

FOOTWEAR TECHNOLOGY

Spanish footwear brand Callaghan has waited a while to build a footwear technology idea it calls Adaptation into its collections. But the extremely sporty range it will offer for spring-summer 2010 suggests there is now no holding back on the innovation that, the company claims, is allowing it to make “the most comfortable shoes in the world”.

Technology idea helps Callaghan go sporty

Spanish radio, television and billboards have been carrying an advertising campaign for some months now in which Callaghan, a footwear brand from La Rioja’s shoe city of Arnedo, has been claiming to make the most comfortable footwear in the world.

The claim is neither here nor there: there must be 20 companies across the world boasting the same thing, safe in the knowledge, perhaps, that no one will really expect details of a global comparative study to prove the point, which by definition relies on a subjective response from wearers anyway. It is the technology behind the idea that is interesting and, after waiting five years since its inception, Callaghan seems to think so too now.

Adaptation is the somewhat clumsy name the company has given to its innovation—renamed for its relaunch as Adaptation Total—developed in partnership with Inescop, the Elda-based technology institute that serves the Spanish footwear industry. It hinges on the use of materials and a construction method that makes the brand’s shoes adapt more easily to the foot as the wearer walks. The heel absorbs energy from the walking action in a new component called an ‘energy pad’ and returns it to the foot. As this happens, the sole of the shoe expands horizontally to support an expansion that takes place in the bones in the front part of the foot when we walk, increasing the area each foot covers by as much as eight

Everyone knows that people’s feet are different. But it’s less well known that the biggest differences are in the sole of the foot.

 Rene Tillmann/ Messe Düsseldorf





The spring-summer 2010 collection from Callaghan is much more sporty than any the brand has put together before.

 Callaghan

millimetres, Callaghan insists.

Its latest collection, for spring-summer 2010, is the second, and the first for that season, to incorporate the idea. Sales director, Julio García, explains that a small selection of its autumn-winter 2009–2010 styles included Adaptation and that the shoes have gone down very well in the market, especially in Spain, thanks to the television and radio advertising campaign, he believes.

The notion of returning energy to people's feet as they walk, literally putting an extra spring in their step, seems much more prominent in this new collection, almost to the extent of dominating it, or even taking it over. The collection for next spring and summer is exceptionally (for Callaghan) sporty. It is full of men's and women's athletic-style shoes in soft nubuck leather with attractive trims in navy blue, red, mauve, brown and white.

Mr García says the television advertising has helped the public in Callaghan's home market understand the technology and to see that, with this, his company was offering something new and unusual. It has also been a success in Italy, Germany, Greece and France, he says, and, at the major September shoe shows in Düsseldorf, Milan and Madrid, buyers from Asia showed serious interest in taking the concept into their markets for next season.

"The autumn-winter 09 collection that had Adaptation involved softer styles," he explains. "For spring-summer 2010, we've used the technology in these younger, sportier styles and we think consumers in those market segments are also going to notice the difference."

The argument is that a shoe that adapts to changes in size in the foot

as we move must offer more comfort. Callaghan has presented this by saying that, 40 years after man first set foot on the moon and felt like he was floating rather than walking, men and women everywhere can feel the same sensation thanks to its footwear technology innovation.

Basilio García, managing director of the company, and Julio's brother (their brother Iván is with them, too, as director of design and research and development, at the forefront of the company their father and uncle founded in 1968), has explained that Adaptation, first launched as long ago as 2004, came to light out of Callaghan's desire to offer shoes that were personalised to the individual needs of each wearer. We know that everyone's feet are different, he explains, but we may be less conscious of the fact that where most of the difference occurs is in the sole of the foot. "So we came up with this concept of a flexible structure that would adapt to the changes in size that the foot goes through as we walk," he says. "This means the internal components of the shoe have to have high levels of flexibility and elasticity, which in turn guarantee a level of comfort that we believe is a step ahead of the competition." 



The brand has built into the collection a footwear innovation it has developed called Adaptation.

 Callaghan