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Dapper in denims

Custom-made jeans are the one-stop solution for those always on the lookout for the perfect fit, says Sushmita Biswas

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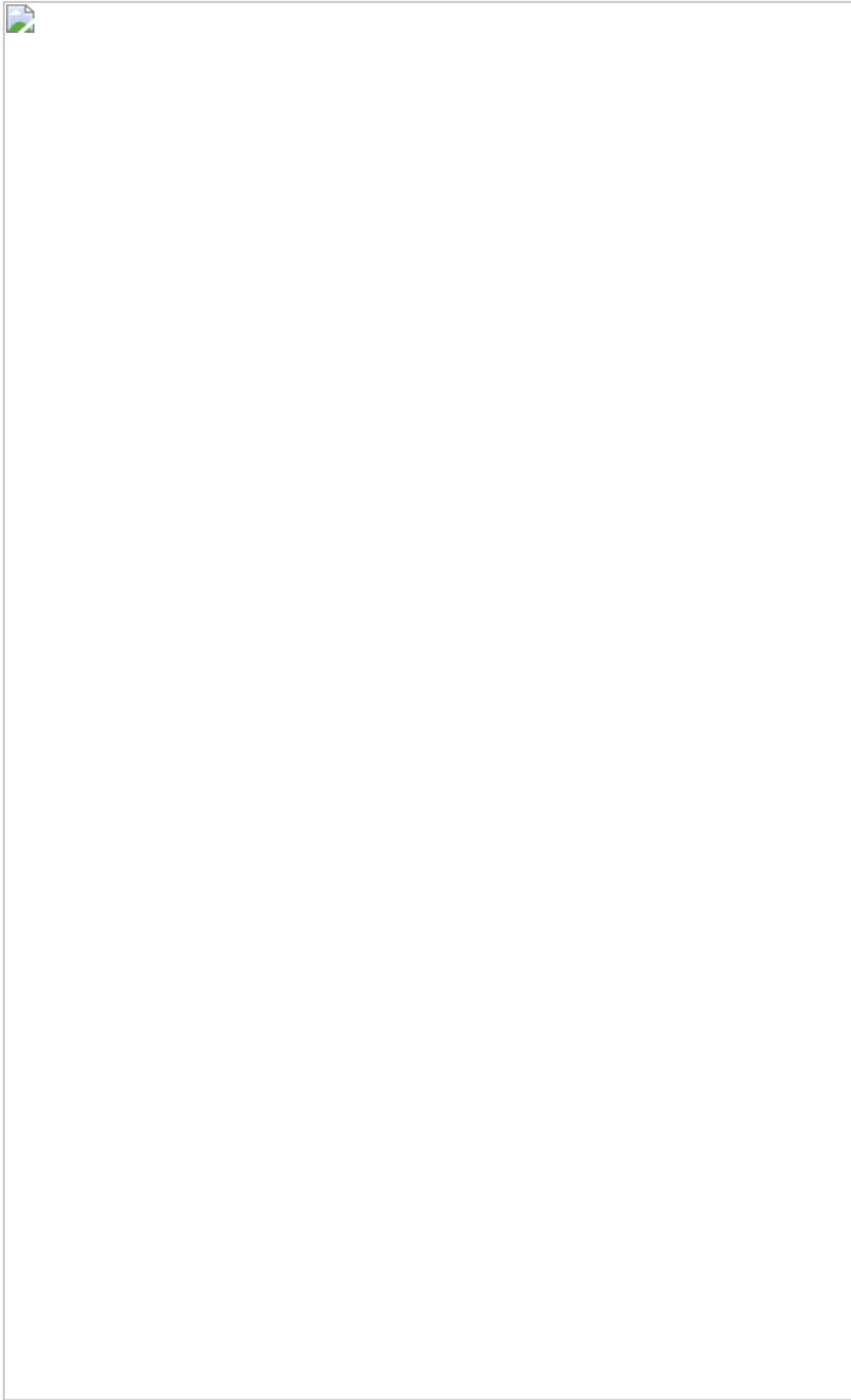


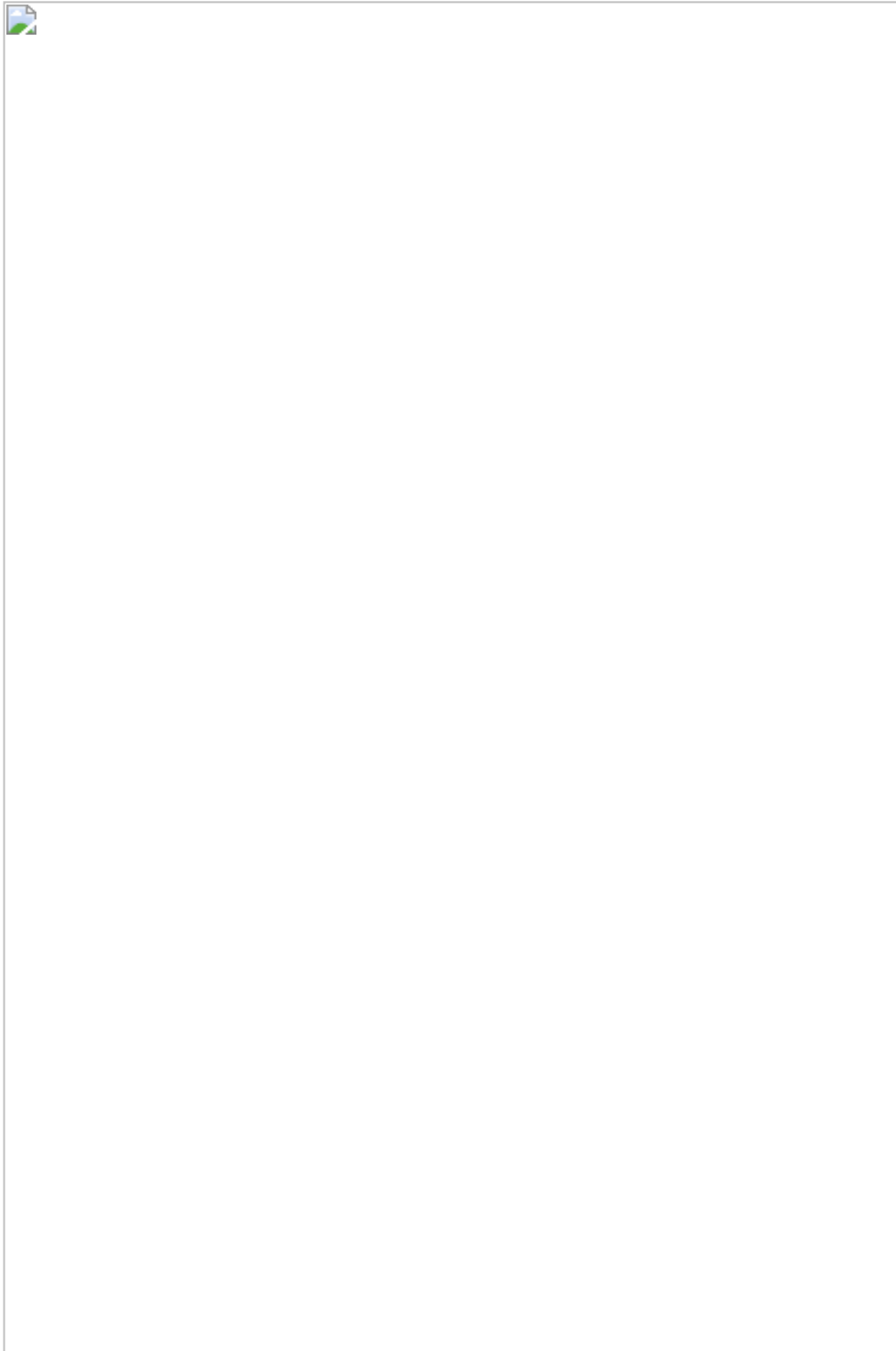
Photo: Rupinder Sharma

It's the age-old dilemma that has plagued jean lovers. Whether you're hourglass or curved, slim or heavy-hipped, chances are that the jeans you try on will be way too long, or too loose around the waist — even if they hug the legs snugly. Finding the perfectly fitted jeans can be a real challenge.

Now a handful of companies are looking at solving this one-size-doesn't-fit-all problem. For these online denim services, it's all about customisation that allows customers to choose the fabric, thread colours, monogrammed labels, pockets — everything. All that the customers need to do is to choose the look, add their measurements and place the order online.

So, you have Korra, launched by four former Levi's executives and designers — Shyam Sukhramani, Himanshu Shani, Mia Morikawa and Rajesh Jaju — that specialises in getting customers into smartly fitting customised jeans. Being ex-Levi's hands, they knew what difficulties Levi's fans had finding the exact fit from amongst the giant corporation's mass-produced creations. "There's no such thing as a perfect pair of jeans," says Sukhramani.

Delhi-based Aditya Singhal of IML — or It's My Life Jeans Company — attacked the fitting problem in a different way. The company, which offers customised jeans, started by measuring over a thousand live models to understand the different shapes and sizes of Indians.



Aditya Singhal's home-service brand, It's My Life Jeans Company, invites customers to book an appointment on its Web store and that's followed up by a visit from brand's fashion consultant

These e-tailors have latched onto the made-to-order jeans trend in a big way. Some brands like Korra offer a 'try-on-at-home' service wherein a stylist comes visiting with an assortment of sizes, fits and fabrics.

The foursome of Korra launched the brand in 2014. It offers customers the freedom to choose their fabrics and detailing to customise jeans according to their measurements. In Korra, each pair of jeans is made after the order is placed on their Web store. Korra sold over 100 pairs of jeans within six weeks of its launch.

Says Sukhramani: "Our aim is to bring the user closer to the designer. So, in our workshop one tailor is responsible for a single pair of jeans and each product comes with the tailor's signature. We don't mass manufacture." The price for customisation isn't hefty at Rs 2,900. Korra also does in-between odd sizes.

IML too is a home-service brand that Singhal launched in 2012. It helps picky customers in their denim pursuits. Customers can book an appointment on the Web store after which the brand's fashion consultant makes a house call. Alternatively, one can visit their partner stores to place an order. Customers can browse through denim styles (ikkat, embroidered and more) and pick the detailing like the buttons and threads, and decide on the fit.

Clients can place an order for custom-tailored jeans on the Made To Order Jeans website by simply detailing their measurements, fabric preferences and the desired designs. Photo: Gajanan Dudhalkar

The consultant also takes the measurements and about two weeks later, the jeans — which are made at IML's Gurgaon unit — are delivered to the client.

Says Singhal: "The jeans are one-of-a-kind and there is no one-fit template for all." The bespoke jeans from IML start at

Rs 5,900 (for a basic pair) and can cost up to Rs 14,000 (using Japanese, Brazilian and Turkish fabrics). He says: "Higher costs include extreme customisation like more fading, distressing and tearing."

At a slightly different level there's Mumbai-based Made To Order Jeans set up by Puneet Lohia that caters to international clients mainly in the US and Europe. Lohia will launch his services in India soon. "Our focus is not embroidered jeans but fitted, customised jeans," says Lohia who has a manufacturing unit in Bhiwandi, Mumbai. Clients can place orders on the company website by giving body measurements, fabric preferences and design styles. Delivery is done within two weeks. Prices for each customisation range from \$70 (about Rs 4,690) to \$100 (about Rs 6,700).

But do customers always walk away satisfied? The answer may not always be a yes. Says Lohia: "Since the customers measure themselves, sizing can be an issue. If they are not satisfied, we give them a free-redo."

Korra, a brand run by former Levi's employees and designers (clockwise from left standing) Himanshu Shani, Shyam Sukhramani, Mia Morikawa and Rajesh Jaju, allows customers to select the fabric and detailing of their jeans. Photo: Rupinder Sharma

There's also Ahmedabad-based Denimcraft. Set up in 2013 by Selvi Gajjar and her husband, it offers the option of a re-order, or returning the jeans if customers are unhappy with the fit.

While Selvi is in charge of the e-store, her husband manages the manufacturing unit. Says Selvi: "Denim is an important part of daily wear. We realised that getting the right fit is the biggest issue when buying jeans."

For Denimcraft, fabrics play an important part and Lycra and stretch cotton are preferred ones. On the other hand, Korra uses only organic cotton and offers fabrics dyed with natural as well as synthetic indigo." IML uses 40 different fabrics in stretch cotton and imported denims like cashmere denim and Japanese Selvedge denim (old-fashioned denim weave). Lohia's Made To Order Jeans uses 70 per cent Indian fabrics and the rest are imported from Japan and the US.

The brands have ambitious expansion plans. Singhal of IML is looking at expanding to 10 cities in the next six months. On the anvil is customisation of bespoke denim shirts from IML. Korra is looking at opening a customised jeans studio in Delhi soon.

Denimcraft, on the other hand, is launching an app within three months while a studio in Ahmedabad is on the anvil.

When they first became part of the fashion scene, there were those who predicted that jeans would, quite literally, fade out and lose popularity. That's never happened and now you can step out wearing jeans that've received the perfectly tailored treatment.

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