

Barbara Cimmino, Yamamay: "Recycling is the new digital"

Yamamay, Italian underwear and swimwear brand, has just opened its first sustainable store in Siena and will inaugurate its second one in Venice in March 2023, while it has already published its third sustainability report and started offering its first monomaterial Sculpt leggings ten years ago.

These initiatives are part of an overall strategy in-keeping with the new European laws that will soon become effective as part of the European Green Deal, a series of measures defined by the European Commission to reach carbon neutrality in Europe by 2050.

These laws aim at promoting the efficient use of resources, according to circular strategies that help promote biodiversity and reduce pollution, along with the becoming mandatory of the EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility), a series of rules engaging companies to take care of their products throughout their product lifecycle, including their end of life, along with, among others, the creation of a Digital Product Passport for each product offered in the market, the mandatory release of a Sustainability Report every year and, the defining of clear guidelines in terms of circularity in the textile sector.

Barbara Cimmino, head of Corporate Social Responsibility, Yamamay, has explained some of the most recent strategies the company is focused on, starting from the key characteristics of the new Siena store.



Barbara Cimmino

Tell us about your first sustainable store in Siena.

For our first sustainable store, out of the total materials we used for it 30% of them are recycled.

Moreover, as part of our overall strategy, our aim is to also offer a greater customer experience based upon a sense of wellness and comfort. For instance, the store is hosting special air purifying systems that make consumers feel more comfortable and, therefore, remain inside the store longer and often spend more.

Our changing rooms are also wider. As we sell mostly underwear, people are trying our products while almost undressed. For this, wider changing rooms make them feel more comfortable. In addition, the changing rooms host magic mirrors and generally our personnel is trained to offer better support.

How much more are consumers spending inside this store?

In this Siena store, the average permanence of consumer has increased notably, as the average ticket which is between €70 and €90, a significant growth when compared to the average €54-€55 one of our other stores.

The consumer remains longer inside the store because the ambiance is lighter, products are exposed differently, and their characteristics are explained better. Along with that also the quality level of air is bettered as filtered, for instance, from impurities and fine dusts.



Photo: Yamamay
Yamamay store, Siena

In which other ways can consumers achieve this sense of wellness?

By setting temperature levels that keep into consideration the changes of the outside temperature we can avoid consumers feel either too hot or too cold and, consequently, also reduce electricity consumption. Thanks to other monitoring systems, we can also modulate lighting intensity according to the light outside the store, also bringing a saving of costs.

Will you introduce this new store model also to all other stores?

We are still waiting for results and still don't have a defined plan. As we are dealing with about 450 affiliated stores it is very important to make proposals with our affiliates by making concrete proposals.

Though, we generally want to focus on a better optimisation between the store's size and the quantity of product offered inside of it.

In fact our average store measures 75 sq. meters—and the Siena one measures 70 sq. meters—but, especially in summer, our shops are hyper crowded because we offer two overlapping collections—a bathing suit collection and a summer collection—at the same time.

Though we will open a second sustainable store in Venice in March 2023.

And what about the Venice store?

The new Venice store will measure 200 sq. meters, though its organization in terms of visual merchandising and lay-out will be different as it will include a series of products with a longer lifecycle whose characteristics will be better explained within the store.



Photo: Yamamay

Yamamay store, Siena

What are the criteria behind these longer life products?

We produce everything according to four pillars: beauty, quality of the product, sustainability and innovation. Every Yamamay product category—from the Privée lines, to men’s and kids’ lines—are produced according to quality criteria that follow the highly stringent standards set by the new EU requirements, like, for instance, a better description of the performance of the product including what tests we did on them and to what standards we adhere.

Therefore, among our products there are some with a higher innovation content, like, for instance, Sculpt, a series of products made with Eurojersey Sensitive Fabrics we calculated the carbon footprint of. In fact these items are designed with one material only in order that they don't need to be disassembled once we will be ready for recycling them.

Similarly, our Principessa bra selection is made according to bettered algorithms for the optimisation of sizes, in order to offer less sizes that fit more consumers.

Though, our aim would not be to keep the sustainable products separate from the others, as we produce everything according to high-quality criteria. With the ones we consider avant-garde, we do experimentation that we then also pour on the regular collection.

By lowering your company’s impact, do you expect to increase your revenues?

We hope so.



Photo: Yamamay
Yamamay store, Siena

What sustainable measures did you already start taking?

We have already installed a photovoltaic plant, we took care of the relamping of the company and of the stores using LED lamps and extended the certification ISO 45001 to the stores.

Obviously, there is not a ROI of sustainability yet. We need to work much on metrics and gradually refine all of our measures in order to create evident results...

What kind of growth do you expect to reach?

In terms of industrial growth we are perfectly aligned with the industrial plan we drew that expects to get back to a €155 million yearly revenues, which was our 2019 turnover, by end 2023.

Speaking about our KPIs, at least for Italy, we are market leaders of sustainable bathing suits as already in 2022 more than 50% of our collection was done with recycled yarns. This means that after a long research on material and the setting of their performance, as recycled material don't have the same characteristics

of virgin ones, in this sector we are an excellence of the market in terms of product's content and projecting it according to eco-design criteria.

For instance, in 2023 we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Sculpt line, in particular of leggings. Already in 2013 it was the first product entirely mono component of our collection. Moreover, if you think of its ten-year anniversary, its lifecycle is extremely extended as it was never sold at discounted prices, therefore the product’s durability is confirmed by the performance of fabrics.

Can this product be recycled at the end of its life?

As it is made with polyamide and Lycra and until these two materials cannot be separated yet, their components still cannot be recycled... Obviously speaking about post-consumer recycling there is not a critical mass. Despite this, many laboratory tests about the separation between elastane and other fibers have been done, but they were not done on an industrial scale yet. Therefore, this pushing coming from the European Union to encourage circularity always more will help accelerate this kind of innovation.



Photo: Yamamay
Yamamay store, Siena

Is this path scalable?

I think that circularity, when it comes to end of life, if there will be an increasing collaboration with companies that produce fibers and yarns, they will manage to recycle what has been thrown away. As a consequence, in Europe about a hundred of companies engaged in recycling will be born. It will be a true big business, as it has been with digital.

Where do you produce?

Our business model operates through external companies as we don't own productive hubs. Out of our total product we manufacture 50% in China, for the rest of our products we produce between Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Turkey, Tunisia and Italy and many of the fabrics we use are made in Italy because Italy is very much forward-minded in terms of smart and high-performance fabrics.

For most innovative products we use Italian fabrics. The company that produces our sustainable bathing suits is based in Vietnam, but it is an Italian company. It is a company that is engaged in reducing its impact is truly aligned with what EU wants to achieve through the European Green Deal.

by Maria Cristina Pavarini <https://www.the-spin-off.com> – 13/02/23