



Bed manufacturer De Rucci is investing in advanced technology, including leather-cutting solutions, to help make its supply more efficient while improving product quality. Its aim is to help more customers around the world sleep better, something of which millions of people in today's world have an urgent need.

Sweet dreams

The world appears to be waking up to the problem that many of us are not getting enough sleep. One furniture company, De Rucci, founded in Dongguan, China in 2004, has been engaging directly with the problem for years and has used its expert knowledge of leather and other materials to develop its own "healthy sleep system". De Rucci is one of thousands of companies in Guangdong province making beds and other furniture, but the high level of care it takes over the materials it uses and the design ideas it incorporates into these

everyday (and everynight) objects help it to stand out. The company has long been convinced that the colour, feel and look of the materials that it uses to make headboards, footboards and bed-frames (almost always high-quality bovine leather in the case of its top-of-the-range 0769 collection) all have a contribution to make in helping its customers sleep soundly.

Secure place

Take the example of the collection's QB-068 model. Like the other 0769 pieces, the QB-068 combines "modern scientific elements" with details from

Chinese traditional culture. For instance, the main structure of the bed is rectangular but many of the details are circular; De Rucci regards these elements as complementary. The headboard is comprised of two distinct but conjoined leather-covered cushions that jut out at an angle. This, too, is deliberate because it helps hold pillows in place, an idea the company takes one step further in another of the beds in the collection, the QB-024 (here, the foot of the bed is slightly raised to help prevent the mattress or the bedding from shifting too much during the night). The common

The company's 0769 range of beds makes extensive use of leather and other natural materials.

CREDIT: DE RUCCI



The QB-024 bed with its turned-up toe, helping to give sleepers a feeling of stability.

CREDIT: DE RUCCI



theme is that holding the sleeper securely in place will make restful sleep more realisable. The full-grain bovine leather the QB-068 uses is dyed a colour that the manufacturer calls “deep yellow” for warmth and softness to help relax and refresh the mind.

Curing sleep deprivation may seem a lot to ask of a piece of furniture, but De Rucci’s business results suggest strongly that the company is onto something. It now has 16 factories in nine countries and, in addition to leather, it uses as many other natural materials as it can, including natural latex in its mattress constructions. It has a research and development centre at its headquarters in southern China, but also runs an ergonomics testing centre in Belgium and a design centre in Milan. Ten years after launch, the company achieved a turnover of \$700 million. It now has 2,386 showrooms around the world, having expanded into markets such as Australia, Japan, the US, India, Germany, Italy and Canada.

Technology investment

Investment is ongoing in new technology to help advance all aspects of the business, including the way it uses leather. In September 2017, De Rucci acquired the DesignConcept 3D virtual prototyping and it explained at the time that it believes enabling consumers to have greater customisation of the beds they buy will be important in the years to come; it has begun to talk of running smart factories and direct-from-manufacturer sales to the public. Its conviction is that the Lectra technology it has invested in will help it achieve these aims.

Chief executive, Yao Ji Qing, says this move is in line with De Rucci’s strategic vision, which is aligned with a wider plan called ‘Made in China 2025’. Washington DC-based think-tank the Center for Strategic and International Studies calls ‘Made in China 2025’ an initiative to upgrade Chinese industry, which means transforming manufacturing in China into something innovation-driven, that

emphasises quality over quantity, achieves high environmental standards and nurtures human talent.

DesignConcept will allow De Rucci to link up product development and production processes, gain greater control over costing and address any feasibility or quality issues at the pre-production stage, Lectra explains. For its part, Versalis’ ability to cut all types of leather and its embedded sensors will save the company time and material because it will enable it to capture critical production data such as hide yield.

The technology provider’s chief marketing officer, Céline Choussy Bedouet, says she is happy that Lectra will be able to support a forward-thinking company like De Rucci in navigating the changing industrial landscape. “We are looking to revamp and invigorate our manufacturing processes,” Mr Yao explains, “as we move towards a smart manufacturing model.”



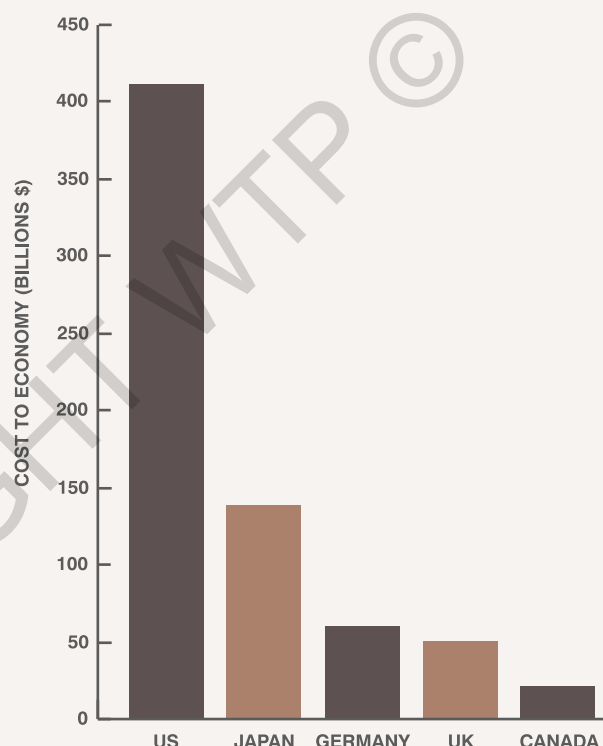
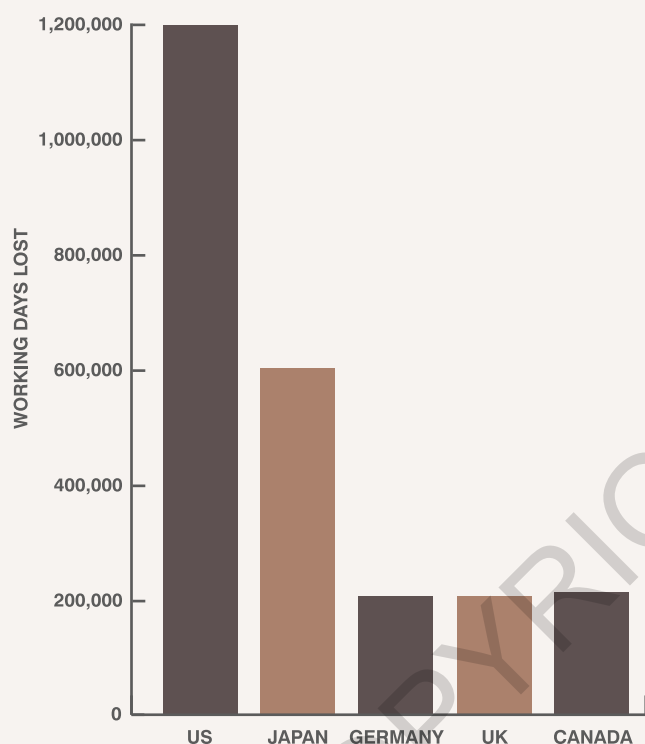
Too tired to work well

Research group Rand Europe says insufficient sleep is a curse of most industrialised countries today and in 2016 it carried out a study to put a price on the problem this is causing to the economies of the US, Canada, the UK, Japan and Germany.

According to the study, the US sustains the highest economic losses, \$411 billion a year, followed by Japan (up to \$138 billion a year). It says the US loses the equivalent of more than 1.2 million working days because of insufficient sleep, while the corresponding figure for Japan is 604,000 working days.

The cost to the German, UK and Canadian economies is, respectively, \$60 billion, \$50 billion and \$21.4 billion per year, with working days lost of 207,000 per year for the UK and Germany and 209,000 for Canada.

In comments confirmed by Professor Matthew Walker, the Rand Europe study suggested that simple things most of us can do to improve “sleep outcomes” include taking some exercise, trying to go to bed and get up at the same times each day and limiting the use of electronic equipment at bedtime.



Always on

If this helps the company's “healthy sleep system” to reach more people's bedrooms, one person who will look on it as a positive development will be Professor Matthew Walker, director of the Center for Human Sleep Science at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of ‘Why we sleep’, a work that took him more than four years to write and which The Guardian newspaper has described as “a complex but urgent book”. So common is the problem of insufficient and poor-quality sleep in our ‘always-on’ world that Matthew Walker now finds himself cornered by rest-deprived people everywhere he goes. He told The Guardian in a recent interview

that, as soon as people find out what he does, he is pressed into offering ad hoc advice clinics everywhere from dinner parties to trips on aircraft. He says he is now tempted to tell people that he is a dolphin trainer instead.

But he says no aspect of our lives is “left unscathed” by sleep deprivation and confirms studies have put the cost to economies of people sleeping badly in the billions. The effects on health are even more critical. Professor Walker says that anything under seven hours is sleep deprivation but he warns that after just one night of only four or five hours' sleep our natural defences against cancer cells drop by 70%. Other health concerns include a greater risk of Alzheimer's, diabetes,

obesity and poor mental health. He is concerned that, in the twenty-first century, people who sleep for eight hours per night are regarded as unusual: unresponsive on social media, unwilling to work into the small hours of the morning on an urgent project, unsociable when friends plan a late night out. It's as though sleeping were linked to laziness and weakness, he points out, when in fact sleeping well benefits us and our work in almost every way.

De Rucci's aim of helping cure the modern world of the great ill of poor sleep appears insightful, prophetic even. And if its beds succeed in blessing more people with sweet dreams, they must constitute another in the long list of ways in which leather benefits humanity. 🌙