

# VISIONARY

Interactive clothing for improved performance



BY NADINE PELZER

**T**he unique history of Red Bull goes back to the 1980s, when it was launched as a completely revolutionary product – the energy drink. Today, it is one of the world's strongest brands, known as much for the beverage as it is for Formula 1 and extreme sports. With the same innovative dynamism, the company is now also designing ready-to-wear apparel for men and women, combining functional fabrics and textile innovations with natural, high-end materials. Ahmet Mercan, Head of Global Consumer Products at Red Bull, talked to us in greater detail about the exciting AlphaTauri brand and its plans.

**You are in the process of conquering the world with AlphaTauri. When and how did the idea to create an in-house fashion brand come up?**

The fashion industry has been characterised by change for some years now. One reason for this is that customers today expect fashion to be more than simply great outfits. And this harbours huge market potential. And who better to exploit this potential than Red Bull? 30 years ago, the energy drink created an entirely new market segment, and we will be continuing this tremendous success with AlphaTauri.

**Coming up with the name proved to be more difficult than anticipated. Why was that?**

We tried to create a clever link to the Red Bull brand, a link that needed to be obvious. Customers should know – at second glance – that AlphaTauri is a Red Bull brand and that it has Red Bull's DNA.

**What is the name AlphaTauri all about?**

Alpha Tauri is the brightest star in the constellation of Taurus and is the most radiant and energy-rich star. It is this energy that is also reflected in all the label's creative processes. We have therefore created a fabulous connection to the Red Bull brand and the energy drink.

**By doing so, you have not only created a brand, but at the same time also a story. Why was this so important to you?**

A brand needs to have a soul to be able to tell a story. This story can either come from a designer or from the brand's heritage. Or, as in our case, from offering the wearer both convincing designs and added value. A fashion add-on, functionality and smart fabrics that make the lives of the wearers easier. We want to help our customers by offering them apparel that caters to their everyday needs.

**What feedback have you received from your customers so far?**

Our brand name – along with the story and the aspiration of the collection – has been really well received at both of our stores. We have a lot of international visitors to our shop on Getreidegasse in Salzburg and lots of young, creative customers at our store in Graz. This gives us a perfect cross-section of customers. And we listen to what our clientele tells us. We are actually more of a start-up, which is why we can channel any feedback directly into the collections. A huge advantage for us.

**What niche are your products targeting?**

The AlphaTauri collection is a ready-to-wear range aimed at combining fashion and functionality. We see huge

market potential here, which is why I wouldn't necessarily talk of a niche segment at all. We are endeavouring to create an entirely new market, a market in which performance and stylish cuts go hand-in-hand. The fashion sector with all its doctrines and dogmas is changing. Outdoor brands are aiming to be more 'fashionable', and established fashion houses are trying to integrate more functionality into their designs. We view ourselves as one of those labels that is achieving a balance between fashion and performance.

**You worked closely with Schoeller Textil AG on the Energy Wear collection. How did this collaboration come about?**

Schoeller is an excellent partner and a leader in textile innovation. To this end, it made sense for us to enter into a partnership with Schoeller. Something we have also done with our other manufacturing partners, I must add. We want to grow together. Our very first technology, 'Taurex', was developed by Schoeller and is now being launched by us.

**There is talk about a 'new era of intelligent apparel'. What exactly does this mean?**

All living creatures give off energy. However, the Taurex technology returns this bodily energy to the wearer by reflecting infra-red radiation. This is made possible by using a titanium mineral that is part of the fabric itself. As Taurex is spun directly into the fibres, it is characterised by tremendous versatility. From winter coats to summer shirts – Taurex can be included in virtually any garment. The technology is absolutely perfect for us – after all, what could be more perfect for adding energy to clothing than the Red Bull brand?

**You have set yourself the task of bringing fibres or technology developed in-house to market every year. What are the greatest challenges in accomplishing this?**

Whenever we launch a technology, it must offer customers a benefit and also make sense. We will never launch something simply to adhere to this pre-set schedule.

**Instead of showcasing a completely new range every season, you work on »**



creating further editions of key pieces. What is the philosophy behind this?

Every brand needs its own signature. We don't have to start from scratch every season. We are opting to further develop key pieces instead. Preferences regarding the cut, silhouette and functionality are constantly changing. For AlphaTauri, it is about adapting to the changing demands of customers. I see this as a kind of evolution in the collection. Customers should know what the AlphaTauri look is all about.

What is your favourite piece from the collection, and why?

My favourite item is a lightweight bomber jacket in pale grey from the very first collection. The cut and functionality are absolutely perfect. And I am already looking forward to seeing the further-developed design in the coming winter collection.

So, what is on the agenda for the AlphaTauri brand, what happens in the next chapter?

After having completed lots of structural set-up work over the past

few months, it is now all about the exciting expansion phase. We want to gradually grow as a business and strengthen our market position in the long term. We have several ideas for making AlphaTauri shine even more brightly in the future. An online shop roll-out, the involvement of the Red Bull athletes and opinion leaders as well as the launch of B2B operations in 2019 are just some of the current focuses.

[alphatauri.com](http://alphatauri.com)

#### AHMET MERCAN

Ahmet Mercan previously worked as a key account manager at Puma and as a regional sales director at Lacoste where he was responsible for all brand activities within the EMEA region, before assuming the role of Head of Global Consumers Products at Red Bull in 2014. As General Manager at AlphaTauri, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Red Bull GmbH, he is responsible for all measures targeted at strengthening the brand in the long term. Red Bull successfully launched AlphaTauri in 2016 and will be keeping the label firmly on an expansion course.

## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

A brief portrait of Netconomy

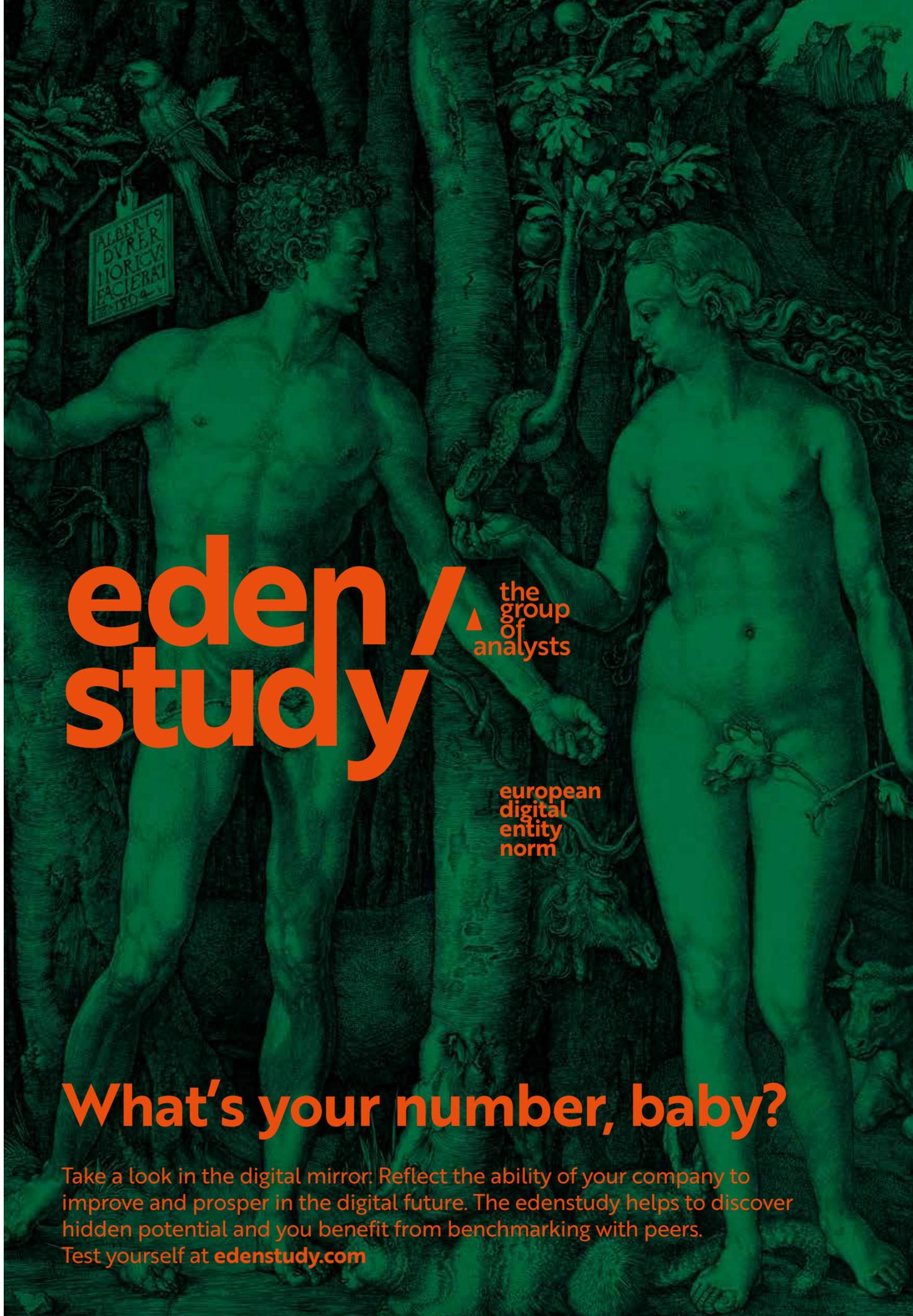
Netconomy is one of the leading SAP Hybris service providers within the German-speaking region, currently employing in excess of 300 Hybris experts focusing on consulting, project management, programming, implementation, quality management, maintenance & servicing, further development, customer service and application operation. Our teams in Berlin, Dortmund, Vienna, Graz, Klagenfurt and Zurich accompany you on your digital transformation journey in close collaboration, supporting your business model with state-of-the-art omnichannel technology combined with a profound understanding of marketing and sales. All with a focus on quality and sustainability: as a Hybris Platinum Partner, Netconomy has been voted 'SAP Hybris Global Most Innovative Partner of the Year', has received the 'SAP Partner of the Year in Specialised

Solutions' award twice and has been 'Recognised Expertise HANA' (for Austria) and 'Partner Center of Expertise' certified. Furthermore, Netconomy has been selected as the 'SAP Hybris Partner of the Year 2017' for the overall EMEA region and chosen as a finalist for the prestigious SAP Pinnacle Awards 2017. The company's customers include the Swiss Migros Group, Leder & Schuh, AVL, the XXXLutz Group, Swarovski, Agrokor and BASF, among others.

[netconomy.net](http://netconomy.net)

#### NETCONOMY AND ALPHATAURI

In creating the AlphaTauri web shop, Red Bull employed the tried-and-tested Netconomy services. The shop is based on a high-performance SAP Hybris platform and is characterised by strong storytelling and extraordinary shop UI design – with an innovative 'Shop the Look' feature and smart product recommendations, among other things. Well-known partners were involved in the creative concept and implementation of the web service interfaces (payment, logistics) to create a unique brand and shopping experience.



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