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BESPOKE LUXURY FOR HIM

Fashion for men is surely getting luxuriously bespoke. **Bindu Gopal Rao** analyses the bespoke trends by looking closely at what the brands have on offer to reveal 'what's ready for the hangers' for his wardrobe!

A report titled 'Menswear in India' by www.euromonitor.com mentions, "Menswear continued to outperform womenswear in 2016, registering retail current value growth of 13 per cent compared to 11 per cent for the latter. The penetration of organised and branded menswear is greater in India than for womenswear, which is largely unorganised due to the strong prevalence of traditional and ethnic wear among Indian women. Menswear in India is thus predicted to register a retail value CAGR of four per cent at constant 2016 prices over the forecast period to reach sales of ₹1,795 billion in 2021."

CUSTOM MADE

Bespoke or made-to-order is an outfit that is crafted exclusively for a specific person, keeping their requirements and their taste in mind. Bespoke outfits fit differently. They are cut



accordingly to fit a specific body shape and give the client the exact comfort and fit which they want. "Since our focus is on luxury bespoke as a business itself, we present the whole gamut of a luxurious lifestyle for men across fine fabrics from the best mills of Italy, England and the cream of Indian fabric along with hand block printed silks, from a third generation family of artisans that is sought out all over the world," says Prmod Bafna, Creative Director at Warp & Weft and Founder, Suitfullstop.com. The luxury bespoke collection by Camessi includes a wide array of choices in cuffs, collars and fabrics to make the perfect shirt or trouser. Likewise, P N RAO has a wide range of luxury fabrics starting from 100 counts going on to 180 counts in all the international brands like Ermenegildo Zegna, Loro Piana, Scabal, Dormeuil and Huddersfield. "Our main emphasis since inception has been superior fabrics which

TREND TALK



get finer and softer with each wash, thereby increasing the comfort level for the one adorning them. Design is, of course, an equally important factor but we felt living in a nation oozing with talent, the only factor which could set us apart from our competitors would be the fabric quality along with the fitting," opine Tushi and Vaibhav, Owners/Designers, ADORN HIS. Colour has slowly evolved to find an undoubted importance in menswear and is essential to put together the perfect look. "Seen by many as a kind of a 'new neutral', many of the hues are based in some shade of beige. Nude and mauve might have some similarities to skin tones or other 'barely there'



colours which keep you feeling light, while looking sophisticated. Petal pink, faded sunshine, orange rind, sea foam, and shoreline blue are all common occurrences from the best part of summer, that add freshness and cool tones to your wardrobe," says Sanjiv Shroff, Director, Camessi.

MEN MATTER

Manish Tripathi, Creator and Designer behind the premium fashion labels antarDESI and Naveli says, "We specialise in both Indian and western wear range of products, especially made for a special occasion as well as an everyday work wear collection. We offer a wide array of 'mill made' as well as handmade fabrics to our clients to choose from, including some of the premium fabrics around the world such as Holland and Sherry from London, Canclini, Testa, and Mileta from Italy and various authentic Indian handloom fabrics. Our bespoke offerings also include a gamut of premium buttons, trims, and accessories. Our signature is the fit and finish we offer." Rubber Couture makes ethnic, Indian and formal bespoke menswear. The silhouettes are classic, while the fabrics used are pure and handcrafted. "We craft shawaris, bandgalas, bandhis, kurtas, waistcoats, shirts, suits and even pocket squares. All our outfits have a fun factor attached to them. We have reversible bandhis, which are one of our hot sellers. A range of reversible kurtas will also be launched in our next line and also jackets which transform into bandgalas by popping the collar. We also believe that God is in the details. A lot of our outfits are



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multifunctional; if not, we make sure that there is an element of fun in the finishing. We may add a moustache printed lining on the inside of a jacket or give a pop colour piping. We also have a range of *bandhis* that can be especially digitally printed, with a print of your choice or even with a wedding hashtag on it," explains Aanchal Bubber Mehta & Sanjana Bubber, Partner/Designer, Bubber Couture.

TREND CHECK

In menswear, currently, Indo-western and offbeat is the way to go. Men are wearing *bandhis* with shorter kurtas and pants. Men are also experimenting with draped kurtas, asymmetric kurta lengths and embroidery placements. "Waistcoats, draped dhoti pants, jodhpur pants and dhotis are really popular at the moment. Traditional is out, chic is in. Surface ornamentation, textured fabrics, quilting and subtle embroideries are in," mention Mehta & Bubber. "The prevalent trend is one of tasteful value addition in this discerning space. The point of almost 'brash subtlety' even though it's oxymoronic in nature is evident in the bold-but-discrete approach, like proper fine formal grey suit for example, with its inner silk lining

reflecting bold patterns that one wouldn't think were actually there, until they got a glimpse of the lining inside, in movement," says Bafna. Vipul Amar, Founder, The V Renaissance adds, "There is always one trend - crisp, high quality and detailed. Summer linen jackets in classic double vent, light checks on darker shades of blue, grey and tan and denim or linen shirts paired with linen light tan jackets or even a dark brown jacket are in." Naveen Pishe, Partner, P N RAO, says, "The man is surely getting bolder and opting for bright coloured fabrics and bold checks. The big trend we are seeing is that men like to use subtle optics such as use contrast colour threads on buttonholes, etc. They want a high level of customisation options with their names or initials on the product. The fit is still slim and should continue for some more time." Jackie Manglani, India President, Stefano Ricci, has another take and says, "From the beginning of this company, since 1972, we have not looked towards trends, but rather towards a timeless elegance. This is found in the quality of the fabrics used as well as the considerable importance given to perfect the details in every garment. The true novelty, or trend that we have encountered recently is a movement of interest from clients towards the style of their sons; our SR Junior line was introduced in 2016 and has been very successful in letting clients obtain outfits that will teach a classic charm to their offspring."

DEMAND IMPETUS

While the market slowed down towards the end of last year, it is now looking up with clients in their late 20's and 30's leaning towards bespoke menswear. Technology has also played a major role in the expansion of the bespoke market.



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With the availability of bespoke service in tier two cities, it has become easier to reach a larger audience. 3D Body scanning machines and other measurement instruments have ruled out the scope for human error or any other issues to hamper the consistency and accuracy of each garment. "People have started realising that fashion is not just a medium to look good, but rather to express yourself and how you like to be perceived by your friends, peers, colleagues, and seniors. With an increase of premium retail spaces in the country, and online shopping trends catering to tier one as well as tier two cities have contributed to the trajectory at which the market is growing," says Tripathi. The market is growing at a healthy pace; we are seeing a year on year growth of about 15-20 per cent. "In order to build a luxury business in India, we feel it's important to first build the bridge for luxury business. So, as an initiative, we have created a 'luxury wall' section at our Anna Nagar store in Chennai that houses

some of the exquisite luxury collection of suits and accessories. And by December 2017, we are dedicating a floor at our M G road store to bridge the gap and dedicatedly have a luxury space," says Pishe. Market responses have been positive, both in India, as well as at the international level concerning Indian clients abroad. "We have noted a developing attention on the part of our clients in an understanding of quality products, as they are continuously looking for the best. Growth is connected to their approach to this kind of high-end production and bespoke offerings," avers Manglani.

CHALLENGES GALORE

Bespoke means that a majority of the product is unique. Which can sometimes be very difficult as many processes and raw materials are sourced from different corners of the globe. Unlike mass produce, in bespoke, the quantities are very small. "This means we have to deal with a lot of time issues. Also, there come in demands which employ technicalities that are used almost for the first time most of the time and we have to end up creating every single thing from scratch. And then, if this product is a wearable, then imagine if the client comes after a year and you have to refit something? So, a lot of times, we have to keep a sample and spares which might cost a lot to the company and also a lot of time which the client might not like," explains Amar. A key challenge is meeting the growing demand, while managing the in-depth process that goes into bespoke wear. "Skilled labour always seems to be in high demand, and we've begun to work with them by training and nurturing our labour force instead of relying on out-of-the-box hiring solutions," avers Bafna. Generally, men would prefer going to the same designer once he/she meets the expectations. "No matter how good the design/style is, maintaining standards of quality and comfortable fabric along with an excellent fit each and every time is the most challenging in men's fashion. He is only a loyal client till the last best outfit. The cost of a compromise on any of these aspects is very high. You lose him once, you lose him for good," say Tushi and Vaibhav. Aditya Singhal, Founder & CEO, IML Jeans Co adds, "The entire ecosystem for luxury in India is very nascent and with a disproportionate focus on wedding wear which is seasonal. Hence, getting anything (products or services) of high quality, durability or design in small quantities (which is the industrial norm) typically has to come from overseas, which has its own dynamics." ■