

Brazilian footwear machinery manufacturer Sazi has launched a new version of its Intelligent line of machines, offering savings in energy consumption that it believes can quickly make an impact on a footwear manufacturer's bottom line.

SAZI PUTS ITS ENERGY INTO NEW INTELLIGENT LINE



The 214s sole press machine is part of the company's 2011 New Intelligent line, offering an up-to-date response to the ongoing need for efficient and economical machines in footwear factories.

CREDIT: WTP

Brazilian industrial group Sazi believes it can make an impression on the global footwear industry by offering a stepping stone between the highest-price and highest-quality machines in the market (which mostly come from Europe) and the most affordable options open to manufacturers at the moment (which mostly come from Asia). Sazi, founded by Antônio Zini in 1984, is based a bit off the beaten track, in the industrial town of Farroupilha in the high ground of the Serra Gaúcha in southern Brazil. Such was the influence of Italian communities in setting up the towns around here that the area is known as Pequena Itália or Little Italy. At a height of almost 800 metres, Farroupilha is cool and comfortable enough to have been picked as an official training centre for the 2014 FIFA World Cup, a source of substantial pride for the town.

It is proud of its industrial heritage, too, and Sazi plays an important role in that. A part of the state of Rio Grande do Sul's considerable footwear production used to be here in Farroupilha and was a huge contributor to the local economy until around 30 years, although only a few factories remain. It was this that encouraged Mr Zini to start producing footwear machinery in the 1980s, starting out by helping Farroupilha's shoemakers maintain their machines from a rented spot in a factory run by one of his brothers. By 1987, the business was going well enough for him to set

up the first separate Sazi site and start making the first Sazi machine, starting with simple items such as soling machines.

Over the next five years, the operation expanded to a range of ten footwear production machines and the company began to export its products, with clients in Argentina and Mexico among the first international recipients. It now has user organisations all over Latin America; Mexico has the most, followed, perhaps surprisingly, by Ecuador where recent growth has been strong, then Argentina, then Colombia and Peru. Exports to El Salvador have also grown after an important investment in Sazi technology by Empresas ADOC.

IDEAS FROM OVERSEAS

The internationalisation of the firm continued in the years leading up to the new century when Mr Zini started



Brazilian shoes at a recent edition of GDS. Energy savings have convinced many top brands to use Sazi machinery. CREDIT: GDS

travelling to other footwear-producing countries, picking up ideas for developing his own products along the way. At a trade fair in Japan, he had a first glimpse of laser-cutting technology. This made him think that if he had laser-cutting technology in Farroupilha, he could, for the first time, be confident of making a line of Sazi machines uniform, each one made like the next and capable of performing to the same high standard. He made the investment, and has never looked back.

Now Sazi produces machinery for footwear manufacturers in many parts of the world, Europe and Asia as well as the Americas, and uses eight laser-cutting machines to cut out the metal parts of its products, an operation that runs over three shifts 24 hours a day. Folding and shaping and welding the pieces over two shifts, but for painting them, it's back to three. The group currently employs more than 400 people on a site covering 11,000 square-metres.

EASTERN PROMISE

Since 2008, Sazi has been working in the Indian market, training up distribution partners and technical support operatives there and working hard to convince local footwear manufacturers that the machines can provide the service they need in their operations. The company describes its Indian business as very stable now, having overcome fundamental issues such as a difference in voltage. A more difficult challenge was what Sazi describes as a negative impression of Brazilian machinery suppliers that had built up in the Indian market owing to poor service

from companies that attempted to establish themselves there at the start of the century but had failed to follow up on some initial interest from Indian shoemakers.

Sazi's commercial manager, Edson Borzoi, remembers being intrigued by a neighbouring stand at the India International Leather Fair when his company started to exhibit there. "There was just a black cloth covering something up," he says. "We wondered for ages what it was and then, eventually, two Indian gentlemen came along, took the cover off and unveiled two footwear machines from a Brazilian company. The machines weren't ours, but there we were with our Brazilian flag. Our distribution partner, who is Indian, told us that the two men were Indian footwear manufacturers and that they had a sign up urging their colleagues not to invest in Brazilian machines because the service was so poor. That left a big impression on me, but I think what it shows is that India represents a demanding market, that people there are serious and expect a lot in return for their investment, and that suppliers deliver what they promise."

He feels Sazi has benefited from inviting technicians from India to spend a month at the Sazi factory in Farroupilha getting to know the company and its products intimately.

INTELLIGENT DEVELOPMENT

In 2006, Sazi carried out a trial of its first machines under a system it decided to call Intelligent. Working with academics and industry experts, it came up with the Intelligent concept to try to create a commercial advantage

that did not involve racing competitors to the bottom on price. Mr Borzoi explains: "The question we had to ask ourselves was how we could create a non-price commercial advantage with a simple machine like a dryer. We decided that the answer was to concentrate on reducing energy consumption. If our customers could consume less energy, we knew they would save money. It went down well."

A full Intelligent line followed in 2007, but with the input of industrial design consultants whose brief was to come up with ways of making the new Sazi machines attractive to look at and easy to maintain. In the intervening years, the line has sold well, with clients reporting impressive savings on energy costs. The numbers were powerful enough to convince big Brazilian footwear manufacturing companies, including Alpargatas, Grendene, Dakota and Ramarim, to become clients. It knows it's not the only machinery manufacturer to have focused on energy costs and to have made claims about the benefits it can offer. All Mr Borzoi will say about the competition is that clients that are truly in the know can see through rebranding exercises, which he feels in the worst cases involve little more than adding a dynamic-sounding word to a product's name and, perhaps, painting it a different colour. Some clients became convinced after carrying out a series of detailed tests to compare energy consumption between machines



In 2006, Sazi decided it could differentiate itself not on the price of its products, but on the energy savings they can deliver for user organisations. CREDIT: WTP

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From a humble start in 1984, Sazi now makes machinery for footwear manufacturers all over the world. CREDIT: WTP

from different suppliers. For others, it was enough to watch their electricity meters slow down when a component of the Sazi line went in.

THE NEED CONTINUES

The need for efficient energy consumption is no less keen today than it was five years ago, and this spurred Sazi to introduce earlier in 2011 a line called New Intelligent. The questions remain the same: how can footwear manufacturers create heat and not lose it or create a cold temperature when required and not lose it? The New Intelligent line seeks to give an up-to-date answer.

The machines in the line include the 740/742 reactivating plant for shoes and soles, which the manufacturer says will pay for itself in four years thanks to energy savings. There is also a chiller, the New Intelligent 650/652, for which the return on investment time is one year longer, again based solely on energy savings. The 732 is a heat-setting plant with details such as high-tech thermal insulation and steam injection that uses no energy, while the New Intelligent 216s twin-sole attaching press offers fast membrane swap and an average daily production of 800 pairs with a consumption of compressed air that, Sazi claims, is half the industry average, suggesting the machine can pay for itself in two years just with that saving. 



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