

Fashion meets function for spring/summer 2007

While the industry continues to develop and apply more functionality to sports and activewear in order to meet the needs of the savvy consumer of today, who demands moisture management, UV protection, and antimicrobial clothing, etc., fashion remains an important factor in selling garments.

In the field of sports and activewear, fashion has never been as important as it is now. Consumers are no longer satisfied with comfortable, functional apparel, as image is now everything, and it is important to be seen in the latest colours and labels, even when you are out on an early morning jog or going to the swimming pool.

This change in consumer attitude is somewhat of a double-edged sword for the industry. On the one hand, it is positive as it means that consumers are willing to change their sports apparel every season, just as in the fashion industry, and therefore sales volumes increase; however, on the downside, it means that textile and garment manufacturers in the functional apparel market are now under more pressure to produce garments that are trendy, therefore meaning that ranges have to be updated more often and with fashion at the forefront (whilst still improving on functionality and performance, of course).

This is no mean feat for companies that have, until recently, focused their main research and development budgets on improving technology rather than monitoring what colours Gucci is going with next winter. But thanks to certain companies now producing trend books and previews, the industry can work together to harmonise the products for upcoming seasons and make sure that the wearer's sports bra can now tone beautifully with her Prada handbag next season.

One company that has produced such a trend book is Israel-based manufacturer of nylon 6.6 polyamide fibre for fashion bodywear, activewear, legwear, and intimate apparel, Nilit. It recently launched its new Sensil Bodyfashion Trendbook covering trend concepts for spring/summer 2007 combined with the needs of functionality in performance apparel.



The book defines five trends set to dominate for the season and highlights the yarns and colours best-suited to these trends. The five main themes are:

Latin Rhythm: An exotic mood where we discover rich inspirations from Spanish and Portuguese cultures and ancient civilisations. Timeless local handcrafts and flamboyant embroidery adorn bodywear with folkloric and ethnic style. Tango and dance forms with a Caribbean rhythm inspire lingerie which is both exotic and expressive.

Sweet Temptation: A romantic mood with an atmosphere full of joy and charm. Sexiness and naïveté are inspired by nature's treasures, flowers, picnics and delightful gourmandise. Surprising combinations of laces, florals and checks in happy and delicious colours characterise a junior theme overflowing with femininity and sweet happiness.

Simple Harmony: A holistic mood for a trend based on today's need for simplicity and pure aesthetics. Bodywear has a mood of tranquility and a retro touch, combining well-being and technology. Inspired by easy living and Scandinavian design, subtle styling has an understated look and discreet charm. Fabrics are compact and airy with a natural handle.

Body, Mind Spirit: The quest for harmony and well-being remains a dominant lifestyle trend in order to keep a balance in these times of high-stress. Leisure activities such as fitness, yoga, dance, and the martial arts are a perfect blend of spirituality, health, and self-growth. Essential seamless bodywear ensures physical comfort, performance, and unrestricted movement.

High Energy: Power fitness demands multi-functional activewear that is created for intense action. High performance characteristics are essential, and seamless technology provides the ultimate solutions. Combining compact knits and cleverly engineered panels, seamless garments with unusual anatomical cuts ensure enhanced performance while providing freedom of movement and support.

Images from Nilit's new Sensil Bodyfashion Trendbook predicting the five main themes for spring/summer next year.

Nilit

In terms of functionality, according to Nilit, the book "embraces all the moods of fashion conjuring up images of luxury, sensuality, and exotic destinations. The desire to wear beautiful bodywear is stronger than ever and lingerie and bodyfashion are considered an integral part of ready-to-wear. This season we see an interplaying of products that are a fusion of fashion glamour, lingerie, and dynamic activewear combining the need for fashion and function."

Seamless bodywear is the season's 'must have' as it captures all aspects of the style spectrum while providing versatility, creativity, and exceptional comfort.

Established more than 30 years ago, Nilit produces Sensil yarns for seamless and circular knitting which can be used for decorative and functional products that offer increased comfort and well-being, while incorporating fashion.