

Blackberrys scissors out women's range to dress men better

Terms women's formals 'a tricky business'

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Apparel brand Blackberrys has dropped its women's range to focus on the highly buoyant menswear category. Besides sharpening its focus on menswear with shorter fashion cycles and a diverse product profile, the company is also realising adding knit wear into its portfolio.

"Women's formal range is a tricky business. Although it contributed about five per cent to our turnover, we discontinued to concentrate on the male formal and semi-formal range. Also, it was difficult to maintain inventory to cater to a large segment of women," Mr Vinod Tiwari, Vice-President (Marketing), Blackberrys, told *Business Line*.

The company had rebranded into womenswear in 2007. Blackberrys is marking its 20th year in the Indian mar-

ket. The journey began with the founders recognising the growing need for branded, structured clothing for the Indian male.

It started in an office of 200 sq. ft. space in Delhi. Today, it boasts a 22000 sq. ft. plant at Manesar which produces 1200 suits a day and 1,800 casual trousers per day.

"Even three years ago, we were doing 400 suits a day. However, there is a demand explosion and we are gearing to tap this demand by almost tripling our production capacity," he said, adding that the demand had been largely driven by BFSI and IT sectors.

The men's range has been growing at about 60 per cent annually. Prominent brands such as Arrow, Van Heusen, Color Plus, Allen Solly, Indigo Nation, Scullery, Louis Philippe, Escalante and Indian Terrain play in the Rs 1,000-plus and higher price bands. A



Models showcase Blackberrys autumn winter collection at a fashion show in Chennai.

range of international labels such as Salvatore Ferragamo, Armani Collection, Versace and Ermanno Zegna, too, have entered the fray to woo the Indian audience.

Mr Tiwari said the compa-

ny is looking to become a lifestyle brand rather than remain in formal wear.

"Now 60 per cent of our line is fashion-driven and only 25 per cent is contributed by the core business which is the men's formal range," he said.

Blackberrys said the opportunity in the men's range has been driven by the need for 'occasion dressing'. "The concept of occasion dressing has undergone a sea change. Now people have different clothes for different occasions that add a ring to their personalities," Mr Tiwari said.

The company said it enhancing its retail presence both in the metros and second-tier cities.

"We are present in 157 outlets, largely company-owned and also franchised outlets. By this November, we should add about 162 retail outlets."

The company is also present in 900 multi-brand outlets. Its turnover for the financial year 2010 stood at Rs 340 crore.

"We are looking to close the current fiscal at Rs 400 crore."