

## Blurring the lines between functional and comfortable wear



Intertextile Shanghai Apparel Fabrics has always served as a launch pad for international brands to introduce their new products to the Chinese market. While the pandemic has led to raising awareness about personal hygiene, an e-commerce boom and greater demand for athleisure wear, Messe Frankfurt spoke with textile innovation leaders The LYCRA Company and HeiQ at Intertextile Shanghai Apparel Fabrics to find out how their latest products have been received by Chinese buyers.

**Messe Frankfurt: Please tell us what new products your company has brought to the fair.**

**Mr Vincent Hu, Vice President – Apparel, Asia, The LYCRA Company:** LYCRA® ADAPTIV fibre is our latest spandex fibre made of revolutionary polymer material. This innovative technology brings a more comfortable, more scientific and more inclusive fitting experience to our fabrics and garments, so that consumers can enjoy comfortable wearing in multiple scenarios. It also makes it easier for us to achieve ‘one-size-fits-more’, thus helping our downstream customers, for example online retailers, reduce the problem of sales returns.

**Ms Celine Huang, Chief Executive Officer, Greater China, HeiQ (China) Material Tech Co Ltd:** This is our third year since entering the Chinese market, and in regards to the development of functional fabrics, we are focusing on applying natural antiviral protection and intelligent temperature control to sportswear and home apparel. And with the winter season approaching, we are also promoting our heat retention materials.

**MF: And how was the feedback from visitors?**

**VH:** Actually before the fair, we’ve already done some promotion and made initial attempts on product application with some of our key customers in China. The results have been very good. Here at the fair, we’ve also seen many visitors, including our existing customers, who showed great interest in our new technologies with the intention to develop new products with us.

**CH:** Due to the pandemic and the fair’s postponement, we did not expect a lot of visitors. However, a surprising amount of brands and industry peers came and asked about our functional products yesterday and today. We are quite pleased by this as we can sense that China’s consumer market is more accepting of functional products.



**MF: Are there any changes in the market that you have observed recently?**

**VH:** Since the pandemic broke out last year, all of our consumers, especially Chinese consumers, have begun to have new demands for stretchable apparel

fabrics. In the past, people would have very different clothing requirements for certain scenarios such as sports and work; nowadays, many consumers will consider multi-scenario clothing, requiring fit and comfort no matter they are in a dynamic or static state.

Another new trend is greater demand for 'one-size-fits-more'. In other words, the flexibility of choice. This is related to the increasing number of online retailers, whose biggest concern is sales return. Consumers want to be able to easily pick a size for their clothes; at the same time they want their clothes to be comfortable and stretchable no matter the size they picked – the clothes cannot be too tight without any elasticity or functionality.

**CH:** Based on the exchange we had with different customers and brands in the past two days, the Chinese market and the fabrics market will certainly pay more attention to functionality. There has been some fascinating changes in the classification of functional products or clothing in general. In the past when you refer to functional products, you may be thinking of outdoor sportswear or apparel for certain professions, but this year a lot of people are asking us about home apparel.

In our traditional concept, home apparel only needs to be comfortable. Due to the pandemic, people are spending more time at home and value the interaction between family members more. They will require functional products, for example yoga clothes for wearing at home – how do the clothes enable them to perfect their yoga moves, or how can the clothes be stretchable, anti-odour or even provide support for their muscles? These areas are what excite us and indicate that consumers are caring about themselves more in the pursuit of healthier and more personalised experiences.

**MF:** Lastly, please can you tell us why your company decided to join Intertextile?

**VH:** The LYCRA Company has always been a loyal exhibitor of Intertextile Shanghai. We treat the fair as our most important annual exhibition opportunity in China, or even Asia. It is also the best platform for us to gather with our upstream and downstream customers, discuss new technologies and innovations, and envision the future together.



**CH:** As a Swiss company, we are really grateful for the platform Intertextile provides for us. We are a relatively young textile innovation brand, so this is a huge platform for us to quickly meet with consumers and industry peers in the Chinese market. It's a really great communication platform for our peers and us to make up what each other lacks, and facilitates our scientific research to better meet the needs of the Chinese consumer market. Our understanding is that Intertextile not only refers to being 'international', but also represents the 'interaction' between Chinese brands, industry players and consumers.

**MF:** That's an interesting interpretation of the name of our fair! Thank you for your sharing and we look forward to the collaboration between The LYCRA Company and HeiQ, which has been announced earlier this year, that will bring more innovation to the global and Chinese markets!



Intertextile Shanghai Apparel Fabrics – Autumn Edition 2021 was held from 9 – 11 October, welcoming nearly 3,300 exhibitors from 19 countries and regions, and over 67,000 buyers. The upcoming Spring Edition will take place from 9 – 11 March 2022 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center (Shanghai).