

Fashion Is Popular for Mass Customization

Fashion in particular appeals to consumers

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Thanks to factors like more efficient manufacturing, 3-D printing and ecommerce platforms, mass customization—the production of products that meet individual tastes—has become more mainstream. With just a click, shoppers can get simple monograms embroidered on hand towels or a custom blend of purple and lavender M&M's with their face printed on each candy.

According to an April 2018 [YouGov](#) survey, 26% of US consumers have personalized a product. Apparel and footwear (29%) as well as food and beverages (29%) were the most common categories for buying personalized items. Designing something for fun and showing creativity were drivers for both these categories, while standing out from other people was a motivation belonging solely to consumers customizing apparel and footwear.

US Internet Users Who Have Purchased a Personalized Product/Service, by Category, April 2018

% of respondents



Note: ages 18+; among the 26% of respondents who have purchased personalized products/services for themselves or someone else

Source: YouGov, "Made to Order: An analysis of US consumer perception towards personalization," June 11, 2018

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Shoes have become a popular medium for designer collaborations and limited edition launches, as well as a canvas for buyer creativity. On the streetwear and athletic side, brands like Vans and Nike allow users to choose from a selection of different materials and colors to build a sneaker to their liking, while on-demand fashion companies like Shoes of Prey offer a seemingly infinite choice of style, heel height, leathers and fabrics for women's footwear.

It's hard to say if fashion is a category that naturally lends itself to customization, or if there is simply more opportunity to customize apparel and footwear. Either way, retailers are tapping into that experience.

YouGov identified characteristics separating fashion "personalizers" from those who personalize other products. For example, 53% of personalizers agreed with the statement "I keep up with current fashion trends" compared with 30% of others. This group also likes to stand out more, spends more on clothing and stays on top of emerging music artists.

In other words, younger consumers. Among those ages 18 to 24, 37% had personalized an item of clothing, as did one-third of those ages 35 to 49. That figure drops to 18% for 50- to 64-year-olds.

Nearly half of so-called personalizers would be willing to pay more for personalization, while consumers who have customized fashion are even more willing to pay for the privilege; 67% said they would pay a premium.

Technology products ranked third for customization (27%) in the YouGov study. And according to a March 2018 survey by [Protolabs](#), an on-demand production company, there is pent-up demand for customized devices. More than eight in 10 US adults thought the idea of being able to customize electronics like smartphones, tablets, notebooks and cameras was appealing. These consumers wanted both utilitarian and aesthetic choices, including types of connectivity and color of device exteriors and accessories.

However, only 16% of interested customers thought that companies would be able to deliver on customized products.