

A sports apparel manufacturer in Germany was recently awarded a new label which was developed to evaluate the comfort of clothes and the ease with which they can be looked after.

The 'Wellness' stamp of approval

Last October a family-run firm based in Albstadt, Germany, became the first apparel company in the world to earn the right to put a new 'Wellness' label on its clothes. Schneider Sportswear was founded in 1926 as the 'Schneider Brothers Knitwear Factory' and produces clothing not for top athletes but for people of all ages who take an active approach to life. It was awarded the Wellness label by specialist textile research and testing organisation the Hohenstein Institute as testimony to the comfort and care qualities of its clothes. Annette Kemmler, managing director of Schneider Sportswear, says: "We want to offer the best possible wellness clothing for people who have found their own, individual interpretation of sport and fitness as part of their personal lifestyle. For us, it's enormously important that our products meet all the highest specifications for quality and fit."

The Hohenstein Institute devised the Wellness label over a period of six months in response to what it calls "a big demand for feel-good textiles". "We performed a series of tests until we had an evaluation model which was suitable for judging the quality of wellness in textiles," says Silke Off, head of the laboratory for clothing physiology at the Hohenstein Institute. Ms Off, who played an important role in designing, developing and introducing the label, says it came about because the institute wanted to

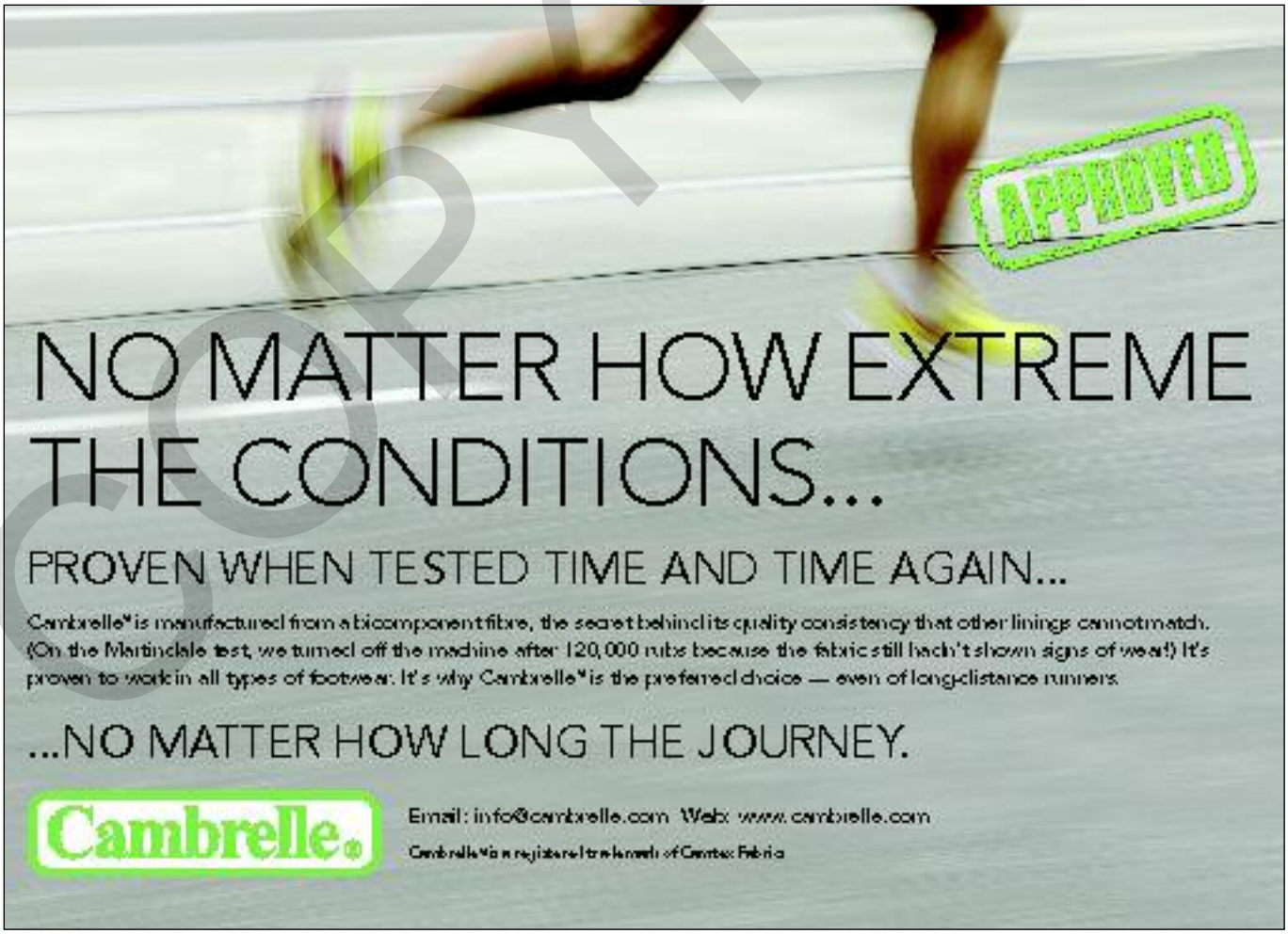


Schneider Sportswear's new knitting and technology centre in Albstadt-Pfeffingen is intended to preserve the region's textile heritage.

Schneider Sportswear

create a system for testing comfort and care factors of fabrics. "The wellness of clothing is something that is important for people," she says. "Schneider Sportswear, which sets such high standards for its products, is tailor-made to launch the new Wellness label."

The institute devised five measurements which quantify objectively how a textile product feels to people when it is in direct contact with their skin. A surface finish index states whether the product scratches the skin or feels soft. There is also a sticking index which shows how much a textile product sticks to damp skin and consequently feels uncomfortable. A wetting index provides information about how quickly moisture is absorbed by the garment when the wearer sweats, and so is carried away from the skin. The number of contact points between the textile and the skin is used to measure how quickly it starts to feel clammy and damp. A stiffness measurement is important for establishing how well the product fits the body and can be an indication of how comfortable in general the garment seems to the wearer. The breathability of the fabric is also measured as part of the wellness testing.



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Taking all the measurements together, the level of skin sensory comfort is calculated and the skin sensory properties of the textile product that is being tested are judged against defined limit values.

As well as the skin sensory properties, the ease of care of the item is also tested, with regard to their colourfastness under ISO 105-B02, their dimensional stability after 20 washes and their general resistance to washing. If it meets all the target specifications, it can be endorsed with the new Wellness label.

Schneider Sportswear's strategy is to produce consumer-oriented collections for its customers, and gaining the Wellness label represents just one of a number of measures the company has taken to ensure quality in its products. Its 'sizing service', according to Schneider, guarantees a perfect fit by means of a system of colours and numbers. Furthermore, the company develops its own materials with a view to the design and function of the products it creates. Knitted fabrics are manufactured in Schneider's new knitting and technology centre in Albstadt-Pfeffingen which went into operation in 2009. The facility is equipped with the latest knitting machines and, as part of a pilot project, extra lint extractors have been installed to provide optimised knitting conditions.



The Hohenstein Insitute believes that its new label will make it possible for textile products to be objectively measured for their suitability in terms of comfort and ease of care. "It means that consumers can also regard certified products as being of higher quality, because of the extensive testing they have undergone," a statement from the institute claims.

The new 'Tested wellness textiles' label from the Hohenstein Institute stands for comfortable clothes that are easy to care for.

Schneider Sportswear



