

Baby's dummies as a question of health and lifestyle

German company NOVATEX in Saxony-Anhalt is one of the leading manufacturers of baby's dummies

Fawn or car, pink or light blue – stoppers and mouth plates are the eye-catchers. We are talking about baby's dummies. The German company NOVATEX in Saxony-Anhalt is one of the leading manufacturers. The health of the child is the company's highest priority.

Baby's dummies from Bon Jovi

Cute and even artistic motifs adorn the dummies, in colours from pink and light blue to bold pink, purple and red. Cornelia Kaschel heads the printing section at NOVATEX, a manufacturer of dummies, baby bottles and baby food spoons. The company has its production site in the city of Wernigerode in Saxony-Anhalt. Cornelia Kaschel has assembled a collection with motifs. "These are aimed at the parents," she says. The motifs even include Germany's national colours. And who likes the skull? Cornelia Kaschel grins and already has the black and white catalogue to hand: "Rock Star Baby" – the idea for this lifestyle brand for babies and toddlers comes from Tico Torres. He is the drummer of the band Bon Jovi. With his range, he wants the attitude of a rocking generation of parents to be passed on to their children as well. Oliver Bertram, the commercial director of NOVATEX, is proud that his company is producing this licensed brand; the order shows confidence. "Our production is characterised by high-quality materials and strict adherence to European quality standards," he says.

No "Plastic Planet"

Oliver Bertram is the father of two children and this is another reason why he is an expert in the NOVATEX products. Do young parents not feel overwhelmed by the enormous variety? Bertram knows from his own experience: "Actually, the baby itself decides. It wants to stay with the dummy that it gets used to in the first days of its life." Parents should find out in advance, and in detail, about the dummies and teats that their child has in their mouth from almost the first day. There has also been a particularly clear increase in awareness of the health risks of synthetic plastics after the film "Plastic Planet," says Bertram. As a result, NOVATEX is doing without the softening agent bisphenol A in all products. The company uses harmless materials, including natural latex, the milky sap of the Brazilian rubber tree, and silicon.

Suggestions and wishes of customers are constantly being incorporated in the development of new products, says Bertram. Valuable suggestions have also come from midwives, dentists and scientifically sound studies. "The health of the child always has priority for us," says Oliver Bertram and mentions the "tooth-friendly" campaign. A tooth with an umbrella is the logo of the association that informs the public about dental health. "Dentistar", an in-house development by NOVATEX, is the first dummy allowed to be decorated with the Happy Tooth symbol. Together with orthodontists and experts, the company has developed dummies with an extra flat shaft, which prevent jaw deformation, for three age groups of babies.

"Ist doch schnulli"; also in the USA and China

"Ist doch schnulli" is a common German expression for trivial, simple, cheap. If the end customer buys a dummy from a retailer for a low price, that does not indicate anything about the enormous innovations and investments behind it, emphasises qualified economist Bertram. "After immense development costs, a whole machine park comes into operation to produce the variety of dummies that will secure the company's existence." Torsten Sievers nods in agreement. The deputy manager of NOVATEX was originally a toolmaker. When colleagues from "Research and Development" have developed a new pacifier or bottle teat, or a design with new colour components, then he and his production team apply the appropriate skills to turn the idea into a product. An abundance of products, more accurately, which are manufactured under the own brand "Baby Nova" and "Dentistar", but also for the trade brands of big-name chemist's shop chains. Exports go to the EU, the USA and China.

Research work in Saxony-Anhalt

Torsten Sievers brought relevant experience from a plastic processing company in Halberstadt when he joined NOVATEX almost 20 years ago. The company was founded in 1984 in Hanover and set up a production site in Halberstadt in 1998. Since then, the company has appreciated the good cooperation with the state of Saxony-Anhalt, says Oliver Bertram. This includes programmes for the promotion of trade and industry as well as support in expansion plans. In 2016, the company moved to Wernigerode in order to expand its capacities. "From a good dialogue with the investment bank, we also established contact with Saxony-Anhalt's Network of Excellence for Applied and Transfer-Oriented Research," says Oliver Bertram. He refers to the Merseburg University of Applied Sciences: "With the plastic experts there we were able to find explanations for several questions arising in the production process." There is currently cooperation with the Harz University of Applied Sciences in the field of management to optimise the logistical processes within the company.

And how do you see the big future field of "Industry 4.0"? "That will be very exciting. For example, baby's dummy prototypes from 3D printers would be a time and cost-saving innovation," says Oliver Bertram and is optimistic: the research partners for this will be found in the academic landscape of Saxony-Anhalt.

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