





Aviator

Year of inception
2004

At the helm
Sankar Singaram, founder

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Sankar Singaram
founder

SUBSTANCE OVER STYLE

AVIATOR AS A BRAND DOESN'T LOSE FOCUS ON QUALITY BY CHASING AFTER FAST-DISAPPEARING TRENDS AND STYLES. ITS STRENGTH LIES IN ITS ABILITY TO MEET POPULAR DEMAND WITH AFFORDABLE PRICING



Sankar Sinagaram, the founder of S Fabrics India Private Limited was barely clued into the garment industry when he came up with the idea of opening a clothes store way back in 2004 in Trichy. The experimental venture paid rich dividends, mostly in terms of experience. When he got back

on his feet after a hiatus and re-launched the business in 2012, it bore him the success that he was shorn of, initially.

BACK WITH A BANG

"When I first launched my store, the only focus was on giving good quality fabric. So we started with a machine and found that people were taking to the

designs quite well. I had no plans to build a brand or furnish fashionable designs," confesses Sankar. The brand had limited options for style gurus, but it made up for it in affordability and quality.

Aviator as a brand specialises exclusively in men's clothing. It offers a wide range of smart casuals, formals and an assortment of casual wares. The clientele consists mostly of office-goers and older professionals besides youngsters looking for budget-friendly options. "We are proud of the fact that we only use pure cotton and linen fabrics and are not polyester-mixed except for the bottom wear," Sankar maintains. "We have two manufacturing units—one in Bangalore and the other in Vandalur. Our fabrics are only sold in our own stores," he elab-

orates.

"My focus has always been on meeting the demand and catering to popular taste. Tracking trends and styles has never been my forte. We try to offer something presentable and clean besides being pocket-friendly. We have a large segment of middle-class customers who pick our products over other brands," says Sankar.

Brand Aviator has about 12 outlets spread over Saligraman, Ashok Nagar, Nolambur, Nandanam, Nungambakkam, Tambaranm, Selaiyur, OMR, Kolathur, Valsaravakkam, Aminjikkarai and one in Thillai Nagar in Trichy. The brand earlier had a presence in Dubai and Sharjah as well. Six outlets based in Virugambakkam, Velachery, Shenoy Nagar,





Karailkhal and Tiruppur are being relocated. Like many other businesses, the current economy and the taxes are affecting the textile industry as well. "Opening a store at a prime location costs money. The rentals are high and so are the overheads including labour, employees, electricity bills and taxes. When the investment is too high, it affects the pricing considerably," Sankar points out.

Since its relaunch Aviator has been disinclined to luring customers offering discounts and deals. "From what I can see, discounts are only offered on dead stocks that are not cleared or clothes that do not meet the quality standards. I don't have either of them to give away, we always make sure that the stocks are cleared as we don't chase after trends," Sankar

argues. "The biggest USP of our brand that we have been ensuring since inception is that we allow our customers to exchange their purchases in any of our stores located anywhere. No questions are asked, nor is there a need to furnish the bill," he assures.

LOOKING AHEAD

Since its relaunch, Aviator has been operating without franchisees but plans are on to expand its base to other cities too. "From this year on, we want to look at franchisees who would like to invest in setting up stores in other cities. We will run the store ourselves with the investor standing to gain a profit from it," informs Sankar. "We also want to open expansive outlets featuring more of our products, including our own line of luggage, watches, shoes, belts and accessories like sun-



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glasses. We hope to do it by the next year," he adds.

Linen being a popular favourite among his customers, it's only logical that Sankar has been thinking in lines of launching a premium outlet in Nungambakkam housing only linen clothing range. The exclusive outlet featuring a range of trousers and shirts for men too will launch by the end of the year. Another outlet featuring select clothing wares for

women will also be launched this year. "We will launch the women's exclusive outlet under a different brand name. We are planning to have a range of designer and silk sarees," Sankar mentions. The founder is also exploring possibilities of expanding and opening outlets in other cities. "We want to open at least a hundred outlets across the country," he announces.

Besides the many launches

being planned this year, Aviator also wants to introduce several customer retention programmes. "We will be partnering with a few e-retailing companies very soon. We are also exploring 'buy now pay later' options through EMIs," Sankar divulges. An online app of the brand will also be launched to simplify the shopping experience.

"We are also thinking of tying up with corporates and form a database of top professionals .

We will present them a customised professional attire on their birthday as a good will initiative to introduce our line-up to fresh clients," Sankar reveals.

"I think in the future, the trend will shift towards the smaller players meeting the demands of the bigger firms in the market, supplying raw materials and finished products. We are very confident and proud of our fabric quality and pricing," concludes Sankar.