

# Apparel cos may rationalise stores after reopening

Avik.Das1@timesgroup.com

**Bengaluru:** Apparel makers will look at store rationalisation once they resume business post lockdown, said Vineet Gautam, country head of Bestseller India, that sells fast fashion brands Jack and Jones and Vero Moda. He said there is a lot of uncertainty on how and when all stores will open, as it depends on the zones of a city. In this situation, retailers need to conserve cash. High street stores are expected to open faster than malls.

“We need to relook at how many stores we actually need,” Gautam said at a webinar organised by the Retailers Association of India (RAI).

Industry executives said retailers need to evaluate whether they need to operate with 100% manpower and may have to start with one shift as demand is unlikely to be like pre-Covid-19 times. Stores may also have to limit the number of customers inside to ensure social distancing.

Shailesh Chaturvedi, CEO of Tommy Hilfiger Apparels, said unsold inventory may be manageable this year because Diwali comes late, in November, “giving us an extended summer.” “We will cut production of Fall and holiday goods.



**HIT HARD:** Industry executives said retailers may have to start with one shift as demand is unlikely to be like pre-Covid-19 times

“We are avoiding deep discounting as it spoils the brand,” he said. Ritu Kumar’s managing director Amrisk Kumar said the company will not be finalising any orders till October as it will use the time to sell its summer collections of bridal, high fashion and western wear.

Apparel makers have also been hit hard because even online sales were not allowed. “Cash flows are really challenged, there is no revenue. Unlike Europe and other parts of the world where online was allowed and some operational revenue was coming in, we are not seeing any revenue at all,” said Gautam.