

Brazil's VO2Max, a High-Tech Sports Apparel Maker, Looks Overseas for Growth

Contributed by Giovana Perfeito
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Sports clothes maker wants to export For Brazilian cyclist Marcelo Torres, from Brasília, the capital of Brazil, it all began almost by accident. Dissatisfied with the material that the sports clothes he wore were made out of, he started testing different fabrics. "I noticed that some brands, despite their fame, were not very concerned with quality. I wore the clothes one week and threw them away the next," he says.

After similar tests, Torres designed garments and gave them to athletes who were his friends. They, in turn, made suggestions for modifications. The solution, out of polyamide, was very well accepted by the market in Brasília and in the whole of Midwestern Brazil.

Today, VO2Max, the company established by Torres four years ago, is already all over the country, selling through a network of sports shops. After the Federal District and Goiás, Minas Gerais, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are the main buyers.

The company has 12 seamstresses and produces 1,300 to 1,500 items a month. "But with the same structure we have now we can produce up to 3,000 items a month," stated Torres. Apart from that, the company has grown from ten to 150 retail clients a month.

VO2Max is always innovative, be it in the field of design or in innovative technologies for fabrics. "We use intelligent fabrics, with special nanotechnology treatment, which brings protection against bacteria and also against UVA and UVB ultraviolet light," said Torres.

He also developed a fabric application that allows cyclists to be seen by cars at night. Apart from cycling, VO2Max also has clothes for the practice of triathlons and is developing garments for races and adventure.

"Now we are concerned about the next step. We must travel out of Brazil and learn about the market, which is very specialized but seasonal, which may bring risks," he explained.

According to Torres, the foreign market should receive the VO2Max products very well. "Abroad, people are used to good parameters. We have discovered that our market niche in Brazil, for example, is where there are quality imported clothes," he pointed out.

VO2Max is now seeking partnership with institutions to learn how to export. "We want guidance to arrive in the best market, to choose potential partners, what standards to follow. We feel that we may start with sales to one or up to three

shops so as to learn how to export," added the executive.

Information about VO2Max was presented at the 3rd National Meeting of Textile and Garment Coordinators at the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae), during the institution's Training Week, in Brasília, from September 29 to October 3.

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