Loungewear drives SS21 product mix as consumers prioritise comfort

By Sandra Halliday - 28 January 2021

With the UK back in lockdown, its fashion shopping choices are continuing to be coloured by social restrictions and working from home. New figures from sales aggregator site LovetheSales.com show that stay-at-home clothing is still striking a chord while previously popular categories struggle.

In January, demand for hoodies has increased by 22% year-on-year with joggers up an even bigger 74%, sweatshirts up 50% and slippers up 82%. Knitted jumpers are also up 41% and cardigans 11%.

But consumers stuck at home are clearly also still getting out and about for some exercise. Demand for leggings is up 22% — although that could also be due to people wearing them at home. But at the same time, running shoe and running shorts demand has soared 83% each and running tops are up 54%.

But just as there are clear ‘winner’ categories, there are some major losers too. LovetheSales said that December’s party season provided plenty of these. Dresses demand fell 49% and heels by 29%. Meanwhile, Reiss is one of the retailers to add more loungewear pieces to its mix.
formal categories such as brogue shoes (-33%), smart trousers (-21%) and blazers (-18%) all struggled.

Moving back to this month, jeans demand is down 10% on the year while leather jackets are down 29% and raincoats 26%. Suits are also down 18%, overcoats 38%, smart trousers 28%, skirts, 36%, and ties 33%.

It's no surprise therefore that in response to the way consumers have been shopping since March last year, retailers have been tweaking their overall offers. LovetheSales also said that loungewear and versatile activewear is becoming more prominent on webstores while more traditional categories are minimised.

For instance, SS21 has seen 25% more jogging bottoms added to fashion lines than we saw in SS20, 22% more sweatshirts and 19% more hoodies. At the same time, chinos are down 67%, while there are 45% fewer skirts available in new-season lines, 40% fewer dresses, 39% fewer smart trousers and 36% fewer smart shirts.

LovetheSales co-founder Stuart McClure said: "The unpredictable landscape of 2020 made it incredibly difficult for retailers to sell-through new-season stock. 2021 will see a continued fluctuation of shopping habits. Loungewear, athleisure and comfy clothing became increasingly popular throughout 2020 and now their popularity is continuing into 2021.

"Retailers have reacted quickly to the new fashion landscape and are merging loungewear products into new Spring/Summer 2021 lines. Designers are now matching overcoats with joggers and hoodies, as comfy clothing is incorporated into trending outfits. Clothing brands want to provide people with the flexibility to wear their ranges out and at home thanks to the prevalence of Covid lockdowns."

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