BTH Heimtex / B+L-Customer survey on fitted carpets 2015 Part 1

Vorwerk builds its lead by expanding

With a level of distribution of almost 70 % Vorwerk is currently the leading supplier of German interior decorators and specialist retailers. In second place is Tretford, and right behind is Infloor/Girloon with over 60 %. There are five suppliers – Jab Anstoetz, Dura, Anker, Nordpfeil and Object Carpet – who achieved a level of over 50 % in the latest BTH Heimtex / B+L Fitted Carpet Customer Survey. Wholesalers and partnerships have strengthened their roles as suppliers: half of the survey participants shop with them.

For the fourth consecutive year fitted carpets from Vorwerk are the most sought-after carpets among German specialist retailers and interior decorators. Around 70 % of the survey participants buy their textile floor coverings from Hamelin. This is a further increase of 3 percentage points on last year. The level of distribution in western and eastern Germany is roughly the same. Its presence in shops with more than ten employees was considerably higher in 2015 (77 %) than it was a year ago (63 %).

With the Tretford brand, the carpet factory in Wesel has a market penetration rate of 66 %. Its products are the second most popular among the survey participants. Its sales strategy focuses on the region of the former West Germany (68 %). Only every other Tretford retailer comes from the former East Germany. The company from Wesel works almost equally with small businesses (fewer than ten employees) as with larger customers.

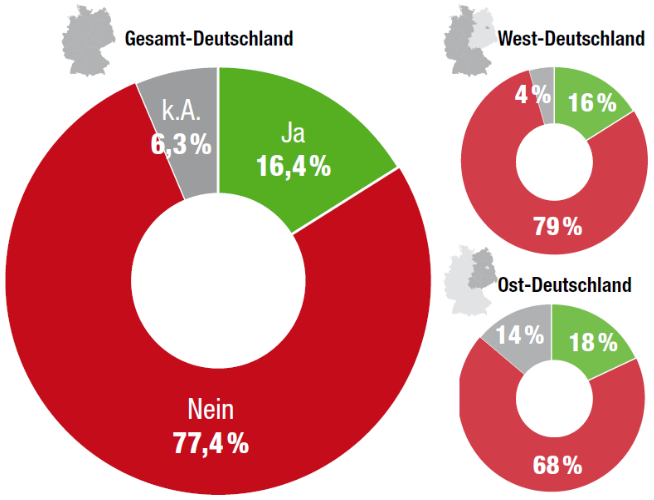
Just slightly behind Tretford and in third place in terms of market share (65 %) is Infloor and its subsidiary Girloon. According to the results of the 2015 customer survey, the company supplies considerably more retailers in eastern Germany (72 %) than in western Germany (63 %). The number of larger customers which have ten or more employees (67 %) that buy from the company is marginally higher than the number of small customers (64 %).

A market penetration of between 50 % und 60 % was achieved by Jab Anstoetz (58 %), Dura (58 %), Anker (54 %), Nordpfeil (52 %), Object Carpet (50 %) and wholesalers/partnerships (51 %). It is worth noting that Jab concentrates more strongly on larger retailers in western Germany. Dura is distributed equally between east and west, but predominantly supplies larger companies with ten or more employees. The same is true for Anker, Nordpfeil and Object Carpet – with the difference that all three are bought less frequently in the east than they are in the west.

Fletco achieved an overall presence of 42 %. The Danes remained faithful to their sales strategy and more frequently supply larger interior decorators and specialist retailers in the west.

The Belgian Balta Group (38 %) with its brands Balta and ITC have their strengths in the east of the country. As is the case for all of its competitors, Balta/ITC focuses more on larger rather than smaller buyers. It is a similar story for the Belgian tufted carpet manufacturer Associated Weavers (38 %).

Carpet tiles: *not a sales impetus for the furnishing sector*



There is currently a trend within the industry for carpet tiles and planks. Against this background we asked retailers whether they thought they would sell yet more textile floor coverings – also in to private customers – as a result of these modular products. The response was unambiguous: 77 % believed that carpet tiles could not provide a sales impetus for textile floor coverings in the furnishing sector.

From which fitted carpet suppliers do specialist retailers buy?

Lieferant	Gesamt	West	Ost	< 10 Mitarb.	> 10 Mitarb.
1. Vorwerk	**70%**	70%	68%	65%	77%
2. Weseler / Tretford	**66%**	68%	50%	66%	70%
3. Girloon / Infloor	**65%**	63%	72%	64%	67%
4. Jab Anstoetz	**58%**	63%	32%	53%	67%
Dura	**58%**	57%	59%	53%	67%
6. Anker	**54%**	55%	50%	47%	69%
7. Nordpfeil	**52%**	53%	46%	47%	64%
8. Object Carpet	**50%**	51%	46%	45%	62%
9. Fletco	**42%**	43%	32%	36%	52%
10. Balta / ITC	**39%**	38%	46%	35%	48%
11. Associated Weavers	**38%**	37%	46%	30%	52%
Großhandel / Kooperationen	**51%**	54%	32%	47%	59%

Alle Angaben in Prozent. Mehrfachnennungen waren möglich.

Weitere Anbieter, die mehrfach genannt wurden (in alphabetischer Reihenfolge):
Balsan, Carpet Concept, Desso, Findeisen, Forbo, Lano/Mohawk, Tisca Tiara, Toucan-T

BTH Heimtex / B+L Fitted Carpet Customer Survey2015 Part 2

Infloor / Girloon are the best suppliers for specialist retailers

The winners of the BTH Heimtex / B+L customer survey 2015 are Infloor and its subsidiary Girloon. Second place went to last year's winner Vorwerk, followed by four companies tied on third place: Anker, Associated Weavers, Balta / ITC and Tretford. **With six wins, the Belgian tufted carpet manufacturer Associated Weavers came top in the greatest number of individual criteria.**

Just as interesting as how widespread a supplier is, are detailed assessments provided by its customers. Therefore, the second part of the BTH Heimtex/ B+L customer survey 2015 saw us put the most important suppliers through their paces in relation to 16 individual criteria.

Overall the results show that in this country interior decorators and specialist retailers enjoy a high standard of fitted carpet suppliers. Moreover, from the customer's perspective the individual manufacturers are very close to one another. Between the holders of first place, Infloor/Girloon (2.1), and the trio of Dura, Nordpfeil and Object Carpet in seventh place (2.4) there is only a third of a mark's difference. In 2014 the difference was 0.4 mark.

So it is comes as no surprise that the first places in the 16 individual categories are more spread out than ever before. In 2014 14 of the gold medals went to just two companies. In 2015 Associated Weavers had six, Infloor/Girloon had five and Anker had four first places. Balta, Tretford and Vorwerk stood at the top of two categories each.

The textile flooring suppliers received much praise for the quality of their products, the generally quick and reliable delivery, and the office staff. On average the best marks were given in these categories. Customers were generally less satisfied with the conditions offered, the efficiency of the merchandising and the industry's sales representatives. The range of the assessments of the latter has, however, recently seen considerable improvements. The marks ranged between 2.3 and 3.2 in 2014, whereas now it is improved with marks between 2.1 and 2.6.

The following provides more detail on the assessments:

Infloor / Girloon

Always one step ahead of the rest

The debut for Infloor and its subsidiary Girloon. For the first time specialist retailers have provided a detailed assessment of the company from Herzebrock-Clarholz. And right from the start the two companies have left all of the other suppliers behind (overall mark 2.1). No other competitor is more popular, friendlier, delivers faster, is more obliging or has better sales representatives. Infloor and Girloon are always one step ahead, which resulted in five first places. What's more, they weren't ranked lower than fourth place in any category.

The survey participants would like to see more involvement and creativity in merchandising approaches and only gave a mark of 2.9. Nevertheless, the mark was enough to give them a solid fourth place as the performance level was generally weak in this category.

Vorwerk

2015 is not the measure of all things

Vorwerk will have to be content with second place (2.2) in the overall ranking this year. Moreover, the number of first places within the detailed assessment has now shrunk from seven in 2014 to two. Vorwerk currently offers the fastest delivery and is assessed as the best at merchandising.

In the eyes of the survey participants the manufacturer's performance in half of the individual categories was either the same or had improved – for instance in the important parameters of speed and reliability of delivery (each 1.8). Additionally, the rating in the remaining eight areas only marginally worsened. But at the same time the competition – whether from Germany or from Belgium – has become noticeably stronger.

Anker

Consistently good

For a few years Anker has been more avidly courting specialist retailers and interior decorators that serve smaller-scale customers. This effort has been rewarded. According to the survey respondents, the company from Düren is the third-best supplier (2.3) alongside Associated Weavers, Balta/ITC and Tretford. There is a good reason for this: Anker delivers the best product quality, has the clearest sales policy and is unbeatable in terms of its delivery speed and reliability. This makes a total of four first places (in 2014 it had one first place for product quality).

As if that were not enough, Anker has also succeeded in improving its score in the two criteria of price-quality ratio (2.3) and conditions (2.4). In both categories the survey participants were generally quite critical. That's what you call listening to your customers.

Associated Weavers

Improved throughout

Associated Weavers always provides something of a surprise. In 2013 the ambitious Belgian carpet maker sensationally scooped more first places than the sector's forerunner at the time Vorwerk. Twelve months later there was much disappointment in the company's headquarters at Ronse at its tenth place ranking (2.5). In 2015 AW has once again climbed back up to third place (2.3) and achieved the feat of improving in all 16 categories! An impressive success.

Moreover, the team from Flanders was ranked highest in six of the parameters: price-quality ratio, saleability of products, conditions, office staff quality, progressiveness and future perspectives. No other manufacturer – not even the overall winner Infloor/Girloon – could keep up. It is particularly worth mentioning the half mark and more increases in the categories of sales representatives and office staff (2.4 and 1.9), as well as progressiveness and future perspectives (each 2.2).

Balta / ITC

Best price-quality ratio

For the sake of simplicity, in this year's customer survey the two carpet brands from the Belgian Balta Group, Balta and ITC, were assessed together for the first time. As a result a comparison with the previous year is not possible.

The company, which has just been sold by one investment company (Doughty Hanson) to another (Lone Star Funds), achieved an exceptional result of third place (2.3). This is considerably better than the respective individual rankings of the two brands in 2014. Twelve months ago ITC was placed eighth with 2.5 and Balta brought up the rear with a mark of 2.6. Currently the Group is popular among German retailers and interior decorators for its price-quality ratio, which is traditionally very good, as well as for its attractive sales conditions. The Belgian Group was the leader in both categories.

Weseler / Tretford

A return to old strengths

The Tretford brand from the Wesel carpet factory is currently performing better in the specialist retail sector than it did twelve months ago. The manufacturer achieved a good average score of 2.3, and after being ranked fifth (2.5) last year now sits in third place. Tretford cannot be beaten in the quality of its complaints process and in relation to fast delivery, giving it two first places.

While in 2014 the supplier was regularly in the mid to low end of the field, Tretford is more often found in the higher end in 2015. Customers associate this brand with a high level of popularity, a good product quality – among the best – and a successful merchandising approach.

In contrast, the supplier is punished with last places in terms of its price-quality ratio (2.6), conditions (3.2) and progressiveness (3.0).

Dura

Better marks, worse ranking

Dura achieved a better mark in the 2015 customer survey (2.4) in comparison with its mark in 2014 (2.5). For the majority of criteria, the individual assessments were better than a year ago. However, when compared with the competition the company has once again fallen behind in the eyes of its specialist trade customers – albeit only slightly. After achieving fourth place in 2013 and sixth last year it now sits in seventh place – together with Nordpfeil and Object Carpet. Although the product quality (2.0) and product saleability (2.4) were improved, as well as deliveries being faster (1.9) and more reliable (2.0) than in the past, its competitors in the market are responding to the needs of customers even more successfully.

Meanwhile, Dura's complaints procedure has worsened, and it has seen a drop in the quality of its sales representatives and office staff – in each of these categories it sits in last place.

Nordpfeil

Successful relaunch, but still some way off the top

Specialist trade customers currently rate the work of Nordpfeil just as highly as in 2014 with a mark of 2.4. Yet its ranking has fallen by two places to seventh position. The relaunch under the new owner Vorwerk can therefore be seen as a success. The basis for this is the admittedly lower, but continuing popularity reports from customers (2.2). Nordpfeil has produced many years of good work in the trade sector. The brand was well regarded in terms of quality, reliability and service. This is still the case. The new Nordpfeil GmbH is doing well at recovering these skills as quickly as possible. It has made a start. The current marks for product quality (1.9), speed of delivery (1.9) and reliability of deliveries (1.8) are good. The completely new sales force is increasingly finding favour with customers and has improved its mark from 2.8 to 2.6. The price-quality ratio has risen to 2.2.

However, at the moment there are too many competitors doing better. Linked to this, for the second year running, specialist retailers also see the future perspectives of Nordpfeil as being less positive than all the other suppliers except Dura.

Object Carpet

Progressiveness is appreciated

Object Carpet was more or less able to maintain its good average mark from 2014. From a mark of 2.3 and a ranking of third it now has a mark of 2.4 and a seventh place ranking. Buyers of fitted carpets in specialist retailers and interior decorators appreciate the progressiveness and the high product quality (1.9) of the family firm. The product quality of the leading suppliers are only one third of a mark better than the company from Denkendorf.

However, customers continued to be dissatisfied with the price-quality ratio (2.6), the sales policy (2.8) and the process for dealing with complaints (2.7).

Ranking according to average mark

All the marks given to a supplier are added together to provide an average mark for all categories. This does not represent their rankings in the individual categories.

1. Infloor / Girloon	2,1
2. Vorwerk	2,2
3. Anker	2,3
Associated Weavers	2,3
Balta / ITC	2,3
Weseler / Tretford	2,3
7. Dura	2,4
Nordpfeil	2,4
Object Carpet	2,4

Winners according to criteria

Popularity

Infloor / Girloon	1,9
Weseler / Tretford	2,0
Vorwerk	2,1
Associated Weavers	2,2
Dura	2,2
Nordpfeil	2,2
Balta / ITC	2,3
Object Carpet	2,3
Anker	2,4

Price-quality ratio

Associated Weavers	1,9
Balta / ITC	1,9
Infloor / Girloon	2,0
Nordpfeil	2,2
Anker	2,3
Dura	2,5
Vorwerk	2,5
Object Carpet	2,6
Weseler / Tretford	2,6

Friendliness

Infloor / Girloon	1,9
Vorwerk	2,0
Anker	2,0
Associated Weavers	2,0
Nordpfeil	2,0
Weseler / Tretford	2,0
Balta / ITC	2,1
Dura	2,1
Object Carpet	2,1

Product quality

Anker	1,6
Infloor / Girloon	1,8
Vorwerk	1,8
Weseler / Tretford	1,8
Nordpfeil	1,9
Object Carpet	1,9
Dura	2,0
Balta / ITC	2,3
Associated Weavers	2,4

Sales policy

Anker	2,2
Infloor/Girloon	2,3
Weseler/Tretford	2,3
Associated Weavers	2,4
Nordpfeil	2,4
Balta/ITC	2,5
Vorwerk	2,5
Dura	2,6
Object Carpet	2,8

Delivery reliability

Anker	1,7
Infloor/Girloon	1,8
Nordpfeil	1,8
Vorwerk	1,8
Weseler/Tretford	1,8
Dura	2,0
Object Carpet	2,0
Balta/ITC	2,1
Associated Weavers	2,4

Saleability of products

Associated Weavers	1,7
Balta/ITC	2,0
Vorwerk	2,0
Infloor/Girloon	2,2
Weseler/Tretford	2,3
Dura	2,4
Nordpfeil	2,4
Anker	2,7
Object Carpet	2,8

Speed of delivery

Anker	1,8
Infloor/Girloon	1,8
Vorwerk	1,8
Weseler/Tretford	1,8
Dura	1,9
Nordpfeil	1,9
Object Carpet	1,9
Balta/ITC	2,3
Associated Weavers	2,6

Conditions

Associated Weavers	2,2
Balta / ITC	2,2
Infloor / Girloon	2,3
Anker	2,4
Nordpfeil	2,4
Dura	2,5
Vorwerk	2,6
Object Carpet	2,8
Weseler / Tretford	3,2

Complaints procedure

Weseler / Tretford	2,1
Balta / ITC	2,3
Infloor / Girloon	2,3
Associated Weavers	2,4
Anker	2,5
Nordpfeil	2,6
Vorwerk	2,6
Dura	2,7
Object Carpet	2,7

Fairness

Infloor / Girloon	2,2
Dura	2,3
Associated Weavers	2,4
Balta / ITC	2,4
Weseler / Tretford	2,4
Anker	2,5
Nordpfeil	2,5
Vorwerk	2,5
Object Carpet	2,7

Quality of sales representatives

Infloor / Girloon	2,1
Vorwerk	2,2
Anker	2,3
Associated Weavers	2,4
Balta / ITC	2,5
Weseler / Tretford	2,5
Dura	2,6
Nordpfeil	2,6
Object Carpet	2,6

Quality of office staff

Associated Weavers	1,9
Anker	2,0
Balta / ITC	2,0
Infloor / Girloon	2,0
Weseler / Tretford	2,0
Vorwerk	2,1
Dura	2,2
Nordpfeil	2,2
Object Carpet	2,2

Progressiveness

Associated Weavers	2,2
Infloor / Girloon	2,4
Object Carpet	2,4
Vorwerk	2,4
Balta / ITC	2,6
Anker	2,8
Dura	2,8
Nordpfeil	2,9
Weseler / Tretford	3,0

Merchandising

Vorwerk	2,5
Weseler / Tretford	2,6
Associated Weavers	2,7
Infloor / Girloon	2,9
Object Carpet	2,9
Balta / ITC	3,0
Anker	3,1
Dura	3,3
Nordpfeil	3,3

Future perspectives

Associated Weavers	2,2
Anker	2,3
Infloor / Girloon	2,3
Vorwerk	2,3
Weseler / Tretford	2,3
Object Carpet	2,4
Balta / ITC	2,6
Nordpfeil	2,8
Dura	3,0

Ranking according to number of first places

This ranking counts the number of first places for the individual categories

1. Associated Weavers	6	Preis-Leistungs-Verhältnis, Warenverkäuflichkeit, Konditionen, Qualität Innendienst, Fortschrittlichkeit, Zukunftsperspektiven
2. Infloor / Girloon	5	Sympathiewert, Freundlichkeit, Lieferschnelligkeit, Kulanz, Qualität Außendienst
3. Anker	4	Produktqualität, Vertriebspolitik, Lieferzuverlässigkeit, Lieferschnelligkeit
4. Balta / ITC	2	Preis-Leistungs-Verhältnis, Konditionen
5. Weseler / Tretford	2	Reklamationsbearbeitung, Lieferschnelligkeit
6. Vorwerk	2	Lieferschnelligkeit, Verkaufsförderung

BTH Heimtex / B+L trade survey

Panel and methodology

The BTH Heimtex/B+L customer survey on fitted carpets 2015 was performed in two stages. The first stage involved asking specialist retailers which suppliers they bought from – i.e. determining the market share of the supplier. This question was aided, but was also open-ended – the interviewees could name suppliers other than the companies suggested by BTH Heimtex. The relative level of distribution is given as a percentage. This was also broken down into eastern and western Germany and into retailers with up to ten employees and those with more than ten employees. Sales volumes did not play a role here.

In the second stage the retailers being surveyed were asked in more detail about the nine leading suppliers. For each company, questions were asked about 16 criteria and the school marking system with marks from 1 (very good) to 6 (insufficient) was used. These criteria included objectively measurable ones, such as conditions and speed of delivery, as well as subjectively reported ones such as popularity, fairness and quality of sales representatives. B+L used the responses to calculate the average mark for the relevant criteria. The overall ranking according to average mark was based on the addition of all of a supplier's marks in the 16 categories and the total average mark that emerged from the calculation.

Throughout Germany a total of 159 conventional trade retailers and interior decorators were surveyed in May 2015, spread regionally between north, south, east and west. The survey did not include chains, wholesalers, cooperation centres or superstores, such as discount stores or cash-and-carry retailers.