



LM chief executive Michel Abeysekera has been in the business 14 years

Despite good growth out of both offices in recent years, Abeysekera says trade figures were slightly down last year, almost certainly a result of the global financial crisis.

"We have had good growth and apart from a little dip last year, we are on a roll."

"Sales are up at the moment and I think that reflects our focus on innovation."

Bluechip local and overseas clients including H&M, Rip Curl, Billabong and Witchery flock to LM for original seamless fashion.

"Most of our customers have their own production houses so our focus is always on doing what they can't do or find difficult to do themselves."

"Our company mantra is to innovate and our buyers know they will see something different every time they visit us."

"I get cross if the same thing is shown to buyers twice."

Ideas are generated through regular LM product development meetings; gatherings highly anticipated by the company's forward-thinking staff.

"We have these meetings because we know ideas come from everyone and everywhere."

"Attendance is not compulsory – just if you have something to offer."

"Lots of staff members turn up and sit in on the meetings anyway because there are always interesting developments being made."

Developments sprung from such meetings include LM's focus on eco-friendly yarns, the idea to grow coloured cotton (therefore avoiding the use of dyes) and the creation of the company's new shapewear ranges.

They also discuss future trends in the development sessions, including the creation of voluminous seamless garments, which they believe will open up a new frontier.

"We started producing using eco-yarns four years ago but it seems to be mainstream now."

"We do eco-friendly yoga ranges and high fashion catwalk-type stuff, which is new for seamless."

"Shapewear is also a growth area for us; because it's

seamless, you don't get any lines."

The task of producing seamless attire with shape and volume is a challenge the LM team is keen to meet.

"Seamless is known as tight fitting."

"The challenge is to innovate and create floaty, voluminous garments that are fashionable."

"That would be going where seamless has never gone before."

Speaking of pushing boundaries, LM is forging ahead in terms of the amount of manufacturing coming out of China.

On average, the company produces over a million garments per year, of which 90 per cent are seamless.

"Designs are intricately programmed into the machine, specific yarns are loaded and then the machine knits to the technical specifications."

"It is a marvelous knit process and the special yarn is pre-dyed."

The Santoni and Shima Seiki machines used by LM are not new to the fashion industry but new models are constantly being created.

Very few are in operation in Australia, which is one of the reasons LM decided to move manufacturing offshore.

"There would probably be less than 10 such machines in Australia."

"For the volume of manufacturing we do, even if we wanted to, we couldn't keep a larger percentage of our production here."

What stands the Santoni and Shima Seiki machines apart is their ability to knit high quality garments while reducing the manufacturing's impact on the environment.

Social compliance, sustainability and fair trade are important aspects of the way LM works its supply chain.

"We have worked in this space for many years and our major clients would not deal with us if we didn't."

"Carbon-wise, seamless garments require less energy and produce a smaller carbon footprint."

"Cut and sew garments traditionally use lots of energy, but with seamless, the machine does all the work." **atf**