

# Online tailors suit millennial men's needs

As e-commerce gains traction, fashionable Chinese males increasingly prefer virtual clothiers

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The e-commerce boom in China is empowering Chinese male consumers, especially the millennial generation, to clothe themselves fashionably.

Zhang Xiaoqun, 24, a civil servant from Shanghai, loves buying custom-made suits online. He specifies a time for a tailor to visit his home for measurements. Within 10 days, a bespoke suit is delivered to him, a breeze compared to the conventional process of getting a suit stitched at a tailor.

"Compared with buying a suit at physical stores, I think online shopping is more convenient. It saves me a lot of time," said Zhang.

Chinese males such as Zhang are

driving the "he-economy", a term that refers to the rising consumption among men.

Fang Qin, founder and CEO of YBRen.com, a Hangzhou-based online bespoke suit firm, said, "With the rapid development of China's e-commerce market, more and more consumers have turned to customizing suits online. The consumer only needs to make a reservation online, usually on our Wechat official account or on our app, and our consultant will pay a visit to tailor a suit for him."

Fang added: "We offer free door-to-door service. Even if the consumer is not satisfied with our samples or hasn't decided yet, he can get his measurements for free, which will serve as reference for future purchases."

The advantage of an online suit ser-



High-end suits on display at an online-to-offline clothing store in East China's Shandong province.

ZHANG HAO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

vice is that it saves time for consumers. In addition, the price is relatively low, given that online stores save on cost of operating physical storefronts.

According to Fang, this business is especially welcomed by the millennials and the post-1970s generation. "These groups of people account for 80 percent of the online clothing market. Our Wechat official account had attracted over 2 million followers by Jan 2, with these groups of people being the majority."

Zhao Yue, an analyst from Beijing-

based market research firm Analysys, said, "The millennial generation focuses more on individuality and self-expression. They prefer buying personal items to suit their personalities. Besides, they tend to enjoy the service first and pay later, living beyond their means."

Promising as the market is, some problems remain, credibility being one of them.

"As a loyal fan of physical tailor shops, I still consider them to be more trustworthy. I wonder if online

shops are able to provide high-quality goods," said Jiang Congxiao, 32, an office clerk in Beijing.

In response, Fang of YBRen said, "We open all details to the public. Once our dressing consultant takes the consumer's measurements, the consumer can track the clothing's whole manufacturing process, as well as the shipment process till the product is delivered."

Lan Linfeng and Fan Chenwei contributed to the story.

# Metrosexuals seek a better outlook

More men now go under the knife to improve both their physical appearance and careers

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Cosmetology, which is all about using procedures like plastic surgery for a better physical appearance, is no longer the sole preserve of women in China. Demand for such services from career-conscious metrosexuals, particularly those in the 18-28 age group, is rising, experts said.

Cosmetology is expected to generate sales revenue in excess of 464 billion yuan (\$72.5 billion) by 2020, sharply up from 176 billion yuan in 2017 and 87 billion yuan in 2015, according to professional services firm Deloitte.

About 10 percent of last year's revenue came from Chinese men, mostly metrosexuals. In 2017, more than 14 million Chinese people turned to cosmetology for better looks, up 42 percent year-on-year, and six times higher than the global growth rate, according to a report from SoYoung, a social networking app with a focus

on China's cosmetic surgery field.

Such phenomenal growth can be attributed to consumers such as Jia, 24, a salesman in Beijing. He paid about 100,000 yuan from 2014 to 2017 for three surgeries to improve his looks. The first one gave him double eyelids; the second one straightened his nose; the third one transported fat from his tummy area to his temples.

"I changed my small nose, hoping to look more masculine," he said. "And a new full forehead may make me look more approachable during business occasions."

Jia used to host live-streaming shows on apps and websites. He said some of his male friends have also gone under the scalpel. Plastic surgery, he said, "is similar to people chasing branded clothing and latest fashions."

Back in 2015, there were not as many clinics as today that welcomed such clients. The scene has changed as society appears to expect men, not just women, to look sharper,

presentable and eye-pleasing, said Liu Xiao, chief operating officer of SoYoung, which boasts 20 million users.

"The number of men involved in jobs that need a good face has increased in recent years. Models, anchors and actors are in big demand," she said.

Yang Mingjie, president of Calmagic, a nose-reshaping clinic in Dalian, Northeast China's Liaoning province, agreed.

She said about 12 percent of patients of her clinic are men, many of who are from the entertainment field.

"They are keen to advance in their career. They are under great pressure from competitors," she said.

"Some people may not feel confident about their appearance. They think change through medical intervention can make a difference."

Besides, men born during 1990-95 tend to have a more diverse demand and freedom to make decisions, Liu said.

According to the company's report, 53 out of 100 consumers of plastic surgery services were younger than 27.

Increasingly, male clients at such facilities in China are seeking services for nose reshaping, acne removal, hair transplant and beard transplant, she said. In China, although such services are still sought more by women than men, demand from male clients is increasing.

This is causing investors to rush in to financially back ventures in this field.

For instance, China's hair transplant clinic Lotus raised 500 million yuan from private equity firm HG Capital earlier in January. The rationale is that demand is foreseen to grow as about 21 percent of Chinese men suffer hair loss, Lotus said.

A hair transplant surgery may cost up to 40,000 yuan — at 10 to 12 yuan per hair follicle, according to a counselor at a Beijing-based plastic surgery clinic Mylike Aesthetic.

At another clinic at Lidu in Beijing,

a counselor named Li said customers need to pay about 10,000-30,000 yuan to draw out fat and flatten their beer belly.

Yang of Calmagic said plastic surgery is generally for people who can afford it; the procedure is not recommended for those who cannot afford it because anxiety and stress associated with organizing finances beyond one's means may neutralize the effect of plastic surgery.

"Besides, the process from anesthesia to recovery from swelling and scarring is also a challenge. People should think twice before making the decision (to go in for plastic surgery)."

Liu said given the growing demand from metrosexuals, hospitals and clinics need to research more for tailor-made procedures.

Hu Peng, 23, a public relations practitioner in Beijing, parted with about 450 yuan in early January to have acne marks on his face removed. "We care because girls care," he said.