

Interview with Expert Textile Sorter

Interviewer: Cathryn Anneka Hall

Interviewee: Textile Wool Sorting Expert working for a company in Pakistan

Questions and answers were extracted and summarised from a Whatsapp Interview
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Cathryn Hall:

Can you let me know what category of wool waste my swatches would be sorted into based on Sorter A's predictions?

Sorter:

Lowest category. Mostly in our grading system we treat them as mix blends garbage. Normally our lowest category composition starts from 50% wool minimum.

Cathryn Hall:

Ok thank you.

Sorter:

But honestly after seeing swatches it's doesn't looks like lowest quality. I foresee a lot of potential.

Cathryn Hall:

Thanks

Sorter:

The real challenge is using them on recycling machine. Our buyers usually complain about short fibre length. We need strong solutions for blended fibres.

Sorter:

Do you sell this type of waste to anyone?

I know your business is focused on the high wool content. But what do you do with anything your sorters decide is less than 50% wool? I'm just trying to get a really clear picture of how it works. 😊

Sorter:

We do take low wool too. There is usage for it as filler in pillows and blankets.

Sorter:

So, you just sort for the 4 categories: low wool - 50% wool - 80 % wool and 100% wool

Sorter:

Also 100% cashmere.

We also do wool coats and wool pants. Nobody is doing this these days, but we are doing it.

Cathryn Hall:

What percentage do they have? Similar to the knitwear?

Sorter:

Yes

Cathryn Hall:

Do you ever collect and sort between, for example: 10% wool and 30% wool If a client asks you to?

Sorter:

We do collect it and we keep to one side. Today we got 10 tons of low-quality wool. There is a lot of demands these days. Demand because of prices. We have to do the same job we do for high end composition. At rock bottom prices.

Cathryn Hall:

Not ideal

Sorter:

We have to do to maintain the business in this current economy situation. Plus, we have to do as my vision is not to waste single sweater. Use it, mend it, use it again, reuse it, recycle it, but don't waste.

Cathryn Hall:



Sorter:

Sometime clients ask to blend with high content to reduce the prices

Sorter:

So you sort the lower end (everything less than 50% wool) into colour etc... and resell or mix it in with higher wool content to reduce the price? Have I got that right?

Sorter:

We don't blend. We sell to customers they do the blends. We only provide a service.

Cathryn Hall:

But you mix the jumpers of qualities together for the client?

Sorter:

No, we have several stages and requirements. We ship separate bales for them, then they blend during the composition of yarn. We can't blend it will be big problem in our quality standards. But we don't leave anything with wool content. Sometimes we find very good quality high end wearable brands.

Cathryn Hall:



So you don't deal with 100% synthetic at all?

Sorter:

No. 100% Acrylic is completely wasted.

Cathryn Hall:

The colours of my yarns, can they be sorted easily?

Even Yarn 4 (see picture of multicoloured fibres in the yarn)?



[sent image of Yarn 4]

What about Yarn 2?



[sent image of Yarn 2]

Sorter:

Yes we can sort Yarn 4 but it will be melange.

Yarn 2 is also a melange.

Cathryn Hall:

Is this worth less when you sell it?

Sorter:

Yes

The solid and the melange colours, as for the price they are similar.

Cathryn Hall: (voice note)

Ok so there are three categories - solid colours which are sorted into family colours and shades. Then there is melange, like my Yarn 4, this is navy and yellow and would turn green when it is recycled. Would you sort this into a green category? How do melange jumpers get sorted? Then you have garments with patterns on them, the fancy sweaters, how do you sort those?

Sorter: (voice note)

Melange is not like yellow and blue combined together. It doesn't happen like this. They [recyclers] prefer to have the yellow with the yellow shades and the blue with the blue shades. Then once it is turned into fibre the recyclers can then use these colours to make their own blend recipes. But there are some sweaters that have many shades inside like your Yarn 4 that have many different fibre shades inside. If you look closely, they have different shades inside. These go into the melange colours and then these go into categories.

We sort melange usually for double tones - you can see there are two tones in the fabrics, so we try and sort for these tones separately. We try to make different categories for these things. Mostly it is difficult, we don't often get big enough volumes of this. It's the normal thing, if we find something we keep it separate. Not that much we find.

For the fancy sweaters - If jumpers are half solid and half fancy, we cut the half out and put this into the solid category and remaining half is kept separately in the fancy category. The mixed coloured and patterned jumpers can be used as yarns. They can be used for 'Rosino yarn' fancy yarns. These yarns are mostly used for blankets. Sometimes they produce the yarns and make the fabrics and overdyed on top of it.

We find a lot of fancy jumpers, but we do not do the separation by colour of fancy. We keep them all together in the one place. If we did separate by colour then it would be very hectic for us and would take time, space and energy, so we keep it separate. Once we have some orders we bring it out and try to use as much as we can. We put energy on that. There are people that prefer to use this fancy material in local market products. Sometimes they prefer to use them as inner filling of pillows and this type of thing. They can easily use these blended fancy materials. Most of the customers want to take these materials because they are less expensive. The quality is really good because most of the fancy sweaters come in heavy sweaters and mostly pure wool and the quality is super super nice. For recycling it is worth nothing, it has low value and no quality. But those fancy sweaters are the best ones. I cannot find this quality in the solids. But this is the market trend and the norm. We have to go with the market.

Cathryn Hall:

Thank you