

# Digital textile printing market growing rapidly in Pakistan

by Prof. Dr. Noor Ahmed Memon, Dean FBMS; Metropolitan University, Karachi.

The market for digital textile printing in Pakistan is increasing as it offers better and high definition textile print design possibilities, lower water, effluent, emissions and energy use with an economical production of “short to medium run” prints to the market. The shorter delivery times brings increased savings to retailers and brands as digital printing industry is based on proximity sourcing and just-in-time printing and sourcing strategies.

The textile printing has become a concept rather than just an embellishment on an outfit contributing to the style and shape of the garment. Digital printing, the newest as well as the most diverse textile printing means, is increasingly becoming more accessible for the textile printers around the world, which enable the designers to produce innovative prints as per their imagination in the right colour on the right fabric. The technological advancements in textile printing made the two aspects associated with textile printing - the design and the printing, more and more interdependent.

Today's textile printing technology facilitates precise and exact placing of

prints on a garment, thus enabling the manufacturers to decrease or increase the size of the print, modify the background tones, produce optical illusions, print advanced graphics, and offer the best translation of every single design.

In the textile industry, the majority of textile printing is done in traditional analogue method but there is a growing interest for digital printing on textiles.

The digital textile printing has already helped revive Europe's textile industry. Large fashion brands, such as Zara, use digital textile printing to design, print and roll out new styles and fashion to their stores quickly, in an environmentally sustainable manner. This allows them to stay on-trend without incurring the significant costs and potential wastage of doing large-volume print runs in China. According to the latest research, the global textile market is expected to reach more than US\$1.2 trillion by 2025.

Despite coming off a low base of 2% of the total textile market, the digital printing market is expected to see exponential growth in the coming years. Analysts estimate that the global digital textile printing sector will grow by 25%

per annum over the coming years, with half of that growth centered in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

The future of digital textile printing to 2021 values this global market at Euro 1.17 billion in 2016 with growth forecast at an annual average of 12.3% for 2016-2021. This will see the market more than double in value over five years, reaching Euro 2.42 billion in 2021.

## Digital Printing in Pakistan

The digital printing sector is a new but most vibrant of the subsectors in the textile industry of Pakistan. Although accounting for less than 5% of total textile printing in Pakistan, the growth in digital printing is indeed remarkable which doubled in the last year.

The key digital printing machinery manufacturers such as efi Reggiani, MS, SPG Prints, Mimaki, Arioli and Atexco are actively selling their high-end machines in Pakistan for high-speed cotton textile printing. The digital machines for sublimation are also gaining share in polyester fabrics and garments. Brands such as Mimaki, Mutoh, Roland are active in this sector.

Home textiles hold a minor share in the digital printing sector as this market is export driven and not a great demand exists as yet for digitally printed home textiles from Pakistan.

There are more than 100 digital printing machines installed for the high-end domestic fashion apparel market in Pakistan. If all the smaller sublimation machines and smaller printing facilities are taken into account, the total installed capacity is more than 300 machines in 2017. This ever-growing sector demands new and faster machines. Many conventional textile printers have partially converted their print runs into digital format in order to cater to the domestic retail market.

### Domestic retail market for women's apparel

Pakistan has a fast-growing apparel sector that accounts for 19% of its exports and firms are competitive with global exporters in terms of prices. It also remains highly concentrated in cotton products.

In this context, the domestic fashion and apparel market has experienced a rapid growth, driven by a rise in household incomes and growth in young population. Falling textile exports because of the high cost of doing business has also compelled several major textile manufacturers to launch their own fabric and apparel brands in the local market, many of them adding digital printing machines to meet the demand for new designs and quality apparel.

Fashion designers and factory owners are collaborating with each other to produce designer lawns. In most cases, the brands hire top fashion designers to design their range of lawn.

Lawn fabric is in huge demand in the domestic market and abroad. Several brands like Gul Ahmed, Khaadi, Nishat, Bareeze etc. and designers have already opened their outlets in the Middle East, the UK and the US to cater to the demand of affluent Pakistanis and other South Asians, particularly Indians, living there.

In other cases, designers get their stocks produced by mills and sell in the market under their own brands. In certain cases, both the mill owners and designers partner to share profits.

Apart from the above-mentioned factors, the entry of qualified, young fashion designers in the market has also helped transform the lawn market and contributed substantially to its growth and expansion by catering to the demand of brand (quality) conscious urban middle-class consumers.

The retailers in Pakistan are increasingly aware of the shorter production lead times, proximity sourcing and quick stock replenishment strategies in the local fashion market which will lead to more applications in digitally printed fabrics. Therefore, the digitally produced fabrics have allowed exclusivity of designs and production of smaller lots for higher value addition. The fashion garment industry has emerged as one of the important small-scale industries in Pakistan. Its products have large demand both at home and abroad.

The local requirements of fashion garments are almost fully met by this industry. With a population of 200 plus million people, it is no wonder that the domestic retail market is proving to be the salvation for many textile printers and processors who were producing for the export market in the past. Digital printing shall continue to see the phenomenal growth as the cost of digital production with the digital inks being the main cost factor coming down rapidly.

### References

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