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Posted Date: 15 November 2024

doi: 10.20944/preprints202407.1772.v2

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*Article*

# Aloe Vera as a Printed Coating to Demote the Wear of Textiles

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**Abstract:** Aloe vera is well known for its biological properties as a bioflavonoid-anti-inflammatory, antibacterial agent. It has been used frequently in the food sector as food coating for its hygroscopic properties and as an ingredient in the lucrative cosmetic industry. Studies have also included Aloe vera as an eco-friendly green solution based on these properties. The current research focuses on the use of Aloe vera gel in printing pastes as an alternative sustainable solution to synthetic thickeners, evaluating its wet performance and ease of fabric stitching, and has been inspired by studies that similarly used this substance measuring its effect on the fabric's coefficient of friction and antimicrobial action. In the current study, printing pastes with natural colourants, such as saffron, curcumin and annatto, and Aloe vera gel thickener derived from natural leaves from Crete increased the fabric's mechanical resistance to abrasion compared to the untreated pastes. The measured performance did not differ substantially from prints with traditional synthetic pastes, hence tolerating the substitution with the non-contaminant variant. The enhanced resistance to abrasion and wear prolongates the fabric's serviceable life and resulting garments, decreasing the need for high industry processing volumes and, as a result, reducing pollution. The resistance to wear was evaluated using the dominant method in textile testing of the Martindale apparatus, which measured the cycles to failure, weight loss, and general appearance deterioration using the official photographic standards.

**Keywords:** aloe vera printing; aloe vera coating; fabric wear; green fashion

## 1. Introduction

The apparel and fashion industry, in general, is known to be one of the most polluting sectors on the planet, according to the U.N. and NRDC [1,2], where 93 billion m<sup>3</sup> of water is used annually, and around half a million tons of microfibre is being dumped into the ocean yearly. Husaini et al. [3] reported that only a few industries treat their effluents according to Pakistan's accepted national environmental quality standard, a country well known to produce many of today's textile goods [4].

The term serviceability of a garment is a generic term that composes several aspects exceeding the limits of the garment's properties. A fully functional but old stylish garment can still be considered unserviceable, as in the case of a lightly discoloured formal suit in the elbows area [5,6]. Based on this concept, consumers are encouraged to buy and discard clothes and textile goods frequently, in general, through constantly changing collections at low prices as the old collections become unserviceable. Consequently, wear-resistance characteristics are usually overlooked as the garments are not intended to have a prolonged short life. Low-cost and quality garments tend to

abrade, discolour or change in appearance faster than average and often, their useful life terminates even sooner. Modern sustainable trends require reusing cloths as raw materials for new ones [7]. Based on these facts, it is essential to improve the resistance to wear of the fabric.

As we approach a sustainability dead end, the serviceable life of garments is a critical issue and the Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action in view of the Paris Agreement of 2015 highlighted the need for waste reduction in textiles. The beneficial effects of Aloe Vera of coated surfaces have been introduced previously. However, no studies in the literature have investigated the effect on the abrasive resistance of the substrate when used as a thickening agent in the pastes for printed fabrics. This article aims to investigate the incorporation of Aloe Vera gel in the printing paste as a sustainable solution for thickening agents, comprising potential innovation in the textile industry by extending the serviceable life of garments, reducing fabric wear, and minimizing waste.

Wear is determined by several factors, such as the abradant, abrasion conditions, lubrication and inherent mechanical properties of the fabric [6,8]. The abrasion can assess wear evaluation to failure point where holes are prominent in the fabric, change of appearance with fuzzing and pill formation or with percentage mass loss reflecting the impact on all mechanical properties related to mass density.

Microorganisms are present on almost every surface when conditions, such as moisture, nutrients, and temperature, allow them to [9]. The growth of microorganisms on textiles can be a hazard to the user, leading to pathogenic or odour-causing microorganisms. At the same time, the garment itself may suffer damage caused by mould, mildew or rot-producing microorganisms, leading to functional, hygienic and aesthetic difficulties such as stains [10]. Synthetic man-made fibres exhibit higher resistance to microbial attacks than natural fibres due to their hydrophobicity. Protein fibres and carbohydrates in cotton can be a source of nutrients themselves [9]. Their susceptibility explains the importance of using antimicrobial properties on these fibres.

Colour is a fundamental aspect of fashion as it characterises collections and can be achieved in yarn or garment form; however, fabric colouring is the most usual case and can be implemented using dyeing and printing methods. For many years, synthetic dyes were used for this scope; however, the need for a greener process gave rise to alternative sources based on natural dyes and resources [11].

Although digital printing is rapidly growing the traditional screen printing, remains the industry dominant methods for 2022 when higher production volumes are needed and constitutes a market of 8.14 billion \$, only in the US [12]. The method be applied by rotary or flat screens and the latter is ideal for home and laboratory runs.

Synthetic thickeners are mainly acrylic based which are widely used in textile printing due to their ability to provide consistent viscosity, good print definition, and compatibility with various dye types. [11,13–19] Researchers have looked for alternatives including the polyurethanes based synthetic thickeners which share the same downsides, particularly concerning biodegradability and sustainability. Synthetic thickeners often comprise petrochemical derivatives, which are resistant to natural degradation processes. [20,21] This persistence can lead to long-term environmental contamination, as well as bioaccumulation in the ecosystem.

Aloe vera is a plant belonging to the Liliaceae family. It has been used frequently in the food sector as a food coating for its hygroscopic properties [22] and as an ingredient in the lucrative cosmetic industry [23]. It is cultivated in many farms worldwide, and it could lead to promising cultivation in Greece if a direct market chain with the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries is established [24,25]. In conjunction with these industries, the textile industry can also raise the need for the plant, as discussed later. Historically, Aloe vera has been used for medicinal purposes, and it has been known as a “healing plant” as it possesses some biological activities that include the promotion of wound healing, antifungal activity, hypoglycaemic or anti-diabetic effects, anti-inflammatory, anticancer and gastroprotective properties. Following that path in this modern generation, researchers claim that Aloe vera treatment can speed wound healing [26,27], offer U.V. protection, and has antioxidant [28] and antimicrobial properties [29–31] when used in textiles.

Aloe vera leaves contain polysaccharides, and the gel contained is viscous and colourless, making it possible to be used as a thickener agent accompanied by natural dyes and avoid the harmful effects of synthetic thickeners and dyes [32–34]. Researchers have used aloe by padding and coating as an ingredient in the printing paste in moderate concentrations and measured changes in the coefficient of friction and antimicrobial performance [9,35]. The current study, as a supplementary study of previous work on the use of natural colourant prints, incorporates more significant volumes of aloe to substitute the commercial thickening agent while measuring the impact of the print on the wear resistance characteristics of the fabric, using the same natural occurring dyes from saffron, curcumin and annatto. These natural dyes are known for their low toxicity and are readily used in the food industry. At the same time, in their application on textiles, they have proven to impart delicate shades on cotton fabrics as reported by Zarkogianni et al. [36] and for convenience presented the Tables 1 and 2, including the fastness to washing and rubbing where the Aloe Vera (AV) treated samples exhibit similar performance to the commercial thickener (CT).

**Table 1.** Colorimetric data ( $L^*$ ,  $a^*$ ,  $b^*$ ,  $C^*$ ,  $h^\circ$ ,  $KS \lambda_{max}$  values) of knitted samples, and colour fastness to rubbing, washing and staining of multifibre strip (W-wool, A-acrylic, P-polyester, PA-polyamide, C-cotton, AC-acetate).

Sample	Washing fastness													Rubbing fastness	
	Colorimetric data						Colour Fastness	Colour Staining						Dry	Wet
	K/S	L*	a*	b*	C*	h°		W	A	P	PA	C	AC		
AV-Saffron	17.2	76.4	4	43.8	44	84.8	3	5	5	5	4/5	4/5	5	5	4
CT-Saffron	4.9	68.8	15.1	69.3	70.9	77.7	3	5	5	5	5	3/4	5	5	3
AV-Curcumin	15.1	81.6	-2.8	51.5	51.6	93.1	3	5	5	5	3/4	4/5	4/5	4-5	3
CT-Curcumin	14.1	80.9	-3.1	49.8	49.9	93.6	4/5	5	5	5	4/5	4/5	5	5	4
AV-Annatto	17.4	72.8	6.8	30.8	31.6	77.5	2/3	5	5	5	5	4/5	5	5	4-5
CT-Annatto	24.3	77.4	8.9	29.9	31.2	73.6	2/3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

**Table 2.** Colorimetric data ( $L^*$ ,  $a^*$ ,  $b^*$ ,  $C^*$ ,  $h^\circ$ ,  $KS \lambda_{max}$  values) of woven samples, and colour fastness to rubbing, washing and staining of multifibre strip (W-wool, A-acrylic, P-polyester, PA-polyamide, C-cotton, AC-acetate).

Sample	Washing fastness													Rubbing fastness	
	Colorimetric data						Colour Fastness	Colour Staining						Dry	Wet
	K/S	L*	a*	b*	C*	h°		W	A	P	PA	C	AC		
AV-Saffron	16	76.6	4.6	43.8	44	84	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4/5
CT-Saffron	4.8	69.2	14.5	70.3	71.8	78.3	3	5	5	5	5	4/5	5	5	3/4
AV-Curcumin	10.5	77.5	-1	53.6	53.6	91.1	3/4	5	5	5	3/4	4/5	4/5	5	4
CT-Curcumin	10.2	78.9	-4.7	54.1	54.3	94.9	3/4	5	5	5	4	4/5	4/5	5	4/5
AV-Annatto	24.2	79.1	5.7	27.6	28.2	78.3	2/3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4/5
CT-Annatto	19.6	76.6	8.3	33.4	34.4	76.1	2/3	5	5	5	3	4/5	4	5	5

The fabric’s wear resistance is evaluated by abrading the fabric using the Martindale apparatus and measuring cycles to failure, percentage mass loss and change of appearance. Similar multifunctional antimicrobial-abrasion-resistant coatings have been reported in the literature for use on silk fibres [37]. The eco-friendly thickener printed fabric with the combined aloe-natural colour pastes and fabric printed with commercial thickener-natural dye paste were tested and compared against their untreated scoured cotton of woven and knitted fabric construction to claim possible benefits in abrasion resistance, implying longer-lasting serviceable garments.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Scope

The scope of the current work was to determine whether the eco-friendly thickener printing paste containing natural dyes and aloe vera thickening agent intended to substitute the commercial thickener can contribute to abrasion resistance to demote wear and extend the useful product life of garments as part of a sustainable textile solution. Consequently, using aloe as a thickening agent can reduce the need for high textile production volumes, leading to pollution.

2.2. Materials

The substrate composition was selected to be 100% cotton owing to their microbial and abrasion resistance susceptibility, as mentioned in the introduction, in the form of the two main fabric constructions. Namely, knitted single jersey fabric with a mass density of 170g\*m<sup>-2</sup> and woven poplin of a 1/1 plain weave fabric of 192 g\*m<sup>-2</sup> were used. Substrates were prepared to undergo desizing and bleaching without optical brightening agents before use, achieving absorbability and forming the control (untreated) samples. The ingredients for the preparation of the printing pastes were the following: the acrylic binder Novabind 1001H, Prochimica Novarese, Italy, soft 100%, the acrylic thickener Kahaprint RCF, Kyke Hellas SA and the fixing agent Novabind ICP: Prochimica Novarese, Italy, isocyanate based free of formaldehyde. Annatto and Curcumin powders supplied by Alps Industries Ltd. (India) were used without further purification for all printing processes. A commercial sample of saffron stigmas (Cooperative de Saffron, Crocus, Kozani, Greece) was used. Aloe Vera was extracted from Aloe Vera leaves containing polysaccharides and was purchased from Crete, Greece. Sodium Alginate was purchased from Glenthams Life Sciences, UK. The standard 100% wool fabric from SDC was used as an abradant in the Martindale apparatus, conforming to the ISO12947-2 standard.

2.3. Methods

The overhand mixer used was obtained from IKA-WERCK (RW 14H). The ultrasonic processor used was the UP 100H from Hielscher. Printing paste was incorporated using the flat screen-printing method by applying a uniform film using a 160-count mesh over the substrate which was treated at 150°C for 3 minutes, and the weight and fabric thickness were checked before and after printing with acceptable discrepancies considering the natural origin of the substrate (CV<5%). Microscopic analysis was performed using the Scan Electron Microscope (SEM) JEOL model JSM-IT500 and the Meiji Techno MX9430 polarising microscope.

Mean percentage dry mass gain and mean percentage thickness gain are presented in Table 3 for the woven and knitted structure.

Table 3. Sample preparation properties.

Property	Woven	Knitted
Mean Dry mass gain (%)	9.85	10.70
Mean Thickness increase (%)	10.81	13.25

Mean Dry Mass Gain (%)

The test for woven and knitted fabric indicates that the p-values for the F-test are over the  $\alpha=0.05$ , which signifies that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted; hence, the variances are accepted as equal, and the t-test of equal variances case has proceeded.

The findings clearly show that the p-values were way under  $\alpha=0.05$  in the subsequent t-test, which signifies that the means are statistically different. Therefore, this proves that the thickness of the printed fabric has increased compared to the control fabric in both cases, namely woven and knitted, Tables 4 and 5.



**Table 4.** Sample variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) for %Thickness increase of control and printed knitted substrates.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances			t-test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances		
	Control	Printed		Control	Printed
Mean	0,5848	0,6623	Mean	0,5848	0,6623
Variance	0,0001397	0,000509	Variance	0,0001397	0,000509
Observations	5	30	Observations	5	30
df	4	29	Pooled Variance	0,00046422	
F	0,2744727		Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0,1079623		df	33	
F Critical one-tail	0,1739182		t Stat	-7,446525	
			P(T<=t) one-tail	7,3715*10 <sup>-09</sup>	
			t Critical one-tail	1,69236031	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0.0000000147430	
			t Critical two-tail	2,0345153	

**Table 5.** Sample variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) for %Thickness increase of control and printed woven substrates.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances			t-test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances		
	Control	Printed		Control	Printed
Mean	0,488	0,540733	Mean	0,488	0,540733
Variance	0,000322	0,000741	Variance	0,000322	0,000741
Observations	5	30	Observations	5	30
df	4	29	Pooled Variance	0,00069	
F	0,434733		Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0,217612		df	33	
F Critical one-tail	0,173918		t Stat	-4,15616	
			P(T<=t) one-tail	0,000108	
			t Critical one-tail	1,69236	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0,000216	
			t Critical two-tail	2,034515	

Mean Dry Mass Gain (%)

The test for woven and knitted fabric indicates that the p-values for the F-test are under the  $\alpha=0.05$ , which signifies that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected; hence, the variances are accepted as unequal, and the t-test of unequal (Welch’s t-test) variances case has proceeded.

The findings clearly show that the p-values were way under  $\alpha=0.05$  in the subsequent t-test (Welch’s t-test), which signifies that the means are statistically different. Therefore, this proves that the printed fabric’s weight (in the dry state) has increased compared to the control fabric in both woven and knitted cases, Tables 6 and 7.

**Table 6.** Sample variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) for %Dry mass gain of control and printed knitted substrates.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances			t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances		
	Control	Printed		Control	Printed
Mean	0,2055	0,227486	Mean	0,2055	0,227486
Variance	0.00000033333	0,000038	Variance	0.00000033333	0,0000038
Observations	4	24	Observations	4	24
df	3	23	Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
F	0,0878174		df	17	

P(F<=f) one-tail	0,0339875	t Stat	-44,741052
F Critical one-tail	0,1156974	P(T<=t) one-tail	2,2209*10 <sup>-19</sup>
		t Critical one-tail	1,73960673
		P(T<=t) two-tail	4,4419*10 <sup>-19</sup>
		t Critical two-tail	2,10981558

**Table 7.** Sample variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) for %Dry mass gain of control and printed woven substrates.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances			t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances		
	Control	Printed		Control	Printed
Mean	0,2255	0,247708	Mean	0,2255	0,247708
Variance	0.0000003333	0,0000171	Variance	0.00000033333	0.0000171
Observations	4	24	Observations	4	24
df	3	23	Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
F	0,0195101		df	26	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0,0038112		t Stat	-24,904272	
F Critical one-tail	0,1156974		P(T<=t) one-tail	5,7174*10 <sup>-20</sup>	
			t Critical one-tail	1,70561792	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	1,1435*10 <sup>-19</sup>	
			t Critical two-tail	2,05552944	

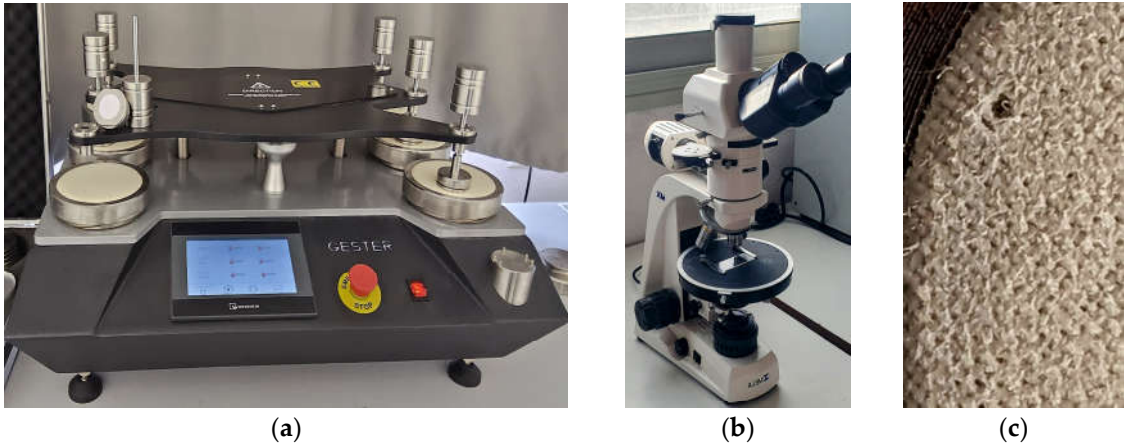
The printing pastes were prepared using the recipes in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Printing paste recipes of Aloe vera Gel and Commercial Thickener.

Ingredients (gr/100gr paste)	Thickening Agents	
	Aloe vera Gel	Commercial
Natural dye	2	2
Thickening agent	80	1
Sodium Alginate	2	-
Binder	15	15
Fixer	1	1
Water	-	81

The Martindale abrasion and pilling testing apparatus (Gester) was used to abrade the samples, which were cut to a diameter of 38mm under the pressure of 12 kPa (ISO 12947–2) and abraded at the speed of 47.5 cycles per minute using the standard woollen abradant, as presented in the set up in Figure 1. The masses before and after specified abrasion cycles were measured, and the mass loss was calculated and reported as a percentage of the initial specimen mass (ISO 12947–3). The percentage mass loss and cycles to failure were measured at the point where two different threads broke for the woven fabric and one thread for the knitted (ISO 12947-1). A minimum of four specimens per run was used to obtain statistically significant results. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS v.13 at a 95% confidence level to detect between group differences of the treated samples.

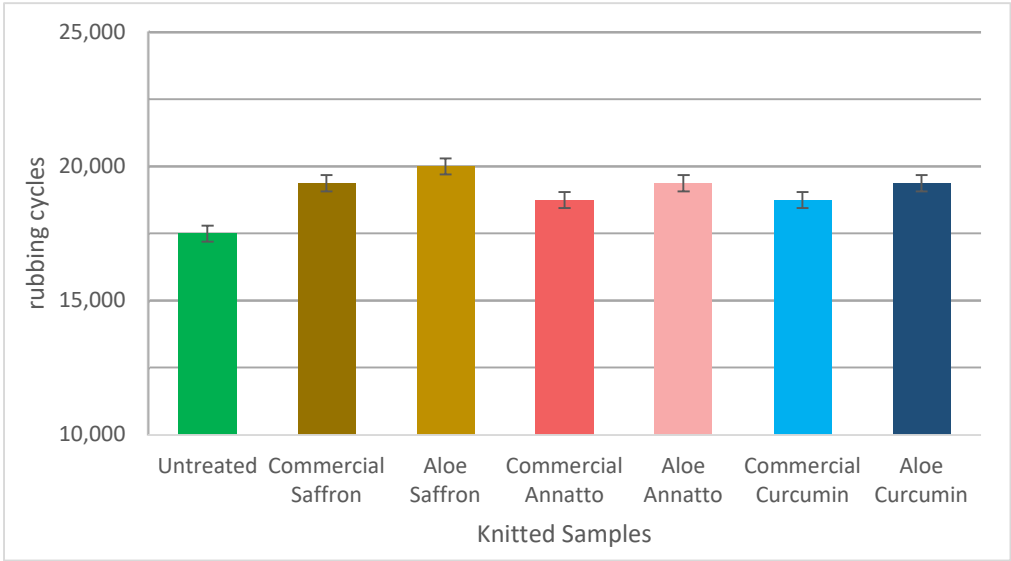
Deterioration of the appearance and pilling was evaluated using standard photographic gradings (ISO 12945-2). The comparison was conducted at pre-determined suggested points and critical points of abrasive wear, taking notes on crucial observations. The assessment was carried out using the light cabinet, illuminating the samples at 5°-15° with the fluorescent source while observing them at right angles from a distance of 30-50cm under the same atmospheric conditions to avoid the influence of any other factor, as temperature and humidity as aloe vera is known to be hygroscopic.



**Figure 1.** Experimental set-up of . (a) abrasion resistance on Martindale abrasion apparatus, (b) microscope and (c) test specimen failing point.

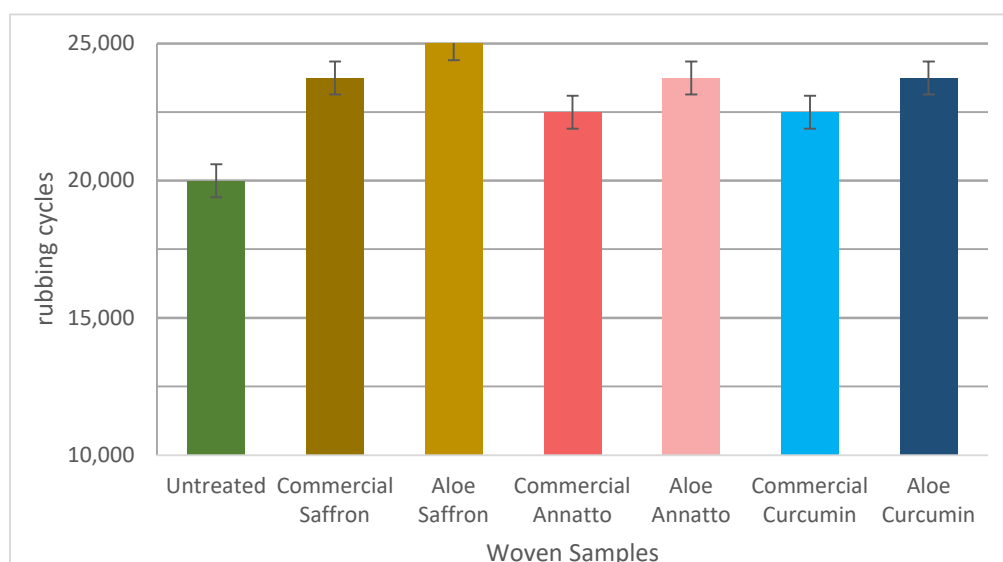
**3. Results and Discussions**

Initially, the untreated control fabrics for knitted and woven versions were compared against the printed ones with both types of thickeners, commercial and aloe, as represented in Figures 2 and 3.



**Figure 2.** Abrasion resistance cycles to failure for knitted fabric.





**Figure 3.** Abrasion resistance cycles to failure for woven fabric.

Results show that the influence of both types of printing pastes promotes abrasion resistance, expanding the life span of the samples. As seen from Figures 2 and 3, a considerable increase in the abrasion resistance is exerted by the printed samples of both versions of paste thickeners, commercial and aloe. The increase is highly prominent on the knitted substrate, which could be attributed mainly to the following factors.

Firstly, the printing paste acts as an intermediate film separating the yarns of the substrate and keeping from coming into direct contact with the woollen abradant. This action protects the fibres until the coating film itself wears out. It should be noted that the polymerised binder on the fabric surface is in solid form with near to zero rheological properties, whereas the abrasion takes place at low speeds with a rough textile surface; hence, hydrodynamic or semi-boundary lubrication cannot be claimed [38]. Tribological analysis of boundary or semi-boundary lubrication was off the scope of the current work. Ibrahim et al. [13] presented only minor differences in the dynamic coefficient of friction, as in the case of abrasion testing. He mentioned that the antibacterial properties of aloe were not detected as the molecules were trapped within this binder film.

Secondly, the binder linkages enhance the fibre cohesion in the substrate, which is a crucial factor in fabric abrasion [8,39]. The primary scope of the binder is to bind the printing paste, which includes the pigment, to the substrate (fabric); however, a secondary action seems to fix the adjacent fibres within the yarn of the abraded fabric, promoting abrasion resistance and offering a longer serviceable garment life. Very similar trends in the abrasion resistance between the untreated and printed samples have been reported by Kokol et al. for flame-resistance-treated fabrics [40].

Yarn crossings occur in every successive warp and weft thread in the plain weave, which locks the fibres in place and promotes cohesion. In addition, crown points are formed, leading to higher abrasion resistance, especially in the balanced warp-to-weft yarn crimp fabrics [39,41–43]. The looser structure of the knitted fabric, where the yarn in the loops forms longer floats compared to the woven fabric, which is more susceptible to wear [44]. Therefore, the knitted structure benefits more from the binder fibre fixing effect analysed earlier, which is reflected in the results of percentage mass loss.

While synthetic dyes, such as multifunctional reactive dyes, actively crosslink with cellulose to enhance substrate abrasion resistance, natural dyes do not form covalent bonds with the substrate [45]. The selected natural dyes behave as direct dyes or acid dyes where Van der Waals and hydrogen forces, or ionic forces, respectively, are the primary mechanism of substantivity to the substrate in exhaust dyeing [46]. The colour was applied by the printing method, where the binder is responsible for keeping the printed paste on the fabric, which significantly differs from the exhaustion method. The colourant was applied at low concentrations with a minute, if any, to the mechanical behaviour

of the printed structure. Spectrophotometric analysis of the abraded samples is beyond the scope of the current study, which concentrates on the abrasion resistance of the substrate.

Figures 4 and 5 show that all printed samples with commercial and aloe thickeners suffer a significant mass loss of the specimen in the early stage of 1000-5000 cycles. The printed side faces the abradant where the wear primarily occurs. This loss evens out in the following cycles until it reaches a sudden failure. Treated samples show a more symmetrical and progressive deterioration in mass loss, which can be attributed to the superficial printed paste (coating) loss, which acts as a protective intermediate layer that absorbs the impact from the first part of the abrasion test cycles. Since the untreated sample's fabric failure occurs earlier than the printed fabric, mass loss measurement of the untreated sample cannot be performed at the ultimate stage.

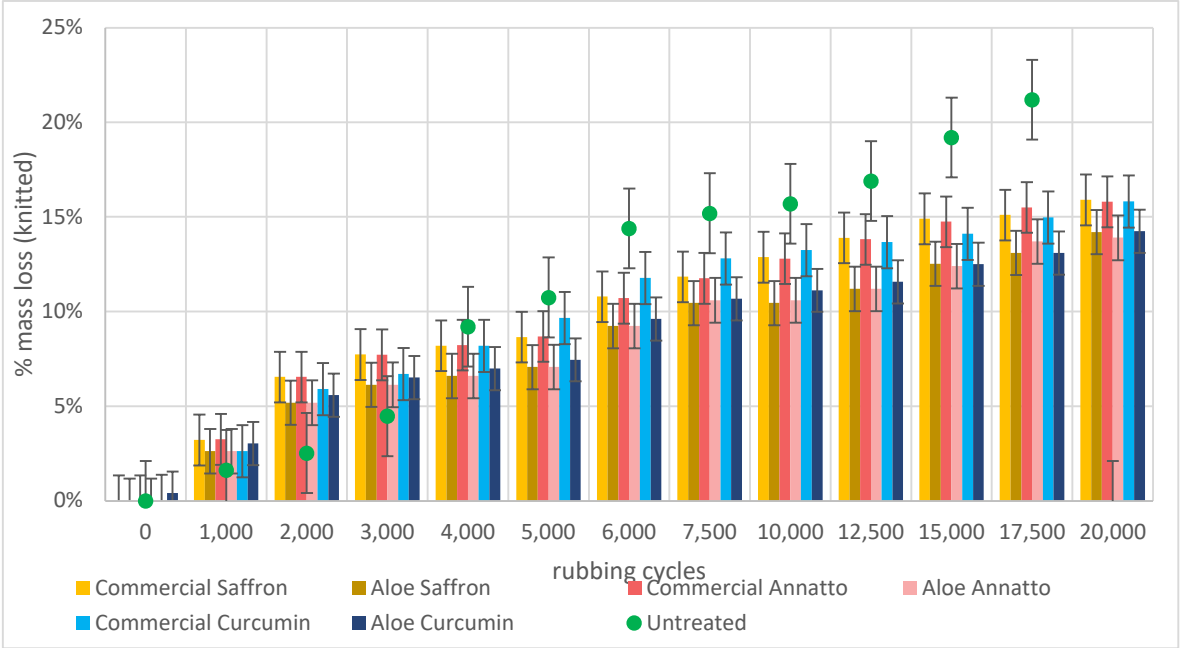


Figure 4. Percentage mass loss due to abrasion for knitted fabric.

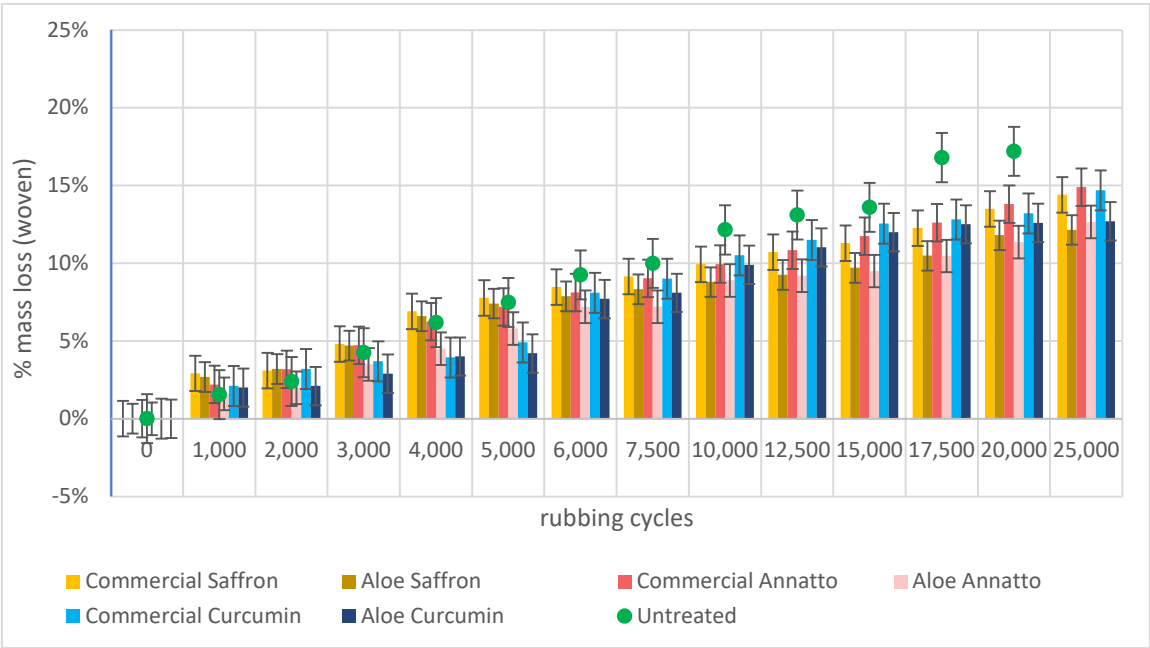
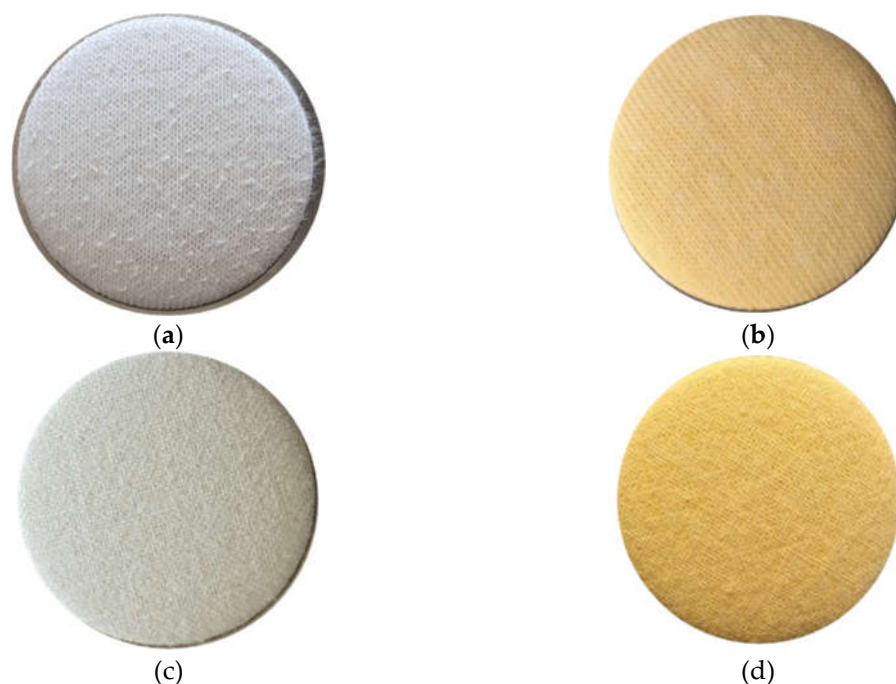


Figure 5. Percentage mass loss due to abrasion for woven fabric.

Additionally, not all samples break at the same time. Some samples fail before the ultimate stage, leaving some testing positions in the Martindale inactive. Mass measurements only for the printed samples at the ultimate stage were plotted in Figures 4 and 5 but should not be considered as the average can become inconsistent. This trend conforms with the literature where, according to the disciplines of tribology, under standard mechanical and practical procedures, the rate of wear passes under three main stages [39]. Initially, the two surfaces adapt to each other, and the duration of this stage depends on the morphology and softness of the surfaces. In the primary stage, the adhesive-shearing wear occurs at the contact points where the normal force exerts an initially high pressure, i.e., higher than the elastic limit or the yield value, causing deformation of the junctions and increase in the contact area, reducing the pressure to the point that the force deforms the material mainly elastically [38]. The second stage is the longest, with a steady rate of wear and in the third, the components are subjected to rapid failure due to the extreme rate of wearing.

Aloe is known for its hygroscopic nature [22,36,47], which influences the heat dissipation at the 'cold junctions' formed by the textile fibres during abrasion [38], while humidity directly affects the viscoelastic behaviour of the fibres through tensile creeping and energy absorption [8,27,39,43]. Saville states that the ability to absorb energy is more critical than high tensile strength for achieving high abrasion resistance [8]. Fabric treated with aloe tends to have a slightly higher abrasion resistance, which is less prominent in knitted fabric than woven fabric, as the latter's tighter and less elastic structure benefits more.

Pictures at a microscopic level (Appendix A) and at lower magnification were taken, although the latter was more beneficial for appearance evaluation. Pictures confirm the findings where the fabric surface fuzzing is prominent in the untreated samples compared to the printed of both thickener types, Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** Surface fuzzing of fabric samples comes at a later stage in coated samples. (a) untreated knitted fabric; (b) printed knitted fabric; (c) untreated woven fabric; (d) printed woven fabric.

The selected fabrics used for substrate were of good quality combed cotton yarn, which exhibits good resistance to abrasion [39,42] and, therefore, surface appearance change and pilling formation were minimal in most of the fabrics but especially in the printed samples with both thickening agents, Table 9 and 10. The lack of surface change in the evaluation system is reflected by number 5, while 4-5 indicates minimal changes. The assessment was performed visually comparing the samples against the photographic standards EMPA for knitted and woven fabrics (SDL Atlas), following the ISO 12945-2 recommended protocol by two examiners to ensure objective judgment. The untreated fabric

has reached level 3-4 after 15,000 cycles for the knitted fabric, indicating poor performance and 4-5 for the woven samples of which the yarns are more densely interweaved. All treated fabrics, especially those coated with aloe vera, exhibited no surface alteration and pill formation and received the punctuation 9.

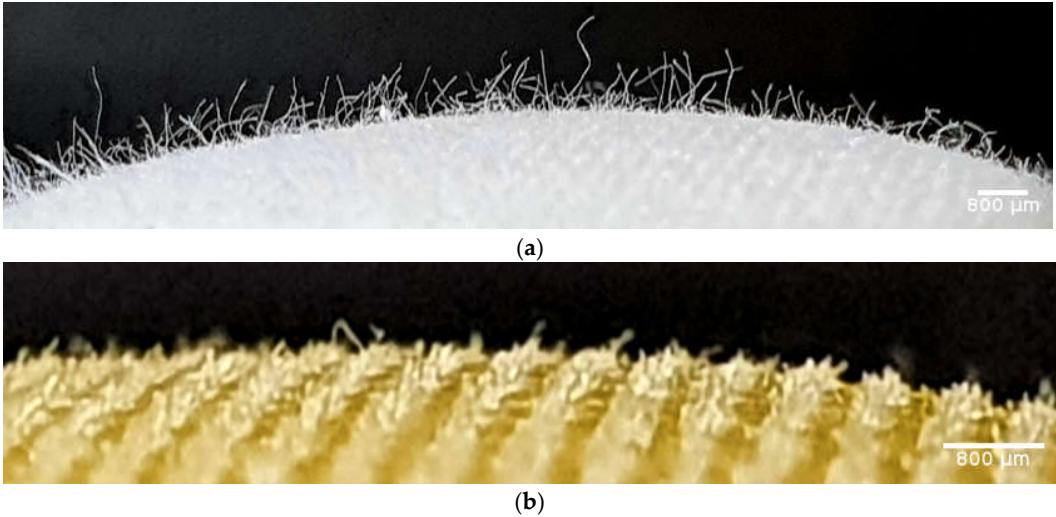
Table 9. Pilling surface evaluation for knitted fabric.

Knitted Substrate	Abrasion Cycles			
	5,000	7,000	10,000	15,000
Untreated	5	4-5	4-5	3-4
Printed Saffron AV	5	5	5	5
Printed Saffron Comm	5	5	5	5
Printed Annatto AV	5	5	5	5
Printed Annatto Comm	5	5	5	4-5
Printed Curcumin AV	5	5	5	5
Printed Curcumin Comm	5	5	5	4-5

Table 10. Pilling surface evaluation for woven fabric.

Knitted Substrate	Abrasion Cycles		
	7,000	10,000	15,000
Untreated	5	5	4-5
Printed Saffron AV	5	5	5
Printed Saffron Comm	5	5	5
Printed Annatto AV	5	5	5
Printed Annatto Comm	5	5	4-5
Printed Curcumin AV	5	5	5
Printed Curcumin Comm	5	5	5

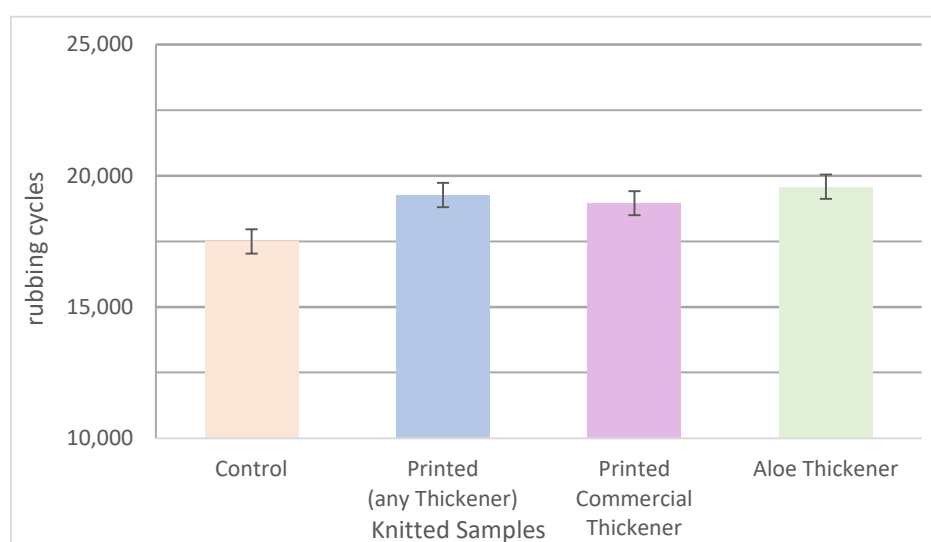
An interesting observation was noted. Samples printed with the aloe thickener paste present a smoother surface with the broken fibrils equally protruding from the fabric surface, similar to a “peach skin effect”, which deliberately is caused on lyocell fabric for enhanced ‘fabric hand’ [45], Figure 7. A combination of the previously discussed effect of long yarn floating and fibre fixing in yarn by the binder could be responsible. Saville explains that the initial impact of abrasion on the fabric’s surface is the appearance of fuzzing as the result of the brushing up of free fibre ends not enclosed within the yarn structure and the transformation of loops into free fibre ends by the pulling out of one of the two ends of the loop [8].



**Figure 7.** Longer fibrils protruding from the surface of the knitted (a) untreated samples compared to (b) aloe-treated pastes coated samples, after 6.000 rubbing cycles.

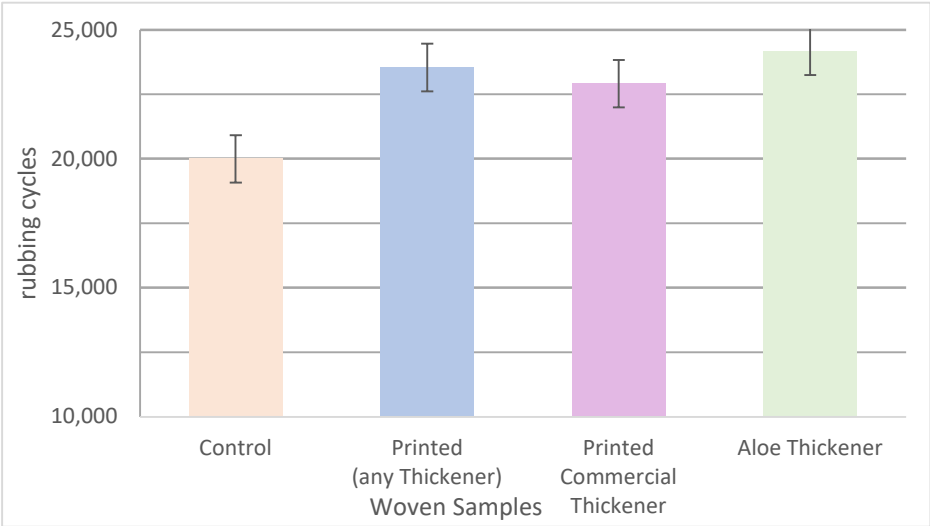
As mentioned before, a marginal gain in the abrasion resistance is recorded with the aloe thickening agent for mainly saffron and curcumin-printed pastes, which can be related to aloe's hygroscopic and lubricating nature. At the same time, similar findings have been reported on the coefficient of friction, drape and resistance abrasion applied by padding [9,31].

Figures 8 and 9 demonstrate comprehensively the differences between the printed (coated) fabric and the control fabric and compare the effect of the thickener in the printed paste, followed by stepwise-specific t-tests analyses and investigate the specific differences between the printed (coated) fabric and the control fabric, comparing the effect of the thickener in the printed paste. Stepwise-specific t-tests with equal and unequal variance were performed and presented in Tables 11 to 18 determine the statistical significance differences of the mean values plotted in Figures 8 and 9. A F-test detects the type of variance of the data, where values of  $p$  above the  $\alpha=0,05$  accept the  $H_0$  of equal variance and greater values reject it, signifying the unequal variance and proposes the execution of Welch's t-test of unequal variance, as explained in the method. Likewise, for the t-tests performed, of both variance types, the values of  $p$  lower than the  $\alpha=0,05$  reject the  $H_0$ , signifying the mean values compared are significantly different, even if the Bonferroni correction is applied to avoid type I error, where  $\alpha=0.05/3$  number of treatments = 0.0166.



**Figure 8.** Abrasion resistance cycles to failure plot of knitted fabric substrates for stepwise-statistical analysis.





**Figure 9.** Abrasion resistance cycles to failure plot of woven fabric substrates for stepwise-statistical analysis.

Figures 8 and 9 and Tables 11 to 18 demonstrate the statistically significant improvement in printed (coated) fabrics, which is prominent irrespectively to the thickener used. Additionally, the same observation is seen for individual comparisons of the control samples against the specific types of thickener paste formulation, for both substrates, knitted and woven. However, there is no evidence of significant difference of the improvement of abrasion resistance between the commercial and the Aloe thickener paste compositions. This signifies that Aloe Vera can used as a thickener and replace the commercial thickener with no sacrifice to the previously stated improvement, while the gain in sustainability is obvious endorsing the scope of the current study. The ability of increased abrasion resistance and decreased flexural rigidity have been reported on aloe vera-treated silk fabric [48], supporting current findings.

**Table 11.** Variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) of control (untreated, KCtrl) and printed (coated-KP) fabrics on knitted fabrics, irrespectively of the thickener.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances			t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances		
	<i>KCtrl</i>	<i>KP</i>		<i>KCtrl</i>	<i>KP</i>
Mean	17500	19270,833	Mean	17500	19270,83333
Variance	0	1347373,2	Variance	0	1347373,188
Observations	4	24	Observations	4	24
df	3	23	Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
F	0		df	23	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0		t Stat	-7,4737636	
F Critical one-tail	0,1156974		P(T<=t) one-tail	6,753*10 <sup>-08</sup>	
			t Critical one-tail	1,7138715	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	1,351*10 <sup>-07</sup>	
			t Critical two-tail	2,0686576	

**Table 12.** Variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) of control (untreated, KCtrl) and printed (coated, KPc) fabrics with commercial thickener on knitted fabrics.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances		t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances			
	<i>KCtrl</i>	<i>KPc</i>		<i>KCtrl</i>	<i>KPc</i>
Mean	17500	18958,333	Mean	17500	18958,333
Variance	0	1657197	Variance	0	1657197
Observations	4	12	Observations	4	12

df	3	11Hypothesised Mean Difference	0
F	0	df	11
P(F<=f) one-tail	0	t Stat	-3,9242834
F Critical one-tail	0,114111836	P(T<=t) one-tail	0,0011876
		t Critical one-tail	1,7958848
		P(T<=t) two-tail	0,0023753
		t Critical two-tail	2,2009852

**Table 13.** Variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) of control (untreated, KCtrl) and printed (coated, KPa) fabrics with aloe thickener on knitted fabrics.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances		t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances			
	<i>KCtrl</i>	<i>KPa</i>		<i>KCtrl</i>	<i>KPa</i>
Mean	17500	19583,333	Mean	17500	19583,333
Variance	0	946969,7	Variance	0	946969,7
Observations	4	12	Observations	4	12
df	3	11	Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
F	0		df	11	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0		t Stat	-7,4161985	
F Critical one-tail	0,1141118		P(T<=t) one-tail	6,663*10 <sup>-06</sup>	
			t Critical one-tail	1,7958848	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	1,333*10 <sup>-05</sup>	
			t Critical two-tail	2,2009852	

**Table 14.** Variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) between the printed (coated) knitted fabrics with different thickeners, commercial (KPC) and aloe (KPa).

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances			t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances		
	<i>KPc</i>	<i>KPa</i>		<i>KPc</i>	<i>KPa</i>
Mean	18958,33333	19583,333	Mean	18958,33333	19583,333
Variance	1657196,97	946969,7	Variance	1657196,97	946969,7
Observations	12	12	Observations	12	12
df	11	11	Pooled Variance	1302083,333	
F	1,75		Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0,183657775		df	22	
F Critical one-tail	2,81793047		t Stat	-1,341640786	
			P(T<=t) one-tail	0,096698958	
			t Critical one-tail	1,717144374	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0,193397917	
			t Critical two-tail	2,073873068	

**Table 15.** Variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) of control (untreated, WCtrl) and printed (coated, WP) fabrics on woven fabrics, irrespective of the thickener.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances		t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances			
	WCtrl	WP	WCtrl	WP	
Mean	20000	23541,667	Mean	20000	23541,667
Variance	0	5389492,8	Variance	0	5389492,8
Observations	4	24	Observations	4	24
df	3	23	Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
F	0		df	23	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0		t Stat	-7,4737636	
F Critical one-tail	0,1156974		P(T<=t) one-tail	6,753*10 <sup>-08</sup>	
			t Critical one-tail	1,7138715	

P(T<=t) two-tail	1,351*10 <sup>-07</sup>
t Critical two-tail	2,0686576

**Table 16.** Variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) of control (untreated, WCtrl) and printed (coated, WPc) fabrics with commercial thickener on woven fabrics.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances			t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances		
	WCtrl	WPc		WCtrl	WPc
Mean	20000	22916,6667	Mean	20000	22916,6667
Variance	0	6628787,88	Variance	0	6628787,88
Observations	4	12	Observations	4	12
df	3	11	Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
F	0		df	11	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0		t Stat	-3,9242834	
F Critical one-tail	0,114111836		P(T<=t) one-tail	0,00118764	
			t Critical one-tail	1,79588482	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0,00237529	
			t Critical two-tail	2,20098516	

**Table 17.** Variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) of control (untreated, WCtrl) and printed (coated, WPa) fabrics with aloe thickener on woven fabrics.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances			t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances		
	WCtrl	WPa		WCtrl	WPa
Mean	20000	24166,6667	Mean	20000	24166,6667
Variance	0	3787878,79	Variance	0	3787878,79
Observations	4	12	Observations	4	12
df	3	11	Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
F	0		df	11	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0		t Stat	-7,41619849	
F Critical one-tail	0,11411184		P(T<=t) one-tail	6,6625*10 <sup>-06</sup>	
			t Critical one-tail	1,79588482	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	1,333*10 <sup>-05</sup>	
			t Critical two-tail	2,20098516	

**Table 18.** Variance analysis (F-test) and mean comparison (t-test) between the printed (coated) woven fabrics with different thickeners, commercial and aloe (WPc) and aloe (WPa).

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances		t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances			
	WCtrl	WPc			
Mean	20000	22916,6667	Mean	20000	22916,6667
Variance	0	6628787,88	Variance	0	6628787,88
Observations	4	12	Observations	4	12
df	3	11	Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
F	0		df	11	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0		t Stat	-3,9242834	
F Critical one-tail	0,114111836		P(T<=t) one-tail	0,00118764	
			t Critical one-tail	1,79588482	
			P(T<=t) two-tail	0,00237529	
			t Critical two-tail	2,20098516	

The following abbreviations have been used in Tables 11 to 18  
KCtrl: Knitted Substrate Control (untreated)  
KP: Knitted Substrate Printed

KPc: Knitted Substrate Printed with commercial thickener

Kpa: Knitted Substrate Printed with Aloe thickener

WCtrl: Woven Substrate Control (untreated)

WP: Woven Substrate Printed

WPC: Woven Substrate Printed with commercial thickener

WPa: Woven Substrate Printed with Aloe thickener

The structure, with reduced resistance to deformation, flexes, stretches, and bends easier, which enhances softness. The latter can be attributed to a secondary effect from the water content of the hygroscopic character of aloe vera [22].

## 5. Conclusions

The findings showed that the abrasion resistance of printed fabrics is improved compared to untreated fabrics, and this is reflected in the visual assessment of surface appearance, cycles to failure, and percentage mass loss. Aloe vera can be used as a thickening agent in the printing paste, promoting a sustainable textile solution substituting the commercial thickeners with equally or marginally superior properties, considering the secondary antimicrobial behaviour, marginal gains on abrasion resistance and handle but mainly in the sustainability achieved. Aloe vera thickener printed cotton fabrics exhibited longer life to the untreated with an increase in wear resistance during abrasion and did not differ statistically from the commercial thickener printed fabrics indicating no deficiencies in abrasion resistance performance while promoting the sustainability of the printing paste concerning thickener composition. An increase in abrasion resistance of aloe vera-treated silk has been reported, as well as a decrease in flexural rigidity, which means a softer and more pleasant fabric [48].

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualisation, M.K. and E.G.A.; methodology, M.K., M.Z. and A.K.; investigation, M.K., M.Z. and A.K.; data curation, M.K. and A.S.; writing—original draft preparation M.K. and M.Z.; writing—review and editing, M.K., A.K. and EGA; visualisation, M.K. and E.G.A.; supervision, M.K.; project administration, M.K.; funding acquisition, M.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

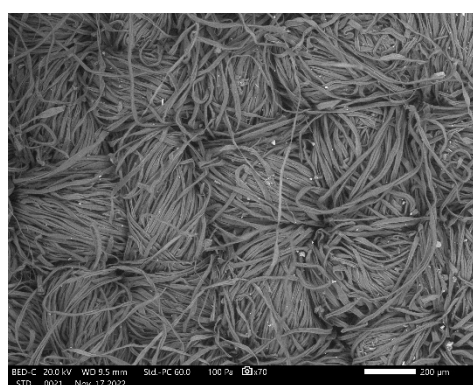
**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

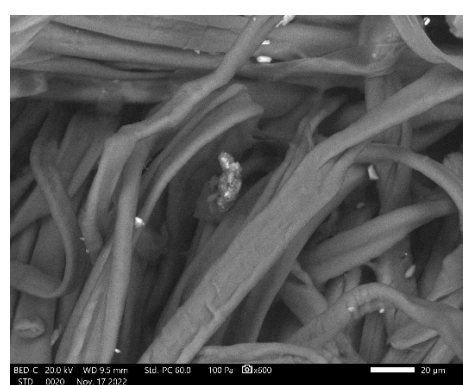
**Acknowledgments:** The authors thank Maria Zarkogianni for contributing to the investigation stage.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest. No external funders were present to take any role in the design of the study; in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

## Appendix A



(a)



(b)

**Figure A1.** The abraded fabric under SEM analysis. (a) low magnification; (b) and high magnification, at 5000 cycles.

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