

# Outdoor Optimism

## An Industry Insider Shares His Enthusiasm for the Outdoor Apparel Market

**D**avid Parkes is a skilled marketer whose expertise in textiles has shaped and advanced the performance fabrics category. Parkes founded his firm Concept III twenty years ago and has grown the company to an international textile resource with a client list that reads like a who's who of the outdoor industry. From his position as a business leader and fabric innovator, Parkes has developed trendsetting products for all sectors of the active outdoor marketplace. Here, Parkes reflects on the exuberance of the early years of the industry, recalls

the challenges of the late 1990s and remarks on why he is enthusiastic and optimistic about the business today.

*• Who were the pioneers of the outdoor business?*  
 Outdoor activists

pioneered the industry. They developed product to improve their own enjoyment of the outdoors and recognized a commercial opportunity for their product. In many instances, companies of the 70s and early 80s took a leap of faith to go into business. They had many ideas and boundless enthusiasm and energy, but were limited in resources and business vision. The Outdoor Industry was then considered a stepchild to the Ski Industry. But with a strong focus on performance product, a dynamic market in its own right emerged.

*• What drove innovation?* The optimism within the Outdoor Industry drove domestic textile innovation when traditional textile markets were going off shore. The insulation brands of Thinsulate and ThermoLite; Gore-Tex and PolarTec brands, yarns by Celanese and DuPont, coatings, laminates and chemical finishes, as well as textile constructions all drove an industry that was at that time eager to embrace credible technology. Brands like Patagonia, The North Face, Columbia, Marmot, Mountain Hardwear, REI, EMS, Timberland, Cabela's and Carhart were spawned from the bedrock of this enthusiastic determination within the Outdoor Industry

*• How did Concept III contribute to the growth of the industry?*

Our combination of textile expertise and marketing savvy helped advance the performance market. In the 90's, for instance, we recognized an opportunity for sliver knit pile fabrics. Delivering a similar warmth to weight story as fleece, we promoted the color, texture and design

advantages of pile and developed outdoor-specific products that proved very successful. The introduction of performance Berber by Glenoi in the middle 90's was orchestrated by Concept III.

*• When did the climate for innovation change?* We have witnessed several tough years for the Outdoor Industry and its suppliers. Companies were forced to reconsider every element of their business due to primarily to the pressure created by overseas sourcing. But other factors played a role, too, such as an aggressive invasion from streetwear brands and the rapid decline of domestic production and ingenuity. With so much attention placed on sourcing and survival, it created a difficult climate for innovation.

*• Why are you upbeat about today's market?*

Although it took almost four years for the Industry to register all these external issues, companies have adjusted, and responded to the changes. Now the industry is returning to its very creative R&D posture. I see renewed commitment to product development and believe this is a very exciting time for the Outdoor Industry. The Industry's tradition of enthusiastic, opportunistic, creative optimism is now as strong as it was in the early days.



**David Parkes,**  
 president and founder,  
 Concept III



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# Vertical Limits

## Navigating Today's Global Sourcing

**A** new world order has created a landscape for textiles that knows no boundaries. Today's fabrics business takes place in all corners of the world with ever changing rules and regulations. To remain competitive in this fast-paced global marketplace, companies must have an edge. It's called Concept III.

As a vertical resource, Concept III offers a complete package, from fabric inception through final garment stages. The company has manufacturing in Asia, the Middle East, and Central America, in addition to development and sourcing services. With offices in both the United States and Europe, Concept III has headquarters in Red Bank, NJ.

"The more vertical the operation, the greater the advantages," explains Concept III founder and president David Parkes. This approach to business streamlines the textile production process, from raw fiber to finished goods, and provides attractive, competitive pricing.

Concept III resource Kingwhale Industries is a perfect example of a totally vertical operation. Based in Taiwan, Kingwhale has the facilities to offer a complete range of high quality polyester knitted fleece products. Their selection of woven textiles is vast, comprehensive and aggressively priced. The company has garment operations both in Vietnam, where there is excellent labor capability at a low price, as well as in Jordan, where the country has a

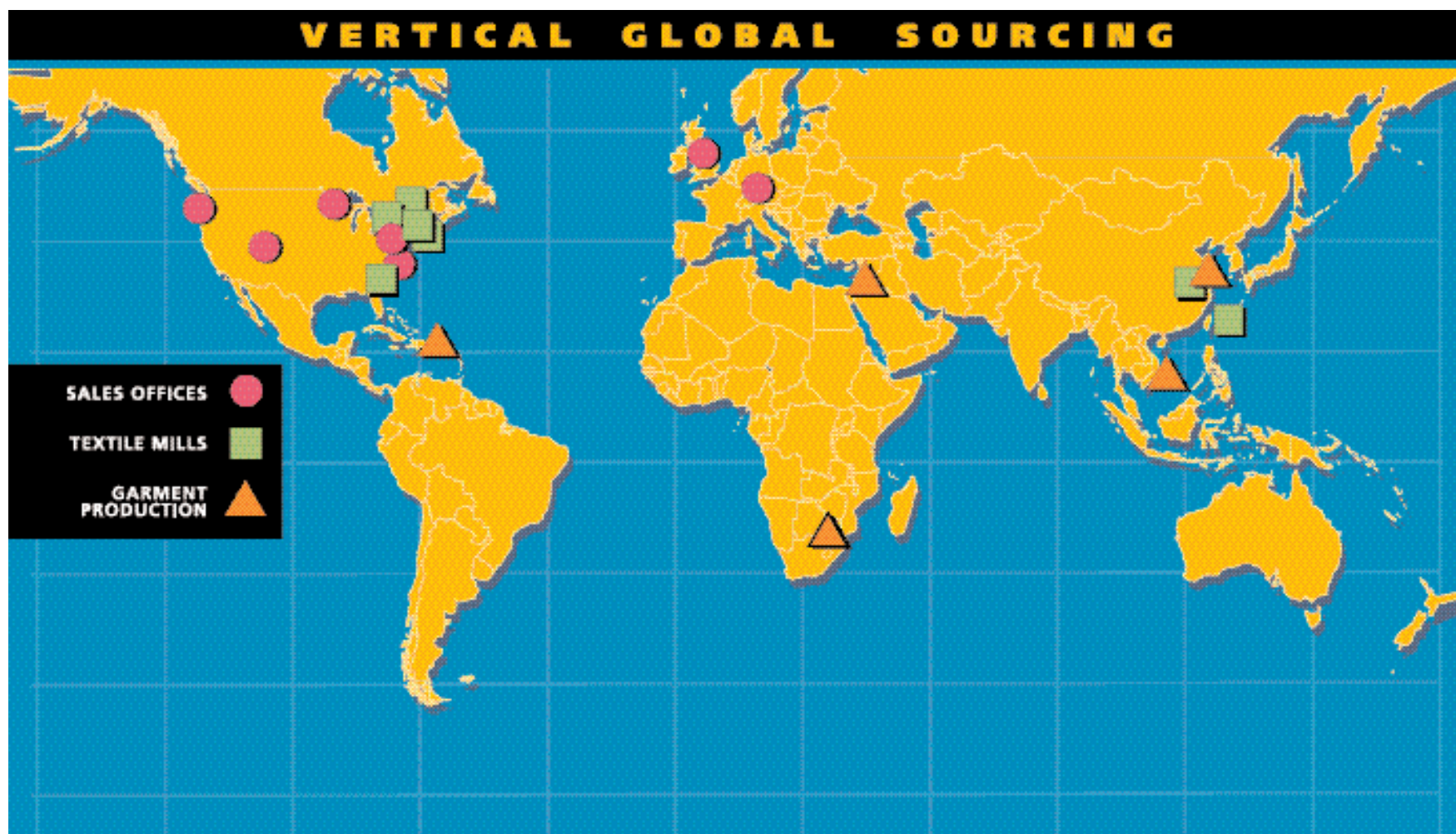
no duty, no quota favored-trading status with the United States.

Well versed in current and emerging trade agreements, and international governmental policies, Concept III has a global perspective that keeps customers apprised of changes and helps clients take advantage of prevailing opportunities. This special expertise in the area of sourcing strategies allows customers the luxury of allocating more time and resources to building their own branding strengths.

"Mills that position themselves to be vertical capture the market by offering innovation, dynamic response, and outstanding service," says Parkes, who founded Concept III on the principles of styling, service and sales. The company has a network of responsive representatives and mill personnel to smooth any wrinkles in the textile supply process.

"We're used to hopping a plane to Pakistan to work on salesmen's samples, answering our cell phone at 5am and faxing Taiwan after midnight," says Parkes. "We work a 24 hour day so our customers don't need to."

The ability of overseas companies to match domestic textile quality may have created the opportunity for global verticalization. And, the devaluation of Asian currencies certainly sparked the financial opportunity. But these days, companies like Concept III have not only risen to the challenge of this new business model, but are building even more effective and efficient means of for future textile production.



Concept III worldwide resources

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# Trend Watch

## AT CONCEPT III

**A** trends emerge and markets change Concept III is on top of what is happening in apparel trades worldwide. With global insights and decades of hands-on experience, Concept III has a trained eye for innovation. From ultra-lightweight technical knits to hard-core weather-resistant laminates, Concept III not only identifies what's new in the marketplace, but also, what's coming next. Here the company reveals the top trends worth watching for Spring '05:

• **NOSTALGIA FOR THE '70S** —

Look for a return of 70's fabrics like sherpa pile linings, rip-stop wovens, geometric prints and bright colors.

• **REVIVAL OF NATURAL FIBERS** —

In addition to rich wools, cotton returns because of its superior breathability and softness.

• **LIGHTWEIGHT** —

These days, the lighter the better — fabrics that are easily layered and extremely packable.

Outdoor enthusiasts want ultimate weather protection without the feeling of armor.

• **TEXTURE** — Innovative textures — from sweater knits, embossing, sculpting, sanding — and combinations of textures, along with color, provide eye appeal and 'rack appeal' critical to sales now.

• **STRETCH** — Even when the silhouettes begins to loosen, there is still demand for the comfort, shape recovery, and ease of movement of stretch.

• **LAMINATES** — A key to the soft shell category, laminates also supply reversibility. New weightless fabrics combinations, and new lamination processes provide a menu of performance features without the bulk or stiffness of 'bonded' pieces of the past. The possibilities are endless.

**MARMOT** ▲

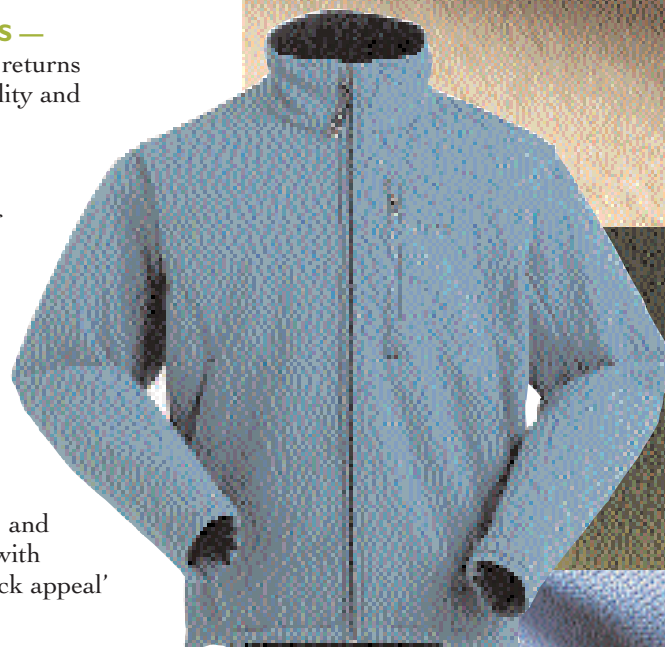
**Gravity soft shell for men and women features poly/spandex fleece laminated to 4-way stretch woven nylon spandex developed by Concept III.**

**CARHARTT** ►

**Sandstone Sierra Jacket with sherpa pile lining developed with help from Concept III.**



The return of natural fibers: New soft cotton sliver knit pile from Gleniot



Innovative new laminates: Poly french terry laminated to boucle fleece



Featherweight textures for new quick-drying base layers



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