



It's all about stylish shirts in various hues, smart fit and a casual look

Changing workplace ethos means formal shirts are now giving way to a more semi-formal and casual look. Demand for informal shirts is on the rise riding on innovative prints, colours, fits and collars. Women's shirt category too is emerging as a category now, find out **Shubhangi Bidwe** and **Ajay Goswami**

- The trend of striped shirts is fast catching up in India.
- There are multiple varieties of cuffs available like square cuffs with single and double buttons, square cut cuffs and rounded French cuffs.
- Smart fits are preferred in formal and semi formal shirts as they exude authority and confidence
- Blue is the most popular color in formal shirts

With a preference for a semi-formal, casual look among contemporary men and increasing purchasing power of millennial shoppers, demand for stylish shirts has been on the rise in India. To meet this demand shirtmakers across brands and segments are innovating with their styles, colours, designs cuts, collars. For instance, Pune-based brand Cottonking recently launched a new range of carbon peach finish and stain-resistant shirts. "We have also launched another range, 'Aerosoft' that offers a wide variety of designs and prints," notes Kaushik Marathe, Director of the brand.



Salman Noorani
Managing Director, Zodiac

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“Relaxed dress code should drive semi-formal and semi-casual shirts off take. We are changing our mix in favour of casual and semi casual,” says Vinit Doshi, Head, Product, Sourcing & Retail Planning, Celio. What’s more, the imprint of athleisure is now visible



in shirts segment now. As Citykart Retail launched hooded shirts with inners in its new collection as the brand believes casual and semi-formal shirts to be most in demand as against formal shirts.

Check, stripes have more takers now

“Three distinct shirts trends are emerging,” says Salman Noorani, Managing Director, Zodiac. These are: athleisure, the black tie look and stripes or floral prints. Styling details are becoming minimal believes Abhishek Yadav, Design Head of Spykar further revealing that his brand’s Spring/Summer range offers a wide mix of checks, stripes, prints and various shades of solid colors. Yadav goes on to state, shirt category is a tricky one, as a little change in design takes the product to a different line altogether. Spykar is a casual wear brand with three distinct lines: Purist, YnR & Actif. Purist is a classic product line, YnR is the trending fashion of the time and Actif is a line of hi-fashion products. Purist line falls into semi-formal, while the YnR and Actif are casual lines.

“The percentage of checks in casual and semi casual shirts is growing owing to its growing popularity,” explains Sudhanshu Agarwal, Founder & Director of Citykart. The brand has also used dobby pattern in shirts. Another trend fast catching up is of stripped shirts. Noorani says stripes are the mainstay of Zodiac. “We are the first men’s wear brand to reintroduce stripes in our S/S2019 collection,” he adds. The brand recorded excellent sales of stripped shirts in its Zodiac Barboni and Vivace collections.

Collars and cuffs see many new styles

In collars, brands are offering a huge variety such as kent, button down, mandarin and cutway. “Windsor or cutaway is our most popular collar style,” informs Noorani. On the other hand, Spykar offers collar styles such as classic, mandarin, button down, spread, etc. “We also offer stand up and flat collar stands,” says Yadav. He points out, classic and button down are the most popular collar styles among consumers. “Trend-conscious consumers also try variations of mandarin and spread collars,” he says.

And just like collars, there are multiple varieties of cuffs available in the market. These include: square cuffs with single and double buttons, square cut cuffs and rounded French cuffs. Designers vary cuff heights to compliment the shirt. “Discerning customers ask for double cuffs. However, our single cuffs are more versatile in use,” Noorani says. Citykart Retail too offers double cuffs both in regular and with cufflinks.

Demand for linen fabrics and smart fits

Though the performance of a fabric does not necessarily predict the performance of a shirt, the right type of fabric helps shirts

meet aesthetic and functional performance expectations of customers. Manufacturers are offering high quality fabrics in diverse designs and blends as per latest trends. Available in a variety of weaves like plain, twill, satin and dobby, these fabrics are smooth in texture, absorbent, and can be laundered easily. They are also available in tecno-natural ranges that cover all cotton blends with manmade fibers.

Premium fabrics like 2-ply Giza cotton and pure flax/linen are gaining popularity. “Made of flax plant fibers, linen fabrics dry faster than cotton. Though they are more expensive than cotton, they are exceptionally cool and fresh in hot and humid weather,” he adds. Shirts in French and Italian linen are also the hallmark of Zodiac. The brand started a linen shirt program in 2004 and till today its linen range remains unmatched.

Shirts have also evolved with numerous patterns fits and colors. Smart fits are in trend in formal and semi formal shirts as they exude authority and confidence. “In casual shirts, slim fits are more in trend,” states Agarwal adding that blue is the most popular color in formal shirts while causal shirts are available in colors like blue, black, white, maroon and olive. “There is resurgence in olive and burgundy this winter, though black and white remain on top,” adds Noorani.

Exploring growth potential

Overall, shirts are a very promising category both for business and volumes. As men roughly require four shirts over two trousers, the segment offers enough potential for growth. There is a lot of business to be explored in smaller towns. “And this can be done without offering discounts or the COD facility,” opines Noorani. Zodiac aims to chart its future growth on the strength of its design and quality besides implementing more systems to converse the environment. On the other hand, Citykart Retail aims to explore using snap buttons in its causal shirts.

Women’s shirt market catches up

A relatively new and smaller category, the women’s shirt category contributes only 2 per cent to the total women’s apparel market. Currently valued at Rs 2,527 crore, the segment is expected to grow at a CAGR of 11 per cent with more women joining the workforce,

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Head, Product, Sourcing & Retail Planning, Celio

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Abhishek Yadav

Design Head, Spykar Lifestyles

“Checks in different weaves and composition are trending. All over prints are doing well for Spykar as a brand. Dobbies and structures are in demand and are preferred when the colour is solid.”



Kaushik Marathe

Director, Cottonking

“Consumers prefer slim fit over regular fit. Rather than core formals, people want semi-formals and that is why we have a range called weekend formals.”

Future growth in this segment is likely to be driven by the young aspiring youth working in corporate sector. Encouraged by innovative designs, fits and color combinations in semi-formal shirts, fashion conscious consumers will opt for semi formal and casual shirts as an alternative to formal shirts. The women's shirt market will also witness a huge surge in demand due to the increasing participation of women in workforce. The market offers a huge scope provided brands and retailers manage to cater to the ever changing fashion requirements of both formal and semi-formal shirt customers.

leading to a huge demand for formal shirts and western wear among women. Change in women's tastes and preference is creating demand for both formal and casual shirts in metros and Tier-I cities which is expected to trickle down to the non-metros as well.



Sudhanshu Agarwal

Founder & Director of Citykart

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