

## APPAREL BREAKDOWN

# Not Your Average Sweatshirt

Hot as ever, the hoodie keeps getting reinvented in new styles and shapes.

BY SARAH PROTZMAN HOWLETT

**To ask Kristine Widulski,** director of sales for FPS Apparel (asi/53475), hoodies will never go out of style. The pullover hoodie continues to be her company's number-one selling item year after year. She says as long as it's soft, it will sell – but the hand of the fabric is far from the only trend keeping this staple on top of clothing piles nationwide. From color to contrast to customization, the hoodie's versatility has led suppliers to predict strong demand from now on. Here are top trends to capture that interest from buyers.

► **Sizzling Silhouettes:** The midweight crop hoodie, often favored by women, works well with today's popular styles of higher waisted jeans and leggings, says Greg Brown, chief operating officer at Citadel Brands/AWDIs (asi/45222), which sells the Just Hoods line. "It's breaking away from long and bulky," he says, and it's here to stay. AWDIs added a crop crewneck this year that's been "gobbled up by decorators and promo companies alike," he says, adding that when done as a midweight, it gives a comfort level that can be worn all year.

► **Pastel Parade:** Brown says hoodies in colors like peppermint, electric pink, vanilla shake and dusty greens are "very entertaining and a great opportunity to stand out in a different way." He adds that when leveled up with a hood in a contrasting color, it's not only a great look, but also has utility and is widely popular across many people's style preferences.

► **Highly Customized Drawstrings:** For brands interested in



The Just Hoods college hoodie (JHA001) comes in 40 colors, including trending shades like hot pink and gold. Available from Citadel Brands/AWDIs (asi/45222); citadelbrands.com

Custom decorated hoods, pockets and even drawstrings add a unique branding touch. Available from FPS Apparel (asi/53475); fpsapparel.com

doubling down on uniqueness, Widulski has fielded requests for logos printed on drawstrings as well as for designs on the aglet itself (the little piece of metal or plastic at the end of the drawstring). "People are asking for color-matched aglets to match their logo," she says. "If they have a Pantone-specific logo, it can really pop with a custom aglet."

► **Under the Hood:** Widulski,

whose company specializes in customizing hoodies, says they're now frequently sublimating on both the inside and outside of the hood. From custom trim, neck tape and zipper pulls, to woven hem labels on garments, these all make hoodies "seem higher end – but still branded," she says, adding that the types of companies doing this are in industries "all over the map."

## DECORATION IDEAS

Here are three ways to make this comfort favorite even more stylish.

### 1 Heat Transfers

Lending itself toward personalization, Brown says heat transfers are contributing to higher-cotton-content requests in the decorating market. Direct to film prints are "more vibrant and have a stronger picture appearance, and the basic screen-print designs benefit with the 100% cotton face as well," he notes. "Hoods are now a way of life. Printing techniques continue to expand and the hoodie is a benefactor in print placements."

### 2 Relocated Logos

Widulski says she's seeing fewer requests for a logo on the left chest, or for basic decorations like screen prints or embroidery. "These days," she shares, "they'll go for a logo on the sleeve or a full back imprint," and as mentioned, are more regularly taking that next step to further customize the hoodie's finer features.

### 3 Small Batches

The technology for smaller runs, Brown says, has given brands greater flexibility in how much they buy and how they decorate. He likes Just Hoods' 80/20 ringspun cotton with a 100% cotton face. "You can go to the basic large screen-printing machines," Brown notes, "but you also have direct to film or direct to garment printing," which means companies don't have to order as many garments at one time. It also allows for more individualized logos instead of a single imprint for a large run.

## VITAL FACT

# NOVEMBER

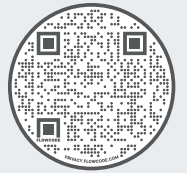
THE MONTH WHEN  
HOODIE SEARCHES PEAK  
ON ESP. SEARCHES  
ARE HIGHEST BETWEEN  
OCTOBER AND JANUARY.

# ELEVATE YOUR

# HOODIES

With hoodie season on the way, let us show you just how custom we can be!

Placed art in hood lining



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