

KIITO: The Finesse of Tailoring



Taking measurements during a fit-on

It was in 2008, that Damith Eranga Cooray ventured out to meet potential clients. Armed with a collection of supplier sample books and a fine-tuned skill to his name, he took on the bespoke tailoring industry a stitch at a time to make his mark in a niche market.

Words Prasadini Nanayakkara **Photographs** Indika De Silva

It all began at an early age for Damith Eranga Cooray who sought employment as

a pattern maker soon after his A/Levels. His first introduction to structured tailoring came about while running the uniform sample room as a garment technologist at the same company. "The UK supplier only got the samples done here but never the bulk production and it interested me to know why the more complex tailoring went to Romania, Bulgaria and China," says Cooray of his early observations of the industry. "I realised that we did not possess the capacity, the factories and the technology required." This realisation provided him the impetus to seek the right skills for a lucrative market.

To gain the right know-how Cooray joined ranks under a tailor where he learned the ropes and advanced to a Singaporean tailor shop to further hone his skills. "I realised that there is a niche market for exclusive suits that can be priced at 100,000-200,000 rupees. This however would demand superior quality and sophistication in skill and service - the client must receive the maximum value for money," he said. To deliver these standards of customisation, he soon grasped that it could only be managed by a tailoring service that operates at a small-scale. Larger orders would mean transferring tasks, which would in turn take away the element of personalised service. Aware of a substantial market, taking into account the overseas business travellers and ambassadors who require suits for everyday wear, he harnessed his skill and know-how accordingly. Thus dawned KIITO, a bespoke tailoring service to meet the needs of the busy executive, the connoisseur or the one-off customer.

"From my experience I believe that it is the person who takes the measurements who must make the cuts as well. It is he who observes the customers physical traits first hand," explains Cooray. At KIITO from the point of taking measurements till the fit-on, the tailor remains unchanged for a particular customer to avoid discrepancies and ensures the client requirements are adequately met - in effect, it is a sole individual in charge of a single order. "When it comes to our regular client base, as tailors we must be aware of his every need, right down to his colour preferences," he adds on the specialised service offered by KIITO.

The bespoke tailoring service is well-equipped to meet the exacting requirements

KIITO soon established a regular and broadening clientele who return for a service and finish of uncompromised standards. The discerning clientele that seek

specialised services are those who are well-versed in the nitty-gritty of tailoring including the origins of a fabric. The bespoke tailoring service consequently is well-equipped in both skill and resources to meet the exacting requirements. KIITO also tailors suits for wedding crews while offering its expertise from the selection of material, colours to producing the desired finish. “50 percent of our orders are for weddings while the remaining is from the business clientele.”

Materials from Europe, Thailand and India, afford customers a range of choice, be it 100 percent wool, wool blend (polyester, viscose and synthetic), or cotton. The fabrics also comprise of varying thickness to suit the different body types. The perfect fit is guaranteed as a fit-on is conducted with a roughly stitched suit affording leeway for both major or minor adjustments. “A tailor must be prepared to accommodate any wish of the client who may alter his opinion during a fit-on, on what the style of a suit ought to be,” states Cooray of a truly customer-centric service. Incidentally to this day, it is he who personally handles the orders, from taking the measurements, cutting to the fit-on stage and delivering the finished product. The tailor shop is able to produce a suit in 24 hours, so that the busy client who is pressed for time may avail of the services at KIITO.

Aside from tailoring suits, pants, waistcoats, jackets and winter jackets, tailoring is also done for ladies clothing such as skirts, pants and jackets. “Skilled tailors are limited in Sri Lanka, but it is a very good niche market and rewarding profession if done properly,” says Damith Eranga Cooray who is a graduate of the Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. Tailoring for him is not simply business as usual, but a vocation combined with a passion to serve.

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