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h+h cologne convinces with a strong digital presence

+++ With over 3,500 participants from more than 70 countries the leading international trade fair for textile handicrafts is also successful as a digital format +++ Around 100 companies from 29 countries presented themselves at h+h cologne @home +++ Homemade is booming - handicraft industry registers record turnover +++

When the first digital h+h cologne came to a close the response was unanimous: That was a strong performance! The digital version of the textile handicraft industry's largest trade fair worldwide came to a close on Sunday with a very good overall result which led to contented faces among all of the participants. The level of internationality was also worthy of a leading trade fair: Over 3,500 participants from more than 70 countries ensured a lively exchange on all three days of the trade fair in the scope of numerous chats as well as audio and video calls. The mood among the approx. 100 companies from 29 countries, who took part in h+h cologne @home, was correspondingly good. They particularly praised the professional quality and the trade visitors' great interest in personal discussions. Hence, the Chief Operating Officer of Koelnmesse, Oliver Frese, considered this to be confirmation of the digitalisation strategy of the trade fair: "h+h cologne @home underlined how much potential our digital event platform holds. Both the companies and the trade visitors recognised these opportunities and made intensive use of them. Our customers won't have to do without this additional digital offer in future either."

Networking as a fundamental part of the trade fair concept went down well

A fundamental part of the new platform was the opportunity for networking. This also proved very popular. For example, the average time the participants spent visiting the digital platform was pleasingly long. After the extended compulsory break, the industry had obviously been yearning for an adequate opportunity to engage in a mutual exchange and keep itself updated about the current developments. In addition to many chats at the exhibition stands, the "wires ran hot" particularly on the main stage, from where the event programme with the talks on a wide range of different themes was streamed. Questions were posed and discussed, appointments were arranged and new products presented as if this digital platform had always existed. The lookbook of the Initiative Handarbeit on the latest trends proved to be an absolute programme highlight. Well over 100 influencers also used the platform intensively for an exchange and for networking. And in the evening a real trade fair feeling was almost achieved in many of the "Virtual Cafés" in the course of the digital socialising.



h+h cologne
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Initiative^{e.V.}
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Companies took advantage of the digital opportunity

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Hedi Ehlen, Executive Director of Initiative Handarbeit was also impressed with the outcome of the trade fair. "Everything that was offered on the platform over these three days was simply fantastic!" was her conclusion. Everyone enjoyed engaging in an exchange again and that was also noticeable during the discussions. What the companies had in store for the trade visitors at their digital exhibition stands also deserves great praise," added Ehlen: "This demonstrates the dedication and creativity of the industry and allows us to take an optimistic look ahead to the future." The companies themselves were also delighted at the high acceptance of these new opportunities. Particularly the conference character and the exchange achieved more emphasis and exposure via this platform. One doesn't want to do without this in future either even when a physical trade fair finally takes place in Cologne again. Because the trade fair in Cologne is irreplaceable - everyone was in agreement about that.

Handicraft market on record course - significant upward trend towards digitalisation

A glance at the current sales figures also gives the industry grounds for satisfaction. Because the handicraft industry registered sales records in almost all sectors in 2020: The total market for handicrafts supplies in Germany amounted to Euro 1.38 billion, measured in end consumer prices, according to the industry association Initiative Handarbeit at h+h cologne @home. This corresponds to an increase of 17.4 percent compared to the previous year (2019: Euro 1.17 billion). It was stated that the Corona pandemic was the reason for this strong increase. At the same time, the pandemic-related measures resulted in considerable shifts in the handicrafts market. The trend toward digitalisation and online shopping was clearly reinforced by the months-long closure of the stationary trade. This is also demonstrated by the current "Handicraft usage behaviour 2021" study, the results of which were also presented by the industry association at the trade fair.

The future is going hybrid

The huge interest shown in the event programme of h+h cologne @home demonstrates how important the intense mutual exchange is not only for the companies, but also for the entire community. 40 speakers ensured full seminars and an active participation on the stage and in the virtual workshop rooms on all three days. The streams from the stage, but also the product presentations of the exhibiting companies regularly attracted interested viewers, who particularly took extensive advantage of the opportunity to chat live and pose questions. And the popular workshops that sold out very quickly also met with an excellent response. Indeed, significantly more tickets were sold for some of them online than would have been possible on-site due to lacking space. This digital enhancement is also an option for the future.

The next h+h cologne is scheduled to take place from 18.03.- 20.03.2022.

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