



Demand for personalised style boosts made to measure market

While tailormade was the norm earlier, readymade clothes have steadily taken over consumer consciousness across India. However, now a niche made-to-measure segment is making inroads in fashion world. With new players foraying into this space, the segment is on an upward trajectory, find out **Prerna Sharma** and **Ajay Goswami**

The concept of made-to-measure is catching up fast in India though the market is still small and niche as it is at a nascent stage unlike international markets where customizing is a developed segment. "In India, it is catching up on account of increasing consciousness of people about what they wish to wear. A decade back, it was not the case as people would wear anything they like without giving any serious thought to their dressing. Every emerging economy goes through this phase where people start showing interest in branded clothing and then they move towards customized clothing and the same is happening in India currently," explains Punit

- **The ability to offer a made to measure depends on the size of a particular production unit**
- **Small brands do not have the bandwidth to constantly produce new collections**
- **They avoid made to measure concept and stick to bespoke tailoring**
- **It's a myth that bespoke clothing is only popular in premium and super premium class**
- **Middle class are equally interested bespoke clothes**
- **Made to measure is still a niche segment but gaining popularity**
- **Market is growing beyond Tier I cities**
- **Many women are also opting for made to measure to get the right fit**

Chokhani, Co-founder, 16 Stitches, a brand making name with its customization concepts.

Similarly, Sandeep Gonsalves, Co-founder, SS Homme, says, "With changing lifestyles and transforming body types, brands these days are looking to cater to a wide gamut of masses with various personal needs instead of fulfilling a specific requirement. Customization/ bespoke tailoring helps achieve the perfect fit and comfort as compared to made-to-measure or ready to wear garments." As more and more people understand the pros of bespoke and made to measure clothing, they are more likely to opt for these services instead of going to a store and picking up garments off the rack.

Brands are definitely more attracted towards the concept of customization because people are demanding it, believes Samiksha Bajaj, Co-founder, Samshék. "Ease to customize the fabric, neckline, dress length, etc, makes it more versatile. It offers customers loyalty to brands. Because the garment is made for the first time, the brand also minimizes their waste and moves towards a sustainable approach."

Made-to measure: Concept and awareness

Bajaj points out, the concept of made-to measure is basically customization, where consumers can give their measurements to customize their outfit rather than buying ready to wear. "In India, people are slowly



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Co-founder, Samshék

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adapting the idea of customization as it solves the biggest bug bear of finding the right size, and helps the consumer to get the perfect fit. Indeed, it works for shirts as well because in today's world, wearing smart corporate wear is important. So many women struggle to find the kind of style, they should wear according to their body type and the size they fit in. With Samshek's made-to-measure and digital customization option, it becomes easy to customize the size, fabric, sleeves, neckline, etc," Bajaj observes.

The modern Indian men are well-aware of made-to-measure and bespoke tailoring as creating a remarkable first impression has become important for all sorts of businesses, and this has triggered the growth of these boutiques in India. Men understand the need for a well-fitted garment, and the complexity involved in achieving perfection in these garments. "Custom-made tailoring did go out of trend for a short period in India but considering the fact that millennials are extremely fashion conscious and want to portray their best impression with their attire at all times, they are becoming increasingly aware of the segment. This is why the concept works well not only for shirts but for trousers and suits as well since nothing creates a better outlook than a well-tailored outfit," says Gonsalves.

Target audience and the growing markets

Among high network Indian (HNI) shoppers its common to opt for custom made clothing due to the high sentimental value attached and plethora of additional services offered with the construction of the garment. "We cater to a niche clientele of contemporary grooms, HNIs, NRIs, businessmen, corporates and several renowned names in the business and entertainment industry who are sartorially inclined individuals looking for a unique fashion forward ensemble. We have always catered to



Sandeep Gonsalves
Co-founder, Sarah and Sandeep

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individuals to value fit over exclusivity," informs Gonsalves.

For Bajaj, target audience for customization are women 35 years and above who struggle to find the right fit in mainstream retail clothing. Most women who fall in this age group are not sure of their size. "This can happen due to a lot of reasons – pregnancy being the most prominent. It is not only limited to high-end and super premium customers, regular customers also find it convenient to customize as per their preferences. The ease to customize the fabric, style, neckline, dress length, sleeve length and of course the fit makes it exclusive for the clients."

16 Stitches is aimed at men 18 to 40 years. And as Chokhani explains, "This is fashion business and very competitive. Customizing market is not at that stage where one is eating into each other's market. It is something where if more players enter the segment, it would ultimately improve growth of the segment."

While Tier I cities remain the best performing markets for bespoke, owing to companies' outreach in small towns, the scenario is fast changing. Gonsalves says, they have been

conducting trunk shows in Tier-II markets to ensure the target audiences in these markets are well-informed about the benefits of bespoke tailoring. "We believe the purchasing power in Tier II cities is phenomenal but they are unaware of the services offered. That is what we hope to change." Agrees Bajaj and says, "Every woman in each part of the globe is facing issues finding the perfect size and, customization is the only solution for that. So, it is not only restricted to Tier I cities alone, women are customizing their outfits in smaller cities too. Brands are approaching smaller cities because they don't have much access to such services."

What works for customisation

Gonsalves says, "The strength of made to measure is its fast paced method compared to bespoke tailoring. However, the extent of personalization and fit is no comparison to bespoke. Due to this, we endorse our bespoke services to clients and recommend them to only go with made-to-measure in case of time constraints." Adding another perspective, Bajaj, says, made-to-measure gives client the ease of customizing fabric, neckline, dress length, sleeve length, size, etc, with no extra cost. With the help of 3D body scanning and artificial intelligence, fitting issue is resolved. Fast logistics also plays an important role, making the whole process more efficient. "We provide 48 hours delivery from the store and five business days across India and that's what the customers are looking for these days."

Customization comes at a varied price point depending on individual requirements. As Chokhani observes, "Customisation is a brand building game and it takes time to

build it. You have to be genuine. It is believed customization is expensive but that is not the case. The average price of a customized shirt is Rs 2,500, which is equal to the price point at which big brands are selling. And we are trying to minimize the gap in pricing. No over the top value and extra charging are our brand values."

Indeed, made to measure shirts are a bit more affordable compared to bespoke shirts but the price points depend on quality of fabric, point out experts. Bajaj argues, made-to-measure is not expensive, it is as similar to the retail sector if we talk about the western wear clothing. In terms of party wear ethnics, it is a bit expensive because of embroidery and fabric. But western wear makes it really efficient with digital customization. Samshek offers the same price range as retail market without extra customization cost, which makes it more feasible for the consumers. The average price is Rs 2,499.

A limited market scope

As for the growth of custom clothing market, Bajaj feels, in initial years, it had a limited space but not now. Customization has slowly but steadily grown through the years. "It has huge consumers base not limited to plus size or middle-aged women. Nowadays, every woman is inclined towards customization, according to body type and personal style. Because it has become easy, one can simply give measurements sitting at home and get outfits customized in no time within the price range of retail clothing."

Chokhani feels the market is challenging in terms of acquiring customers, making sure one is on the top of the game. "We

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deliver across the country and abroad. As it is a service oriented business, everything has to be easy and perfect from delivery to making sure you retail the customer. These are the challenges. The market is growing and everyone has space for growth. It also becomes important that any brand entering the space should have clarity about who they want to serve and how."

Made-to-measure shirts are experiencing consistent growth internationally and there has not been a reason to conclude that it may decline anytime soon. And as Gonsalves sums up, "Millennials are more likely to spend on experiences because of which the volume of purchase during festive season is higher. Additionally, we have been monitoring the international markets closely to match the standards of service provided and are noticing a number of innovations that will automatically improve the year-on-year growth prospect."

