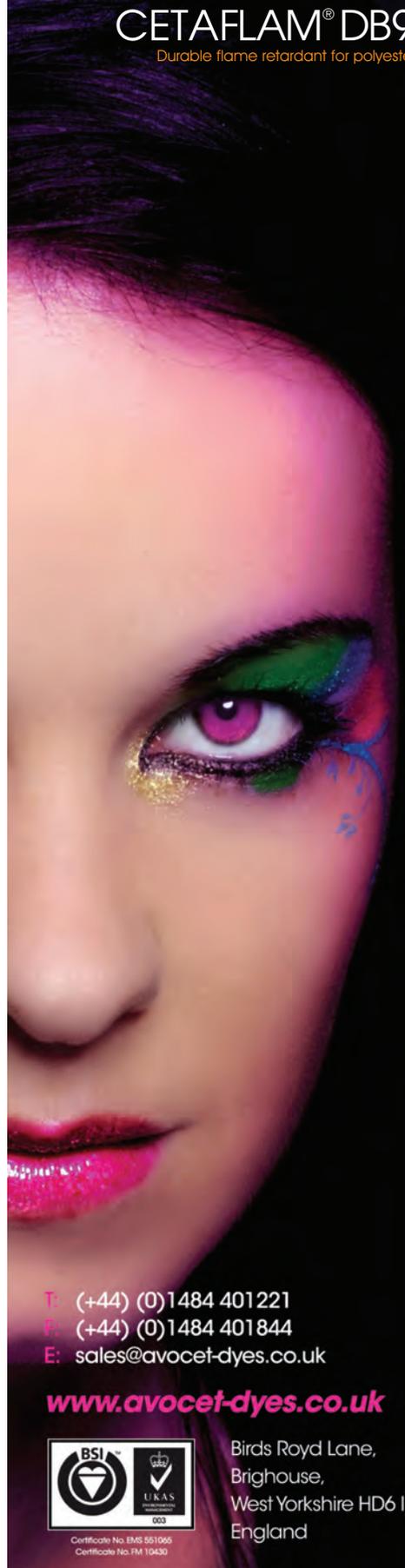
What do a plaid shirt and a red truck have in common? The short answer is two companies – Red Truck Inc. and Pendleton Woolen Mills – which generate product loyalty and give consumers a reason to extend the lifespan of the products they own. Product longevity is often an overlooked aspect of a brand's sustainability strategies during today's fast-fashion movement.



In check: plaid shirts with long lives.

"Classic patterns are kept or handed down," says Kathy Monaghan, brand marketing manager at Pendleton Woolen Mills, as she describes a typical consumer that has worn their wool shirt for years or even decades. "Since natural fibres can safely decompose, if a wool shirt can no longer be worn or repaired, then this provides another eco story for a brand to tell. Additionally, wool is easy care because it doesn't need to be washed as often because of the fibre construction so this reduces the overall environmental footprint of the product. "Consumers can now ask who was the athlete that used this before me?" says Michael Bergmann, CEO and founder of Red Truck Inc. as he describes the athlete's products that are available in the virtual marketplace. "Our innovative business model gives designers and athletes the opportunity to focus on the longevity of the products, and a way to be responsible about its lifecycle." At Red Truck, sports enthusiasts can buy and sell high-end gear that has a story to tell. This gives consumers access to products so they can write the next chapter in the product's life.

A product index is at the heart of a brand's sustainability strategy, which helps to analyse areas for improvement and strategy updates. With an index in place, brands can deepen their conversation with consumers and drive meaningful change by focusing on the product's lifespan. ■



T: (+44) (0)1484 401221
F: (+44) (0)1484 401844
E: sales@avocet-dyes.co.uk

www.avocet-dyes.co.uk



Certificate No. EN45 551066
Certificate No. FM 10430

Birds Royd Lane,
Brighouse,
West Yorkshire HD6 1LQ,
England

GLOBAL REACH LOCAL TOUCH

Cotopaxi – a new value proposition

Cotopaxi, a new outdoor company, is named after the second highest summit in Ecuador where llamas roam nearby. The company funds sustainable poverty alleviation, its unique business model enabling grant-making in developing countries and representing a commitment to sustainable product design and charitable giving.

The Luzon 'Del Dia' backpack is a colourful example of Cotopaxi's "commitment to innovative solutions and products that benefit everyone involved." 'Del Dia' uses remnant fabric at Cotopaxi's factory in the Philippines to make the bags via a manufacturing process which reduces pre-consumer waste by using up excess fabric inventories, thereby creating a value proposition for industry waste.

Since each colour-way of the Del Dia is based on available materials and colours, the Luzon products are always limited editions. CJ Whittaker, co-founder and vice president of product and design, shared his vision with Outdoor Retailer attendees, which is, "to create innovative products and solutions that benefit everyone involved." Also showcased at the 'Made in America' display case was Cotopaxi's collaboration with Polartec - a Power Wool pullover, which is a collaboration in support of the American economy. All Cotopaxi products come with a Human Lifespan Guarantee, which means each product is guaranteed to last 61 years – the average lifespan of a person living in the developing world. ■



"This specially engineered polymer reacts to the temperature of the outside environment, and can increase or decrease the thermal conductivity coefficient of the insulating material by dynamically changing its structure."

Allied Feather & Down, a provider of fill for bags, jackets and more, has a tradition of innovative work in sustainability and animal welfare and its new HyperDRY ECO product is a good example of this. Allied is now offering HyperDRY ECO – a new fluorocarbon-free, water-resistant down – to a few select brands and the company is also working on a plan to make 100-per cent of its waterproof down PFC-free.

W.L. Gore & Associates has also been hugely busy behind the scenes, developing outdoor products which blend functionality with a keen eye on environmental concerns. Gore-Tex Active three-layer, waterproof/breathable technology now features a "permanent beading surface which, uniquely, puts the membrane on the outside, eliminating the need for a face fabric. This lightens the product and prevents wet outs of the exterior surface. Castelli, Arc'teryx and The North Face are among the brands whose products are incorporating this innovation, which negates the requirement for DWR.

Among the offerings of Schoeller Textil AG at the show were 3XDRY, which makes textiles water and stain repellent on the outside and water absorbent on the inside. Schoeller claims clothes finished with 3XDRY keep the body dry, minimise perspiration marks and stimulate a cooling effect.

The 3XDRY Advanced Moisture Management-finish combines two technologies in one textile: on the outside the textiles is finished with a water repellent function (hydrophobic), whereas on the fabric's inside it absorbs perspiration (hydrophilic). As a result, it reliably repels moisture from the outside. Moisture resulting from perspiration is quickly absorbed from the inner side of the textile, transported away from the body and distributed over a large surface area. The appearance, hand or the air permeability features are not influenced by the 3XDRY-finish. ■