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TAILOR AT YOUR DOORSTEP

A mobile app start-up is changing the way India has looked at bespoke tailoring. Bindu Gopal Rao speaks to Premjeet Singh, Founder-CEO, Tech-Tailor, to find out the inside story.

Tech-Tailor is a discovery platform for custom fitted clothing and tailoring services, anytime and anywhere. The portal allows customers to personalise their tailoring needs online by helping them with style elements and garment fittings. The best part is that they provide home service for client's measurements and home delivery within 10 days. They also provide alteration services. Currently, they are serving customers in Bengaluru and have special offers for defence personnel, advocates, corporates, colleges and universities, social clubs and group housing societies. Tech-Tailor is backed by IIM-B alumni, NID and industry experts from e-commerce giants

like Myntra. Premjeet Singh, Founder-CEO, Tech Tailor, tells us more, in this exclusive interview.

WHAT IS THE CONCEPT BEHIND AN ON-DEMAND PLATFORM FOR TAILORING SERVICES?

On-demand tailoring is primarily a simulation of offline tailoring store in an online scenario. Just like you walk into a store, buy fabric and order for tailoring, we do just the same but through an online platform. The customer can choose a style from our website and schedule a technician visit to his/her place. So in our model, instead of the customer commuting to the tailor's place, a

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technician/tailor goes to the customer's place. There is no separate inventory maintained for the fabric. It is purely fabric samples or swatches which customer chooses from. Fabric is ordered directly from the mill, once the customer places an order. After stitching and finishing is complete, the garment is delivered to the customer. The tailoring takes place in small workshops which maintain standard operations and quality processes, ensuring superior quality garments as compared to conventional tailoring. There is a standardisation of trims and accessories so that the customer gets the best product.

HOW HAVE YOU BUILT YOUR MARKETPLACE?

We are in the pilot phase for marketplace model in Bengaluru currently. We started by sourcing from one small factory and standardised certain

processes. This helped us in setting an internal benchmark for quality within the factory. From the body measurement of the customer we evaluate the ready garment measurement using our algorithms and anthropometric database. This helps in reducing the re-work rate and maximising success on the first delivery. The same process was replicated for five other factories and all are now working well. This is a win-win for both customers and tailoring units as customers get faster deliveries with minimal alterations. Tailoring units can save lot of time from re-work and also quickly encash what they produce. We are now mapping the chain of sewing centres across the city of Bengaluru. Our learnings and insights about tailoring orders are being simulated into a web/app interface for seamless operations. When fully activated,



WHAT ARE THE PROS AND CONS OF TAILOR-MADE VERSUS READYMADE CLOTHING?

The crux is that one size cannot fit all. Readymade garments are produced with specific sizing in mind which is more generic, so, the product may or may not fit you. When tailor-made, the product is developed from the body measurements of an individual, so it is quite specific to you. Given a choice, most of our customers choose tailored garments in place of readymade and this was validated in a survey we conducted. However, since readymade garments are being produced in large factories, there are systems, processes and economies of scale. This yields a better quality product at an economical price. At Tech-Tailor, we are working with small factories whose output times are faster and can deliver competitively priced bespoke products.

customers will be able to discover credible tailors and get their work done in an efficient and convenient ecosystem.

WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO FIND GOOD TAILORS?

Tailoring is a very unorganised market and hence it is not easy to find a good tailor who delivers a good product on time. Lack of discipline, commitment and respect for the customer's time are the biggest challenges. The ones who are more established are hard to access and always charge huge prices. They go overboard patronising themselves as monopolistic heroes in a modern India. Unfortunately, tailors have not evolved with changing times. There is no one to challenge them currently or disrupt the entire ecosystem. This is the very essence of Tech-Tailor. We are working towards making better tailors become more visible.

HOW DO YOU USE SMART TECHNOLOGY TO DELIVER HIGH QUALITY AND CUSTOMISED GARMENTS?

Smart technology is an enabler in our entire process. The operation process, from customer order mechanism to delivery, is mapped onto our SOP, so it is easy to control and trouble shoot if something goes wrong. Our system helps us to maintain product quality standards. We can use our algorithms more efficiently using the modern technology. Also the measurement data for thousands of customers help us to keep refining our fit.

We are working on a smart phone technology for auto measurement through a 'selfie'. In



the future, you will not need any technician to visit you. Anyone will know their own body measurements at a click of a button. This data gets converted into a QR code and can be used over any e-commerce portal to determine best fit of garments.

HOW DOES TECH TAILOR WORK TO MAKE LIFE SIMPLER?

We are committed to providing convenience to the customer. That is why we have started as tailoring services at your doorstep. This helps customers avoid commuting anywhere for tailoring work, avoid parking hassles and saves their precious time. Above all, we ensure our customer's privacy is maintained as we discuss their bespoke styling and choices in the comfort of their home.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE?

We are looking for good quality developers and some serious tech guys who can take things forward quickly. Currently, we have a small team who are doing their level best; but we need to move faster on technology as business is moving much ahead of technology, at the moment. Sometimes, we forego certain business opportunities as we are not tech ready for the same.

HOW HAS THE MARKET RESPONSE BEEN?

When we started last year, we were doing short surveys to validate the extent of tailoring

demand. There was an immediate trigger from the customers to make for them. This was so surprising and encouraging that we simply started from there and never looked back. The market has been kind and we are growing rapidly, almost at 80 per cent, through customer references.

HOW HAS THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING INCUBATED AT NS RAGHAVAN CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING (NSRCEL), IIM BANGALORE BEEN?

Right from our venture starting up, to date, we have been guided on each and every step, from an organisation's registration process to idea validation. Proof of concept, pilot programmes, commercial launch, building team, branding and market positioning, contemplating world class disruptive tech—all this is attributed to the mentoring from NSRCEL mentors. They are all highly refined and act as devil's advocates if the need arises. We are fortunate to be incubated at NSRCEL in IIM-B. Even more, our idea is also backed by some of the faculty members who have great industrial expertise.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

We want to build this business and expand in other cities like Delhi and Mumbai in the coming year. By the end of 2017, we will be prepared to launch in another four cities—Pune, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Chennai. Tech-Tailor will also become a one-stop platform for tailoring services and supplies including fabric, accessories, sewing machines, training centres and knowledge base for technicians across India. ■