KARL MAYER GROUP

An exhibition that impressed



CEO Arno Gärtner shares his thoughts on the highlights of the KARL MAYER GROUP stand at ITMA 2023

The KARL MAYER GROUP was among the companies involved in the recent ITMA trade show in Milan, with a large, inviting stand full of innovations that quickly became the place to be. Visitor feedback confirmed that the global market leader really hit the nail on the head with its selection of machines, new textile developments and digital solutions. Without exception and throughout the entire duration of the trade show, the guests' response to the products showcased by each of the Group's business units exceeded all expectations. KARL MAYER GROUP CEO Arno Gärtner was interviewed by Ulrike Schlenker from the global player's Corporate Communications team, revealing which products impressed and interested the visitors the most, and what the customers from the flat knitting sector thought about the Group's exhibition.

1. **The KARL MAYER GROUP stand focused on the topics of sustainability and digitalization. What was the visitor response to the exhibition?**

The textile industry has finally become highly aware of the topic of sustainability. Our customers already offer a wide range of products with a low environmental impact; however, we were nevertheless able to show them solutions that unlock completely new possibilities for them. What is important for us is that our products are sustainable as well as profitable. Our new jacquard raschel machine for processing staple fibres – for example, 100% cotton – and the new energy monitoring system in our HKS range for matching the energy consumption to the production targets generated a huge amount of interest. We intend to continue our development work in these areas. The sustainability highlights from the other business units, including an extremely fine flat knitted all-rounder T-shirt made from bio-based materials with a back and front worked from one piece to avoid unnecessary waste, our latest weft-insertion machine WEFTTRONIC® II G, which also produces less waste, and CASCADE, an innovative steam and condensation system that uses up to 7% less steam during the drying process of sizing and indigo dyeing machines, also attracted a lot of attention.
Our denim customers were impressed by the results of the first practical application of our water- and chemicals-saving BLUEDYE. The consumption of hydrosulphite and caustic soda alone – the main environmental polluters involved in the process – can be more than halved, and it waste less yarn.
Digitalization is also no longer a new topic for our customers. Nevertheless, most visitors did not know – and were very impressed by the fact – that our group of companies is a major player with a strategic approach in this area. With our software company KM.ON, we not only offer individual solutions, but also provide our customers with bespoke overall concepts designed to support their value creation processes individually. The interaction of real machine products and software solutions was impressively demonstrated. Our digital portfolio includes software products for highly efficient design processes of knitted and flat knitted fabrics, smart machine functions that enable, for example, highly flexible and simple patterning with data from the cloud on warp knitting machines, and digital tools for production management. The production data analysis tools that form the basis for more production flexibility and efficiency are now available for warp and flat knitting machines, as well as for warp preparation systems.
We are also increasingly focusing on digitalization in the after-sales service area. Through the combination of our conventional offers with new digital services such as an e-learning platform, our customers benefit from unparalleled next level support. An equally new and intuitive customer portal ensures that the individual solutions can be accessed quickly and easily, and an incredible number of visitors signed up as future portal users on the spot during the trade show.

2. Beyond the principal focus topics, were there exhibits that attracted a particularly level of high visitor attention?

Yes, definitely! We are all experiencing times full of uncertainties and upheavals right now. This is why we wanted to take the opportunity at ITMA to show our customers a mixed bag of coordinated solutions and new developments to help them get to grips with these fundamental changes. Our wide range of exhibition offers was all about profitability despite rising costs, sustainability, being able to respond quickly and flexibly to the market dynamics, new business opportunities, and stable value creation processes despite a shortage of skilled workers. This trade show concept hit the bull's eye. Our stand soon became the place where everyone from the industry wanted to meet, and many exhibits attracted a huge amount of visitor attention. Of course, there were some particular highlights to look back on, including the HKS 3-M ON in the warp knitting area. The latest model of this digital tricot machine generation offers maximum benefits thanks to an outstanding machine performance and state-of-the-art technical features. But what's especially impressive is its incredible speed, even when working with sequential yarn feeding from the warp beam and numerous pattern changes. This machine actually clocked up an unparalleled 2,900 revolutions per minute during the trade show.

The customers from the flat knitting area were impressed by the ADF 530-32 ki FLEX. With its tag line of 'One machine for everything', this STOLL model really does revolutionise the concept of variability. The all-rounder clearly demonstrated this by whipping up a pair of trousers, a dress, a top, a jumper and even some upholstery fabric during the trade show itself. With its unparalleled spectrum of different high-quality knitted products, it not only offers incredible speed, but also the flexibility to handle changes that might be made to the order.

The main attraction in the technical textiles areas was the WEFTTRONIC® II G, which now ensures even greater competitiveness thanks to new features and upgrades. The new VARIO WEFT laying system in particular proved a real hit with our customers. The weft insertion component is aimed at maximum flexibility. With this machine, the patterning of the weft thread can be changed electronically – quickly and easily, without mechanical intervention in the process of threading in or limitations with regard to the repeat lengths. It also produces less waste. With this in mind, the WEFTTRONIC® II G scores well when it comes to sustainability and costs.

A highlight in the warp preparation area that we exhibited at ITMA was the MULTI-MATIC® 32 Compact. The new warp sampling machine has the same footprint as its predecessor while being twice as productive. It also makes it possible to react flexibly to market requirements thanks to quick and easy pattern changes and short changeover times. What's more, the fully automatic model with optimised ergonomics can still be safely operated in the event of a shortage of skilled workers.

3. **This year’s event was the first European ITMA where you exhibited with STOLL as a KARL MAYER GROUP business unit and brand. What feedback did you receive from your visitors on the group exhibition with the extended product portfolio?**

   As far as the STOLL customers were concerned, we successfully won and also regained their confidence in the brand’s future and independence. Of course, some of the flat knitting companies were still unsure about STOLL being integrated into our group, but our exhibits really hit the mark and showed that STOLL continues to stand for innovative flat knitting machines with maximum customer focus.
   In fact, customers are already starting to see some initial benefits of the integration. We launched a machine at ITMA that combines knitting, warp knitting and weaving technologies to offer completely new product design possibilities. These include the ability to create textile textures with sectoral multidirectional reinforcements, decorative stitching effects, and innovative designs and functional features by combining special yarns with standard materials.
   The fantastic feedback on this new development encourages us to go further in this direction. In fact, the prototype was constantly surrounded by crowds of people for the duration of the trade show.
   A number of other synergies also become apparent at the event, with many visitors looking for innovations in the knitting area that go beyond technological boundaries. As luck would have it, they didn’t have to look any further than our stand.