

**Durst Alpha 330 in operation at Union Fabrics (Private) Limited, Karachi**





# “Durst offers competitive technology with greater productivity and energy efficiency”

**Interview: Asif Siddiq, CEO, Union Fabrics (Private) Limited.**

## ***What steps had you taken in the weaving industry in the 1990s in order to survive?***

We started in late 1998 and early 1999 as a business of commercial sizing which is the back process of weaving. There was a big gap in commercial sizing because at that time wider width had no sizing. We started out with locally manufactured machines and now we have the largest market share of commercial sizing in the S.I.T.E. industrial area.

Then we moved further and kept reinvesting in the company. We established other units and invested in Airjet weaving capacity that further supported our growth. For the last three to four years we also started a business in textile processing. Today we make complete bed sheets for the export market and digitally printed fabric for suits for the local market, particularly the brand Khaadi, for whom we are now the biggest supplier in Karachi.

We started the local business because margins in exports were squeezed and we

were looking for a new opportunity, which the local fashion industry provided.

The successful model for growth in the local market is to have a good supply chain model rather than to produce everything in-house.

## ***What, in your opinion, has been the reason for your success?***

We are in the conventional textile sector and most of the bankruptcies also occurred in this sector. So, this segment has been suffering badly. We are proud of the fact that in the post-quota phase after 2005, we started growing when most of the industries were declining or stagnant.

Instead of giving up and moving abroad or investing in real estate we decided to invest through BMR. First and foremost, we have to impart skills to our industry, secondly achieve economies of scale and thirdly, we have to be competitive, efficient and invest in high tech equipment in order to avoid wastages and leakages, in order to survive and thrive in the market.

That particular strategy has paid off tremendously. Firstly, we needed to grow to be able to compete with the big players. Secondly, we wanted to do BMR in the right technology so it pays off in long-term. We decided to move into printing business after successful investment in our weaving capacity with state of the art airjet looms.

We were at a crossroads in 2014-15 when we purchased this mill which was Union Exports from the bank because the previous owner had defaulted. After buying this mill, we made the deliberate decision not to invest in the rotary machines and decided to go for only digital printing, which I believe is the future. Instead of going for the flatbed, which many of our competitors had recently installed, we opted for the latest digital printing machines.

Despite our capital constraints, as we were not as big as others, our third Durst machine is now being installed and we are already planning for the fourth machine for 2019.

**What were the reasons you invested in the digital printing business? And what are the basic advantages of digital for home textiles?**

The world is changing, and converting to the short runs, the designers need lacs of meters. In this context, the quality also improves and the replacement of digital technology is the flatbed technology. Thus, the wastages are also 14% to 15% and now with costly yarn one cannot absorb that heavy percentage of wastage.

The digital printing gives you the flexibility of short runs with the reduction in printing time and most importantly is the affordable cost of digital machines, which is three times what it is today. In the past, the printing cost was very high, but today due to a combination of advancement in the digital printing and less wastage, there is now a competitive edge over the flatbed printing. The time has come that the flatbed technology is considered quite obsolete.

In the next phase, the rotary machine will also be outdated in near future. However, it is not easy to replace the huge capacity of the rotary with the digital one. Today some companies are still running flatbed because there are different perspectives for different users. The dynamics have changed and those who have invested in cutting-edge technology are reaping the rewards. That is why we have heavily invested in digital printing technology by Durst and continue to do that with the fourth machine to be installed very soon.



Mr. Shoaib Jadoon, Manager Digital Printing - Processing and Mr. Yousuf Agha, Head of Operations, Union Exports Private Limited with Mr. Mustafa Ashraf, Managing Director, Mustex Corporation.

**Can you tell us about Durst's specific strengths and features that made you decide for this?**

In the layman's terms when we talk about digital printing, it is all about the registration and sharpness of the designs. In these two things, Durst is far superior to other machines. This is the general perspective from the user's point of view.

In terms of the aesthetic appearance of the output, few machines can guarantee the results that Durst can deliver in this context. Apart from just the great visual results, Durst machines are also extremely robust with excellent features.

The productivity of the machine was one of the prime factors that forced us to make a decision in favour of this machine. We have been able to achieve

higher productivity and quality at a lower cost with Durst machines.

**How does the Durst machine manage this higher productivity?**

The increase in productivity is due to the flexibility of the processes. So, for example, with this machine, we can run it on the single pass as well as on double pass. The entire productivity depends on the number of passes. This machine is capable of producing on single pass what many of its competitors cannot produce on double pass.

While keeping the cost of production constant, the output increases by as much as 30% with no compromise on quality, when shifting from double pass to single pass.

I must add here that even the best of the machines and technology that are capable of the highest productivity and results are rendered useless due to poor after-sales service. We have seen a remarkable change since Mustex Corporation took over as their agents in Pakistan. The vital after-sales service has become a part of the picture with both the local as well as the Italian service staff readily available to help us with any issues faced in the production.

**What is the future that you foresee for your company with this investment in Durst machines?**

Two years back our production ratio was 25% in home textile and 75% was still grey fabrics. Today, our ratio is 40%

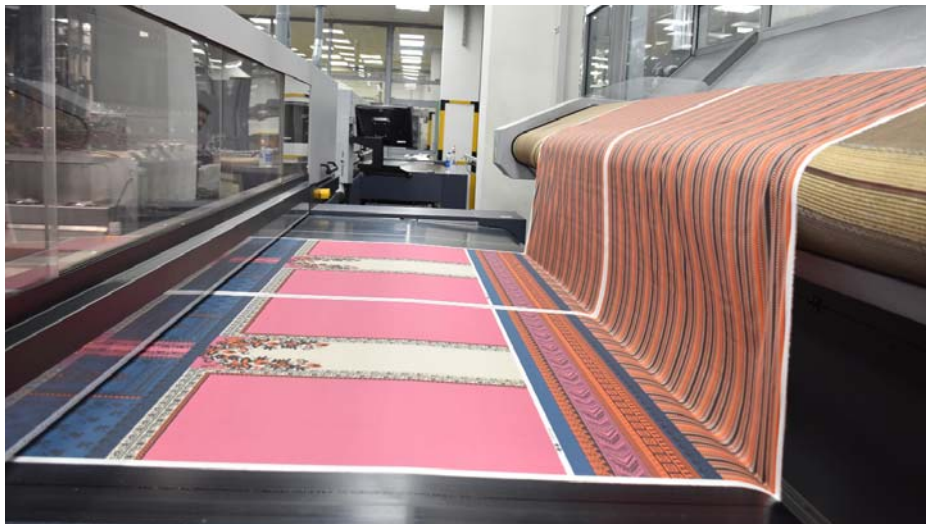


Durst Alpha 330 installed at Union Exports Private Limited.

## Special Report

in home textiles and by June next year we will grow up to 50% in home textiles and 50% in grey fabric. Our target is to grow in the home textiles, till we reach the ratio of 65 to 70%. We are also importing T700 and T800 yarn from Europe and also do large volumes in organic textiles. With it, we are also working in long staple length in yarn, in which we made very high value-added products.

We import yarns from China, Turkey, Egypt, and Turkmenistan when needed. We have also bought Jacquard machines as well as machines for mattress stitching and we are now working for the American market with this technology. If you want to survive you have to give value addition to the sectors.



Right now we are at 2.5 million metres per month, but our capacity is 3 million metres. We are also flexible enough to shift from weaving to apparel and apparel to bedding, because we have to be extremely flexible and adaptable as it is a matter of survival. We are also establishing a new unit

for Pret because the future trend is of Pret and we hope to achieve great success with our our investment in Durst machines.

If your approach is positive and you make good decisions then you are certain to be successful. ♦

**“Union Exports Private Limited will reach to the highest level of production with outstanding results.”**

**Yousuf Agha, Head of Operations, Union Exports Private Limited.**



Yousuf Agha has recently joined Union Fabrics as the operations head. He has an experience of 20 years having worked in the leading textile companies in Pakistan such as Mustaqim and Gul Ahmed Textile Mills. Agha is a graduate of the NED University and has completed his post-graduate degree from National Textile University. Soon after he also completed his MBA program in Marketing. As the new head of operations, he is highly appreciative of the investment made by Union Fabrics in the world-class machinery such as Durst. He believes that with the state of the art equipment and a leaner efficient production, Union Fabrics will reach an even higher level of optimal production and customers service with the outstanding results.

According to Agha, “In the textiles, we must do something different than others to stand out. A medium-sized company such as Union Exports must be different and unique with a faster turnaround time than other players who may have better economies of scale due to their size. The key is a swift turnaround and flexibility to adapt to the fast-changing customer requirements. The customer base today is not the same as before with an increasing focus on customization. Today, the quality must be good with shortest possible delivery time at the lowest possible price. This in return would require production at the highest levels of efficiency.”

Yousuf Agha believes that the investments in Durst textile digital printing machines will help Union Fabrics to achieve the goals of optimizing production levels as well as keeping the customers satisfied with the quality, speed and the price. ♦



### Alpha 330: Multi-Pass Printing by Durst

The new Alpha Series features different configurations and print widths for the digital printing of fashion garment and apparel, home textiles and upholstery.

The Alpha 330 is Durst's flagship for the industrial production of home textiles; with a maximum printing width of 330 cm, households and decor products such as duvets, linen, tablecloths, curtains and drapes, as well as advertising materials such as flags and banners can be printed in their full width.

Depending on the number of print heads, the production output can vary: fully configured with 64 print heads the Alpha 330 produces up to 460 running meters per hour and the Alpha 190 up to 620 running meters per hour.

### Magnetic Linear Actuator

The print carriage, engineered by Durst, is equipped with magnetic linear actuation to achieve the highest precision print results. The carriage and print bridge form the basis for this precise, flawless, sharp-edged output, with 2 micro-meter tolerances. ♦