

# Sweatshirts

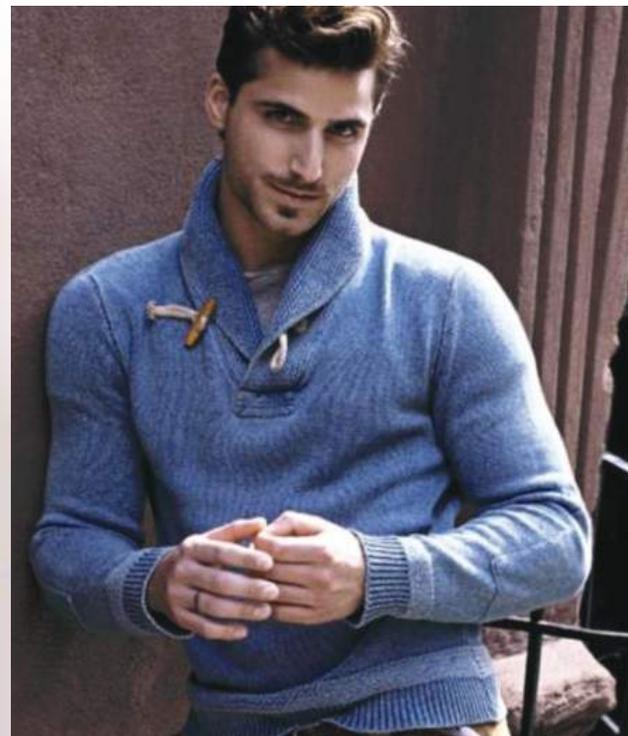
## Sweatshirts becomes 'Swajackets' and goes glam

Sweatshirts are in demand throughout the year. However, as winterwear, the segment has made major inroads across men, women and kids' category. As the new concept of 'Swajackets' catches on, brands/manufacturers are making the most of growing demand and coming up with innovative products to gain market share, say **Ajanta Ganguly and Ajay Goswami**

Shrinking winters and increasingly fashion conscious consumers have led to the rise of a new apparel item, known in fashion parlance as 'swajackets'. It's a mix of sweat shirts-cum-jackets blending warmth and comfort along with fashion, swajackets are trending now like never before. With various woven fabrics and innovative embellishments that give a mixed look of a jacket and a sweat shirt, these swajackets are versatile and affordable. And alongside the swajackets on shop shelves are a wide range of sweatshirts from both domestic and international manufacturers. Warm, durable and inexpensive, sweatshirts are the mainstay of the winter apparel market and come what may, will never go out of fashion. But the simple stripers, basic colours and round necks just don't make the cut anymore, it is all about design innovations and small inventory stocks that will sell well through unpredictable length and intensity of the current Indian winters.

### Sweatshirts popular through unpredictable winters

To move away from its image of being just simple casual wear, the sweatshirt segment now includes mix and match varieties and innovations in wool, quilting, prints, leather and other fabrics. Overall the sweatshirt segment is a fast growing one, moving quicker than light sweaters and jackets because of its affordability and versatility factor in the current winter market. Sweatshirts are popular because they have long use in winters, from the very beginning to the end of the season, maybe barring a couple of months between when it is very cold. Consumers prefer sweatshirts not only because the span of winters is contracting but also because of its versatility factor with scope for innovation and designing and appealing to all age groups and income classes.



**Swajackets, a mix of sweat shirts-cum-jackets are trending now**

**Innovative sweatshirts sell well, not the simple stripers, basic colours and round necks**

**The winterwear category was estimated at Rs 13,920 crores in 2013**

**It is expected register growth at 9 percent to reach Rs 32,000 crores by 2023**

**Bigger brands focus on basic and smaller brands on innovative designing**

**Digital prints and bright colors like coral, mustard, indigo and black are popular**



**Nikhil Jain**  
Director, Miss Grace

“Apart from being versatile, sweatshirts are value for money in terms of purchase and easy to maintain. Winters these days are not that harsh and for the mild winter sweat shirts solve the purpose. Moreover the cost of jackets are high compared to sweat shirts which are more durable with added comfort.”



**Vipin Verma**  
Director, TMO

“Last year, the season was not good but this time expectations are high with right timing of festivals and weddings. However, the market is tough, so we have produced limited stuff and are hoping the season turns out good. Last year we witnessed 10 to 15 per cent growth and inventory of around 10 per cent, which we consider normal.”



**Devendra Singh**  
Proprietor, Granzstein

“While making products, we have to keep in mind that the product should be innovative as innovation is a must. Sweatshirts are most in demand among all winter wear products followed by jackets and sweaters. But we are facing a challenge due to raw materials and climatic conditions because of which the market is slow. For the consumers, quality matters most, if the quality of product is good, prices don't matter.”

With increasing globalisation, industrialisation and spending power, there has been a continuous change in lifestyle which has led to consumers developing a taste for seasonal clothing and occasional dresses. The winter wear category, one of these seasonal categories, is estimated at Rs 13,920 crores (as of 2013) and is expected grow at 9 percent to reach Rs 32,000 crores by 2023. Sales of winterwear are generally higher in the four months from October to January during which time there are many festivals, weddings as well as other annual celebrations which contribute to more shopping and sales. Most brands give maximum discounts in this period such as for Diwali, Christmas, New Year discounts and end-of-season-sale in January-February and many equal their sales in the other eight months of summer or general sale, in just these four months.

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**Innovative fashion sells better**

The winter wear market is clearly segmented into branded and unbranded, with unbranded segment having 70 per cent market share. The branded segment is trying hard to claim greater share by offering innovative products, although basic products always sell best. Global brands do not affect the domestic player much and each has its own space within the short winter span, Bigger brands do not just focus on sweatshirts segment and are more into basic designs. Innovative fashion designing at lower price points is the focus of domestic brands, leaving the field wide open for all players. However, overall sentiments are low and there is not much excitement in winter wear except in North and Northeast India which gets a good taste of real winter. Smaller brands are now trying to make the best of winter market with new styles, colours and fabrics like leather, snow fleece and grindle fleece which is a mixture of colours in which there are dots and spots.

“We are bringing in unique colours and fabrics and the colour palate is vast this time. Earthy shades such as dark brown, khaki and olives and bright colours such as black blue and red are on trend. This year



**Arshdeep Singh Baweja**

Proprietor, Punjabi Heritage

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**Manu Chawla**

Director, Taiga Kids

“We are into boys segment only, in the kids’ category with a target age group of 1 to 15 years and offer sweatshirts, jackets, track suits and sweaters. We target premium and high premium category with a price range between Rs 1,000 to Rs 3,000. Spending is not an issue for customers and the kids segment is growing at 20 to 25 per cent.”



especially in the kids’ and women’s segment. Although market conditions are not conducive and profits depend on the intensity of winters, the kids’ segment overall is growing well. The main reason is that kids outgrow clothes very fast and parents do not cut costs on clothes for their children even if they do not buy for themselves. Also, the durability and easy to maintain factor of sweatshirts is an USP for mothers who prefer it over high maintenance jackets and fancy sweaters.

“We are into boys segment only, in the kids’ category targeting 1 to 15 years old. We offer sweatshirts, jackets, track suits and sweaters in the premium and high premium category with a price range between Rs 1,000 to Rs 3,000. We have used a mix of fabrics this year, such as cotton and fleece and many products can be worked upon using these fabrics. We source fabrics from the domestic markets and use a lot of accessories. Spending is not an issue for customers and the kids segment is growing 20 to 25 per cent,” points out Manu Chawla, Director, Taiga Kids.

Vipan Verma, Director of TMO, also into kids’ winter garments along with men and women’s category opines, “Last year the season was not good but this time expectations are high with right timing of festivals and weddings. However, the market is tough, so we have produced limited stuff and are hoping the season turns



sweatshirts are starkly different and include wool as well as jackets material such as cotton and other fabrics with printed and washed leather. Since we are using leather in sweatshirts, the look automatically changes into sweatshirt-jacket look which we are working upon this season,” says Arshdeep Singh Baweja, Proprietor, Punjabi Heritage.

“Leather prints are quite popular this season. The good thing about sublimation prints is you can experiment with them and the printing allows you to print anything on it both words or images, thus changing the whole look of sweatshirts. We also have basic items like hoodies, zippers and buttons. However, inspite of all this, we are not anticipating good growth and maybe 5 to 10 per cent is the target due to unpredictable climate. Last year, we grew by 15 to 20 per cent and did not face any inventory issues. But this year we are not very optimistic,” he adds.

### **Kids, women’s segment doing well**

Winter wear generally commands higher prices as compared to other categories due to the intricacies of design and usage of wool fibers. The winter wear market is dominated by the unbranded segment due to lower prices and wider range of products,



**Ramneesh Aggarwal**  
Owner, Angel Bells

“We only make sweatshirts for woman and target 18 to 50 year olds. But most of our business is from the age group 20 to 40 years. We make sweatshirts which are funky and designer. This year, we have used new fabrics and mixed and matched them to create new designs. We also make sweatshirts with digital prints. Mostly bright colors like coral, mustard, indigo, black among others are popular this season.”



out good. Last year we witnessed 10 to 15 per cent growth and inventory of around 10 per cent, which we consider normal.” The brand makes reversible sweatshirts in smart fits and fashion and basic sweatshirts along with heavy weight sweatshirts which has good demand.

Sweatshirts are popular among young and old and men and women as it is an apparel segment without boundaries. Among young people, hoodies are popular as well as the more exotic fashion variety. Most brands see good potential in women’s segment as sweatshirts teamed with track suits are in demand throughout the year. The brands which have newly introduced women’s sweatshirt expect to do well as consumption is always higher since women are more open to newer trends than men.

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among others are popular this season,” says Ramneesh Aggarwal, Owner, Angel Bells Aggarwal feels demand is higher among woman because they want more fashion products. “This year, we have 5 per cent for printed sweatshirts, 50 per cent designer and the basic sweatshirts. Sweatshirts are also available with hoodies, round neck, semi collar, without zipper, long sleeves and sleeve leers as well. We have more demand for sweatshirts with hoodies,” he adds.

A recent Technopak study pegged the winterwear market in India at Rs 15,670 crores in 2014 and expected to grow at a CAGR of 8 per cent to reach Rs 33,590 crores by 2024. Since sales in this category is seasonal and depends on the duration of the winter, hence brands need to work on their marketing and production strategy to avoid inventory issues.

To do well in the sweatshirt category, both small and big brands need good infrastructure, economies of scale, and a good access to distributors and suppliers on a pan India basis. With a clever marketing and advertising strategy, the sweatshirt market has ready to take on other winterwear categories and move ahead.