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Cover Story | April 2016
DIGITAL PRINTING
Set to soar

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Digital printing has made rapid strides since its entry early 2000, and in the last few years, most of the providers of this rapidly-evolving technology are eyeing India, which has shown double-digit growth, recount S Joseph and Karthik M.

From millions to billions, digital printing of textiles is set to sweep the markets worldwide, of which India will have a pivotal role to play. Presently, globally digital printing has not even scratched the surface, with just 3 per cent of the total volume, in which rotary printing takes a lion's share of 65 per cent. But digital's growth rate is already a whopping 25 per cent, and the markets are already showing the tangible results of its global leap.

A look at the figures: In 2014, digital printing reached a printed volume of over 600 million sq m, which is expected to exceed 3.2 billion sq m in 2019. India's figures are still more impressive. The geographic split in overall textile printing clearly shows China with 29.3 per cent at the top followed by EMEA (23.1 per cent) and India (17.6 per cent). The remaining amount is divided between the rest of Asia (17.4 per cent) and the American continent (12.6 per cent). **Dr John Provost, founder of Provost Ink Jet Consulting Ltd**, expects an annual growth of up to 25 per cent between 2012 and 2017 for digital printing – a stark contrast to the 2.5 per cent growth expected for conventional printing methods.

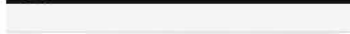
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"Digital textile printing is proving a particular favourite within high-quality, short-run projects as pre-treated fabrics, vibrant inks and finishing techniques provide an excellent end product. Italy is well known as an epicentre for textile printing in Europe, in particular the Lake Como region, where many manufacturers base themselves," says **Roz McGuinness, Divisional Director, Federation of European Screen Printers Associations (FESPA)**, whose event, FESPA Digital 2016 celebrated only last month the 10th year anniversary of the show.

New technologies on the horizon

Innovation in digital printing is what is making it a hot topic! Single-pass system, one-ink-all-fabrics and such process claims are forcing buyers to make a scramble for new technologies. Digital prints clarity is another brownie point for this new revolution in printing, which made its tentative foray sometime in 2000. Short runs, reduced process steps and elimination of a lot of polluting wastes are other reasons for the digital preference. Ultimately, digital is also ushering in a new era for sustainability in printing!

Driven by the digital transformation of the printing processes, the textile industry has experienced a true renaissance in the past 15 years. Whilst developed in the early 90's, digitally printed fabrics are rapidly evolving and for a while now have been providing the ability to print in high quality, on synthetic as well as natural fibres, at production speeds whilst at the same time using fewer resources such as water and energy.

From production to end use, digital printing - having made notable progress on the quality front too - has ended up influencing market tastes. The particular features of fabric printed digitally are now accepted as the new standard of quality, both by stylists and designers and by final consumers.

LaForte® Paper & Textile printers

Aleph's LaForte®Paper & LaForte®Textile printers: Aleph Srl, Italy presented to the international market the two new industrial large format digital printers LaForte®Paper and LaForte®Textile, delivering high performance and allowing the quickly creation of high quality finished product with precision. The arguments that convinced visitors and customers during the presentation were the technical and mechanical aspects of the two models as a result of an outstanding work masterfully executed by Aleph engineers and of course the typically Italian design and aesthetics. The printing demonstrations further emphasised the worth of the two models.

The two LaForte® machines are on top of their category and are becoming a reference point for the digital printing market for fabric and transfer paper, thanks to their high production capacity reaching a printing speed of 640sqm / h. The greatest benefit comes for all production companies, in Italy and in the world, which normally use digital printing exclusively for small batch, continuing to use the traditional printing with a considerable increase in costs; from now on, with the two industrial printers LaForte®Paper and LaForte®Textile they can take advantage of the benefits and innovation in digital printing for the entire production.

Both printers are equipped with the latest technology noticeable in the ease of use, the convenient operation of large and heavy reels (up to 10,000 m in length and 180 cm in width) and the use of inks that deliver maximum resolution up to 1200 dpi.