Why has the growing popularity of Prêt become a style-statement for the fashion-conscious women, on the streets of Karachi?

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Abstract

Ready-to-wear clothes, commonly known as Prêt have become quite the style statement for the fashion conscious women, of Karachi. This is mainly due to the fact that these women want to save time, as well as look stylish without having to spend too much, and without having to go through too much hassle. Over the past few years, with the advent of Prêt, Karachi has become a more fashionable city than it used to be. And it is all thanks to designers who are taking the initiative to sell their designs at more affordable rates, to the masses, and not just to particular classes of the society.
1.0 Introduction

The growing popularity of Prêt\(^1\) has played a pivotal role in Pakistan, especially on the streets of Karachi. Besides making our women fashion-conscious, it has also played an important part in grooming our men.

In recent years, Karachi has gone through a whole transformation. Not just in its infrastructure\(^2\) but the people themselves have been changed. There has been a big change in the local fashion. It is not just the people, who belong to the affluent\(^3\) socio-economic status, who are fashion conscious anymore; it is most of us on the streets. From the top businesswomen of the city, to the middle class workingwomen, everyone has become more fashion smart. The streets have become savvier\(^4\), and the women even more so.

Have the women become fashionable because of the growing popularity of Prêt? If yes, how? And why is it that women prefer Prêt to the life-long custom, of going to the tailors? Why has is become a style-statement? For us, Pakistanis, it has mostly been about getting our clothes custom made by the local tailors. A concept that is quite common amongst the masses of Pakistan. Then why has Prêt suddenly become a trend? And why is it that over the time, with the growing range of Prêt stores being opened in our city, people have started accepting this new “trend”? Is it because of the fact that buying Prêt is much easier, than getting clothes stitched by the tailor? The

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\(^1\)Ready-to-wear designer clothes

\(^2\) The basic physical and organizational structures and facilities (e.g., buildings, roads, and power supplies) needed for the operation of a society and enterprise.

\(^3\) Wealthy

\(^4\) Knowledgeable in the realities of life
women these days strongly believe that Prêt saves time. Their motto being, ‘Rather than going through the hassle of dealing with tailors and bazaars; why not buy something stylish that is ready to wear?’

Pakistan has a growing number of designers who are venturing into Prêt. Some of the big names being: Deepak Perwani, Kamiar Rokni, Maria.B, and Maheen Khan. Other new designers like Mina Hasan are also following suit, but what she does is formal Prêt.

The one label that has been in this field for the longest is Tee Jays. They have been in the market for over more than a decade, and are considered the pioneer of Prêt in Karachi.

Previously, fashion in Karachi was only limited to a few people. But now it has stretched to most parts of our city, thanks to the concept of ‘ready-to-wear’ clothes. With the introduction of new high street Prêt stores in Karachi, a connection to fashion has finally been formed. Stores like Generation, Sheep, Khaadi, Ego, Threadz, all produce ready-to-wear clothes that are modern and affordable to many. Designers who have been in this line for a long time are still producing new designs; fashion is eternal. Even the brand Tee Jays has started their modern yet traditional line for our fashion savvy women.
These brands cater to the modern day women, who value quality and style. The designs being produced in these stores are modern and fresh, with the added bonus of being affordable. The trendy yet traditional clothes being designed are a hit amongst the masses. The new up-coming fashion trends, and the concept of being ‘one of the firsts’ to wear what is “in”, all play a major role in making our women fashion savvy.

This report aims to provide a simple understanding of Prêt and how it has changed the meaning of fashion on the streets of Karachi. It also involves a thorough analysis of why Prêt has become a style-statement for the fashion conscious women of our city.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The first and the current chapter is the introduction. It briefly explains the topic, the aim and purpose of this dissertation, and also introduces the chapters that this research consists of.

The second chapter of this dissertation is the Literature Review, and it consists of various articles related to Prêt, and its popularity in our city.

The third chapter is the Research Methodology. This discusses the research methods that were taken for this dissertation.

The fourth chapter is Findings, which includes interviews, discussions, and reviews.
The last and the final chapter is the conclusion. It focuses on the aim of the dissertation, and the final analysis reached after going through all the chapters.
2.0 Literature Review

Out of the wide range of articles available, almost all of them discuss the growing popularity of Prêt in our city. While studying the relevant literature to this report I discovered that Prêt has created quite a niche for itself in Karachi. I came across a collection of essays that elaborate on Prêt, and how, as Maliha Rehman puts is, is taking over the Pakistani women’s wardrobe.

2.1 ‘Prêt-à-porter woman’ by Maliha Rehman

As said by Maliha Rehman in her article, Prêt-a-porter woman: Ready-to-wear Prêt is taking over the Pakistani women’s wardrobe.

There are a number of women who still prefer going to their tailors, over buying Prêt clothes. Women who fall into this category are mostly housewives who, unlike businesswomen, have plenty of time at their disposal, and can afford to endlessly browse through different bazaars, and spend time mulling over different fabrics and laces.

The article “Prêt-à-porter woman” by Maliha Rehman (DAWN | April 3, 2011) is as the name suggests based on Prêt. The writer paints a perfect picture of how it is with the majority of Pakistani women. Their frequent trips to the bazaars, and the daily *darzi ke chakkars*⁵.

‘Standing in the narrow and often congested tailor shops, they spend hours mulling over designs, bargaining over stitching costs and squabbling over the final outcome of

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⁵Urdu words, meaning frequent rounds to the tailor.
their efforts. Pointing out how the tailor has invariably taken their fabric and turned it into a complete fashion catastrophe, they rant, rave, and send in the clothes for alteration. The tailor, in his claustrophobic corner, smiles smugly. For these ladies-regular clients of his- may complain and protest but ultimately, they have no choice but to come to him and wait as long as it takes until he deigns to have their clothes ready.’

In this tailor/client relationship, the tailor knows that he has the upper hand. No matter how loyal the client, the tailor knows how to keep them under his power.

‘Such is the power that tailors have and quite often, they misuse it mercilessly. With stitching styles getting more complicated- shirts with multiple panels and embroidered borders are still all the rage- tailors charge astronomical prices for their labour. Brandishing their sinister scissor blades, they cut, sew, and make a few bungling mistakes here and there. And they do all this at a languid pace, unconcerned that the clothes, promised to be ready within a week, could be delayed by a month or so.’

Going through this hassle is, as said by Maliha Rehman, ‘a painful process’. But with the growing number of women coming towards Prêt, women have become not so helpless any more. A lot of women in our society have jobs, or their own businesses. And going to the tailors is just not feasible6 for them, thus comes in Prêt- the ray of hope in their busy lives.

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6Something that is possible to do easily or conveniently.
Well-known designer Maria B. says, “A lot of women work now and they don’t have the time nor the patience to spend hours over making clothes. But they still do want to dress stylishly. For these women, comfortable, affordable ready-to-wear is the easiest route to take. This year, I decided to include ready-to-wear lawn suits at my outlets. I had noticed that my friends would be complaining that tailors took ages to stitch their lawn suits. This way, women wanting to wear designer lawn but with no time to set about getting it stitched, could simply just buy it off the rack. All the stitched clothes in my outlet, as well as in other shops, are available in a number of sizes, designed it suit women with varying physiques.”

There are many designers with similar sets of thoughts, who have ventured into Prêt keeping just that in mind. But even if they don’t admit it, Prêt is also a very quick way of making money. When the demand for something is very high, it is more likely to sell, and bring profit.

The article by Maliha Rehman, further discusses Shamoon Sultan’s take on Prêt. Shamoon Sultan of ‘Khaadi’, agrees with the growing popularity of Prêt in Karachi. He too discusses that with the addition of stitched kurtas and shirts, in his shops, he has gained more clientele. After realizing that these were a hit amongst the women, Shamoon delved more into it, with a wider variety of embellishments.

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A loose, collarless shirt worn by people of the sub-continent.
In Shamoon Sultan’s words, “We noticed that the dressier women’s apparel sold very well. We began to include more stitching styles, embroideries, and borders. At one time, we had nine plain stitched kurtas, and one fancy shirt; today the ratio in our women’s ready-to-wear line-up has become the complete opposite, with nine fancy shirts for every one simple kurta.”

He also mentions the fact that the age bracket for Khaadi’s Prêt customers usually ranges from teenage girls to women in their late thirties.

The article also discusses designer Huma Adnan’s take on Prêt. Huma Adnan of FnkAsia believes that older women who are not big fans of Prêt at this point, will eventually come around to the idea. She has customers who are in their 60s who, she says, feel comfortable buying their clothes off the rack. “If a woman enjoys fashion, it doesn’t matter what age she is. She will, of course, want to buy well-stitched, fashionable clothes from a trustworthy designer label. Besides, even a lot of older Pakistani women are working now. And working women usually just don’t want to deal with the hassle of getting their clothes stitched.”

As the writer points, the growing popularity of Prêt has led to the growth of a number of new designer labels. Maria B., Deepak Perwani’s D-Philosophy and Khaadi Khaas produce Prêt that is semi-formal, formal and for daily-wear. Whereas labels like
Daaman, Ego, Sheep, Generation, and Khaadi produce a greater range of casual and affordable Prêt.

The advent of Prêt in our fashion business hardly means the tailors will go out of business. As designer Kamiar Rokni puts it, “There will always be women who enjoy spending hours with the machine embroidery-wala’s and at the tailors but at the same time, there are plenty of housewives for whom clothes-making is a hobby.”

In summary to this article, clothes that are purchased off the rack, are not only well stitched and comfortable, but also cheap and reasonable, and affordable to many.

2.2 ‘Ready, steady, go’ by Hani Taha

This article, published on January 15, 2011 in the Express Tribune focuses on the buzz created by Prêt, in the past few years. Unlike other articles, this one mention that even thought Tee Jays was the pioneer of Prêt in the 1970s, there were other stores before it who catered to the middle-class. Stores such as: Bonanza, Sanaullah and Modern House. These stores have been selling ready-made eastern clothes for quite a while now.

In the past one-year, multiple Prêt stores have opened in Karachi, that caters to the elite and the affluent socio-economic people of our society. This “elite” class who up until the past year preferred customized tailor-made clothing, now prefers ready-to-wear clothes to it.
As Hani Taha puts it:

‘The eventual move away from the three piece shalwar kameez\(^8\) suit and the introduction of ‘separates’ lead to the initiation of Prêt. A separate ‘pant’ could now be teamed with a separate ‘shirt’ in the same manner that western clothing was mixed and matched to a range of permutations\(^9\) and combinations of clothing that made Prêt the rage that it is now. Even designers have come to the point where they understand the dexterity\(^10\), utility and efficacy\(^11\) of the concept and many such as Deepak Perwani, Maheen Khan, Kamiar Rokni, Maheen Karim amongst a host of others have followed suit.’

According to the writer, thanks to fashion weeks, it has become easier to pick on trends. Without losing their signature style, retailers should be able to translate these trends into their designs.

Unlike the previous article, this one believes that stores like Generation are more Prêt than some of our other fashion houses. It also believes that the power of Prêt is so much that big designer labels like Labels and Ensemble are also following suit, to match the trends.

But these big stores are not, as the writer puts “making a connection with fashion like they should”. She also points out the fact that if these designers are getting front seats to fashion weeks, they should be amongst the first ones to follow the trends, which they are not being very successful in doing.

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\(^8\) A pair of light, loose, pleated trousers tapering to a tight fit around the ankles, worn by women from the subcontinent, typically with a kameez.

\(^9\) A way, esp. one of several possible variations, in which a set or number of things can be ordered or arranged

\(^10\) Skill in performing tasks, esp. with the hands.

\(^11\) The ability to produce desired or intended result.
In Hani Taha’s own words, “Brand such as Ego, that has arguably spear headed the Prêt movement by providing modestly priced clothing for working women, are also not evolving ‘fashionably’. The brand has a signature design palette with bold motifs and straight fuss free cuts that became its claim to fame, and has now begun to delve into slightly more formal wear, yet its association with high fashion remains limited at best. “I used to be a huge Ego fan,” says Madiha, a sales executive, “But now their designs have become a bit too bold, bordering on odd and they don’t offer a variety of cuts.”

‘Ego nonetheless has been a success story that has boosted and compelled others such as pastel pretty offerings by Sheep and a line of savvy clothing by Daaman, to follow. While Sheep is sticking to its guns for simple structured clothing in a sophisticated design and color palette, it has managed to carve a niche for itself with women who have a sedate\(^\text{12}\) design sense. Lately they have started a line of slinky\(^\text{13}\) tops perfect for a soiree or a party priced slightly higher than their average, but their designs can compete with any international label offering similar party wear. The contention with Sheep however is that its price points are much higher averaging at about Rs3000 and as Saman, who works in a bank says, “Some of their designs such as the spaghetti straps and halters cannot be worn to work.”

\(^{12}\)Calm, dignified.

\(^{13}\)Graceful in movement, line, or figure.
A brand that has made a successful transition at all fronts is Daaman. Not only has it marketed itself exceedingly well via Facebook but has now launched a gift card worth Rs2000 which is ingenious since an average garment at Daaman fluctuates between Rs2000 and Rs2400. Daaman’s unique selling proposition lies in how quickly it picks up on fashion trends such as the season’s hottest *churidaar*\(^{14}\) sleeves, and offers a variety of cuts and silhouettes. The brand has effectively picked up on the manner in which fashion is evolving in the country: moving away from embellishment towards an emphasis on cuts, drapes and styling of a garment – a lesson that other retail stores need to pick up and fast.’

All in all, this article focuses more on the different Prêt stores in Karachi, rather than Prêt as one. It is about how each of these stores has made its niche in the fashion business of our city.

### 2.3 ‘A Pakistani Designer’s Prêt-à-porter Line’ by Rumana Husain

Dating back to September 24, 2008, this article is about one of the most well known Pakistani fashion designers, Amir Adnan. He is one of the few designers who have a vast clientele of ordinary people as well as celebrities and high-level statesmen. Some of them being: Pakistan’s ex-President Pervez Musharraf, former Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee, President of Afghanistan- Hamid Karzai, Prime Minister of Mauritius- Paul Bringel, Crown Prince of Bahrain, and former Pakistani Prime Minister- Shaukat Aziz.

\(^{14}\)Urdu word for gathers or pleats.
This team of husband and wife (Huma Adnan, of Fnk Asia), has been very successful in their business, and has achieved a lot of respect from fellow designers and their loyal clientele.

According to this article, Amir Adnan started his brand almost eighteen years ago, and after Tanveer Jamshed of Tee Jays, is the second fashion designer to be awarded the Pride of Performance award by the Pakistani government.

Rumana Husain has added an article by Sabrina F Ahmad, which is part of an interview conducted by the latter.

The interview is that of Amir Adnan and he has quoted, “See this Punjabi coat? It's got that sherwani\textsuperscript{15} -style high collar, but opens up in the front, and you wear another kurta underneath it. It's a look that will give you the Matrix feel without departing from the Sub-continental tradition.”

And, “I seriously think this [the Sub-Continent] is the next fashion capital. Previously, we lacked the technology, but we've got it now, and we've got something else, a rich cultural and traditional heritage. You know how desi\textsuperscript{16} fast food is so popular abroad? A burger made by an Indian or a Pakistani would taste different because it has that extra masala to it; not too over the top, but still spicy, and with that exotic taste that makes Europeans and Americans go crazy over them? It's the same with our fashion. We have the scope to be trendy and metropolitan, and still adhere to our traditions.”

\textsuperscript{15}A knee-length coat; buttoning to the neck, and worn by men from the Indian subcontinent.

\textsuperscript{16}Local, indigenous
3.0 Research Methodology

Conducting research for this topic was not as difficult as I had initially thought it would be. As Karachi has a wider range of Prêt stores as compared to other cities of Pakistan, this task was not as tough as assumed.

3.1 Secondary Research

To get to learn more on Prêt, I sought my initial information online. Simply typing the word Prêt in the search engine brought up related information on the subject. This information was very important in context with articles that are available online. And helped provide an outline on what is already available on the subject.

Many of the well-known brands have their own websites, with photos of their work and collections posted on them. With the advent of Facebook, there are many designers who now upload their work on their pages, along with pictures of their work, updates on their new creations, and feedback from fans and customers. This was quite helpful in identifying the popularity of these brands, and what the public’s perspective is towards such stores.

As I could not get my hands on newspaper clippings, finding these articles on the newspaper websites was also a big help.

3.2 Primary Research

The fundamental research was conducted by visiting the Prêt stores in different areas of the city. Stores such as Exclusive and Tee Jays covered the Tariq Road and
Bahadurabad area. Zamzama Boulevard is home to stores such as Sheep, Daaman, Generation, Khaadi, and Khaadi Khaas. More research was carried out at Park Towers, which houses designer, Deepak Perwani’s outlet. Prêt stores like Cotton Ginny and ReDefyn, which are not very well known amongst the masses, also produce ready-to-wear clothes suitable for the fashion-conscious women.

Since little research is found on the general public’s view on Prêt, and almost none on why Prêt has become a style-statement for the fashion-conscious women of Karachi, I had to speak to Karachiite personally. Therefore, for a more detailed perception, I carried out surveys at some of the, above-mentioned, stores. Where, I believe, the designers sell a sense of their own style. Thus, sharing their fashion with the masses. I also took to the streets, interviewing random people on the roads, and in bazaars like Aashiana, Kehkashan, Rabi Centre. I also stopped and asked a few Prêt-related questions to shoppers at malls like Park Towers, and Dolmen Mall.

I intended to interview the Pakistani fashion giant Mr. Tanveer Jamshed of Tee Jays, to find out his background, his source of inspiration, and his reason for bringing Prêt to the masses. I wanted to know his thoughts, and why he believed in bringing a revolution to the Pakistani fashion scene through Prêt. But for some reason, I was unable to get through to him. As luck would have it, instead of him, I got to interview his daughter and heir to Tee Jays, Feeha Jamshed.
4.0 Findings and Discussions

With the advent of Prêt wear in our city at its peak, I decided to carry out my dissertation on exactly that- the growing popularity of Prêt, on the streets of Karachi. Our city is ranked as one of the biggest metropolises in the world. And I believe, that if a city has made that big of a name for itself then it is our responsibility as its citizens to make its name more prominent in the world. And what better way to do that than through fashion? Don’t they say that the kind of clothes we wear is a reflection of our personality? And who better to interview than the pioneers of Prêt in Pakistan, Tee Jays itself.

There are many designers in our society, and each of them is competing to sell their own style to the market. Some want their clothes to be exclusive, while others are out there to make sure that their style is accepted by the masses. These are the kind of designers who truly want the streets of Karachi to be fashion forward. I was lucky to get my hands on one such designer: Feeha Jamshed of Tee Jays.

I did not want to bombard the designer with hundreds of questions, so I narrowed them down to a few related to my topic, and her background. I started off with the basics, the educational background, and a formal fashion education that might have helped taking her career forward. After receiving a negative on that one, I asked if she felt that a formal fashion education is important for any future designer.

Feeha Jamshed is the girl next door. And like most of us, she did her O’ Levels from Foundation Public School, Karachi. Her A’ Levels from Lyceum, and 3 years of business education from CBM. Her take on the business education was a bit disheartening because she felt that ‘schools here should actually teach education that’s pertaining to our economy, rather than a Western economy in mind.’
‘This is because when you are graduating, because of what you have been taught, you will be more aggressive towards the nature of our own economy rather and then get disappointed with it.’

Lucky for us this designer, after dropping out of CBM, went to PSFD, to pursue a career in fashion design. There she did a year of fashion education, but had to come back due to her father’s illness, which also meant that she had to look after his business- Tee Jays.

When asked what fashion meant to her, and how she would describe fashion on the streets of Karachi. The young designer said that fashion, to her, is an expression of one’s style. “The word fashion means common, actually.”

According to her, its changing now because a lot of designers are coming into Prêt. The young designer feels that ‘Prêt in Pakistan is very high-end and should be steered towards the retail side’.

She is not shy, in saying that Tee Jays is the only business that does creative retail, along with affordable prices. “No other business has done that.” She points out that there is Khaadi that does retail, but it is Khaadi Khaas that does the creativity. And if both become one, then there can be Tee Jays. According to Feeha, Tee Jays has been on the ramp, created fashion, ‘actually created trends’. And has also allowed their customers to afford it. Success, for this
young designer, is when she ‘bridges the two gaps of society’.

As she says, “When I see someone who is an elite, wearing the same jumpsuit as someone who is a technician in a channel. Two different incomes of society coming onto one platform and wearing the same thing, is success for me. When I bridge two gaps.”

When asked about her source of inspiration, the designer said that the person who has always been a source of inspiration to her is her mother. Growing up with someone who would ‘transform a simple outfit glamorously’ with the way she carried herself.

Feeha Jamshed is one of the top retail designers of our country, and she feels that the modern woman should take the traditional roots forward, rather than the other way round.

When asked how she felt about Prêt taking over the business of the local tailors, and if she felt that the growing popularity of Prêt was a threat to the local tailors, she mentioned that she considered tailors as her biggest competition. And that anyone who can copy designs off the runway could be considered competition. Fashion should be on the streets, for any country to be considered fashionable. And for that the prices for retail should be affordable to the masses.
“My thing in fashion has always been about exporting the Pakistani cut on the global front, rather than importing western cuts.”

I believe that in order to bridge gaps between the two sects of society, we need more designers who can produce creative clothes. Because half of us cant go abroad, we need fashion from our own country, to make us fashionable and trendy.

It’s high time that Textile and Fashion Design come together on one platform, and produce fashion that is acceptable in our society and that makes the streets of Karachi more fashionable.

One thing that I felt after interviewing Feeha Jamshed was that she has very strong aesthetics regarding our local fashion. I believe that if more designers start thinking like Feeha Jamshed, we will have a more fashionable Karachi in no time. And at, the end of the day, the work of the designer, is an extension of his or her style. So imagine what would happen if more stylish designers start coming into this field, with great designs and at even more affordable prices!

There are many articles online, related to Tee Jays’ work, and even more photos of their creations.

After the designer’s interview, I spoke to the locals on the streets- in malls, and bazaars. And as mentioned in the previous chapter, I carried out surveys, asking the general public’s view on why they now prefer Prêt.

My target market included girls from colleges and universities, housewives, and professional women- women in general.

My first question to these women was meant to estimate the popularity of designer-wear amongst them. A high acceptance to wear designer clothes would itself be an
indication towards the growth in popularity of Prêt. Surprisingly there were 47% who said that designer clothes did not matter to them but that they do prefer ready-to-wear over custom-made clothes, and the remaining 53% said that it’s not designer clothes that they go for, but whatever that is comfortable yet stylish, even if it means the continuous rounds of the tailor and the bazaars. As discussed by Maliha Rehman, in the Literature Review, there is majority of women who still prefer going to the tailors to Prêt.

Majority of the women that I interviewed, own at least two clothing items from the Prêt stores that I previously mentioned. And many of the girls that I interviewed, in colleges and universities, own at least four such items. When asked if it was the style of these brands that attracted these ladies to their clothes, or the mere thought of not hassling with their tailors, majority answered that it was actually both. Women these days prefer buying ready-to-wear outfits, because they say they can’t find extra time from their schedules to go buy the raw fabric, bring it home, shrink it, go to the bazaars again to find suitable trimmings, then go explain the desired outfits in the congested tailor shop. And if, god forbid, the outfit is not stitched as desired, throw it at the tailor’s face for alterations! They say, that it is much cheaper and easier for them to buy outfits from these brands, which are now considered ‘designer brands’, and of course much more fashionable!

Women these days, be it in school, colleges or universities, or in the corporate world, are fighting to climb the most stylish ladder. Even housewives, do not want to be left behind in this race of the stylish women. Every woman these days want to be in the “in” crowd. They dress better and better. One woman, at Aashiana, said that buying ready-made clothes from these brands has been very easy for her. She feels that by wearing these brands, you can look stylish without having to spend too much on
yourself. Another girl, from a private university, stated that the clothes, at stores like Sheep and Daaman, are very every-day yet very chic. ‘No one wants to wear laces, and too many trimmings anymore. There needs to be a balance. And what these stores do is provide just that. The right amount of trimmings with the already suitable dress, and there it is- a chic dress that you can wear any time of the day’.

Most of us, want to look like our idols. And in a country like Pakistan, where are so many stylish designers in the market, that our idols are none other than these women. And as mentioned earlier, a designer sells their own style to the people. So if, for example, Feeha Jamshed is out there wearing one of her own fashionable designs, then why wouldn’t the younger girls want to copy that? Of course the next thing they would do is rush to the stores and grab that very design, to wear to an upcoming party, and look stylish!

Many people also believe that Prêt is easy-money. Along with these designer brands, there are also many women and young girls who have started their own Prêt businesses. These businesses might not be as big as those that are already in the market, but they are selling good. And people are buying from such designers, because at the end of the day, all that matters is style, and which is now being sold in the market at very affordable rates.
5.0 Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to provide a simple understanding of Prêt and how over time, it has changed the meaning of fashion on the streets of Karachi. Over the past few years, women have started accepting the fact that there are other ways to get your desired clothes, than getting them stitched by the local tailors; but after having done a thorough survey on the streets, I came to the conclusion that there are still a great number of women in our society who believe in getting their clothes custom-made by their tailors. Even though their stats is greater than that of those willing to buy ready-to-wear clothes, I believe in a few years time there will be more women buying Prêt, than custom-made clothes.

In the light of the previous chapters, I have analyzed that not many women in our city are stylish. They might be fashion forward, but they lack style. And what Prêt stores, do is provide just that- they sell the designer’s style to the masses. And if a person looks up to a certain designer, then they are definitely going to want to buy their designs. It is due to this fact that most women these days are willing to buy what is being sold in Prêt stores in the city. And if more designers start coming with the sole purpose of not making money, but to spread style, then the streets of Karachi will become even more stylish than ever.
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• Figure


• Figure

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• Figure


• Figure

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• Figure 7:


• Figure 8:

I conducted an interview with Feeha Jamshed of Tee Jays. The idea was to find out what inspires the young designer, and her take on Pret. The following is the word-to-word version, which had earlier been edited in chapter 4, Findings and Discussions.

“I did my O Levels from Foundation Public School, and my A levels from Lyceum. I did 3 years of Business education from CBM. My take on the business education was a bit disheartening because I feel that schools here should actually teach education that’s pertaining to our economy because then when you are graduating they will be more aggressive towards the nature of our own economy rather than having a western economy in mind and then getting disappointed with the economy. After dropping out of CBM, I went to PSFD, which is now PIFD. Did one year of Fashion education then came back because my father was ill, so I had to look after his business.”

“What is fashion to me- something that is an expression of one’s style. The word fashion means common, actually. Well its changing now, because a lot of designers are coming into Prêt. Plus its also very high end, and I feel it should be coming more on the retail side. There is a difference. You know why because TeeJays is a very different model. We do creative retail. We have affordable prices. No other business model has done that. There is Khaadibut Khaadi does retail, but Khaadi Khaas does creativity. So the prices go up. But if Khaadi Khaas and Khaadi become one, then there can be Tee Jays. Same goes for Generation- makes fashion on the ramp, they necessarily don’t make their own
fashion. I feel Tee Jays has been on the ramp, created fashion, actually created trends. And then allowed the customers to afford it.”

“For me success is when I bridge two gaps of society. When I see someone who is an elite wearing the same jumpsuit as someone who is a technician in a channel. Two different incomes of the society coming into one platform and wearing the same thing is success for me. When I bridge two gaps.”

“My mother has always been my inspiration. I was growing up with a woman who would transform a simple outfit glamorously the way she carried herself. A modern woman should take the traditional roots forward, to make it modern.”

“For me my biggest competition would be tailors, not any other business model. And I am not being boastful about it. Anybody who copies designs off the runway could be competition.”

“For me its very hard and very tough to be creative at the same time, and as well as being affordable, because the profit margin is not as much. That’s my way of giving back to my country because I feel that fashion should be on the streets to make any country fashionable. You cannot just pertain to the trends. So Prêt now has started to increase why because my father’s vision was what Pakistan is forty years ago. So I feel if we had started this forty years ago and people had followed in his footsteps, we
would have been a very fashionable country. Its great to see how couture and Prêt, are going side by side and making it big in fashion.”

“My thing in fashion has always been not importing the western cut but to export the Pakistani cut on the global front. Like the ‘sharara’ pants. You can actually tuck them in in a shirt like a wide legged pant. So basically making everything into one, the whole Pakistani fashion should be exporting of Pakistani ideas on the global front. You don’t need to copy or import western ideas.

For my latest fashion show I did sharara cargos. You can wear them anywhere in the world. Some journalist took them abroad and emailed me saying, ‘Everyone’s just loving them here.’ You know the whole idea is to export, and it doesn’t mean that you have to make a pishwas to make it look Pakistani. I am proud and touched to have to know the fact that anyone wearing something from Tee Jays. It might not look Pakistani but the feeling that you get, you can only get it from Tee Jays. Not even Karl Lagerfeld, I can challenge Chanel. Because something he can’t do, I can, and what he can do I can do it better - because I haven’t seen cargo shararas on his ramp.”

“I made these shalwars that you can actually zip up. And you can make them pants. And you can even zip them halfway. They are pants that have volume. You’re actually downsizing your wardrobe. For me its’ having one item of clothing per season, and make it your own. Like take a kurta, you can tuck it in and make a boyfriend shirt, you can tuck it out make it a kurta. You can belt it, and you get a peasant shirt. Three ways of making one look.

17 A pair of loose, pleated trousers worn by women from the Indian subcontinent.

18 A loose frock, worn by women from the Indian subcontinent.
As I said, what Karl Lagerfeld can do, I can do it better. What I can do, Karl Lagerfeld had not thought of doing. I don’t think he came up with a *sharara* looking wide legged pants, he must have done wide legged. The whole idea is that where I come from, the east and west is a collaboration of both. That’s when you become global.”

“Our stocks are available at Labels, Saddar and Bahadurabad. And we put the same amount of stocks everywhere. We tell our customers to circulate. I introduce six designs. When the fashion week happened, you introduce about twenty designs, twenty different designs. If I do a spring and summer in November, that will only come in spring and summer, that wont come the next month. Yes, the variety of designs may not be there, but the stocks are definitely there.”

“Communication between you and your master (tailor) should be clear. We sample. I don’t do anything directly. I have to see samples.”

“My fashion show, my whole music was based on leaders, speeches and freedom-Quaid-e-Azam, Martin Luther King, Iqbal. Its all about knowing yourself, and discovering yourself every second of the day. Maybe I discovered it, maybe I continue discovering it. And God just helps me. It’s all God, because God is the most creative being, in the world, the universe. I mean you and I are testaments of that.”

“I have been designing from the age of 13, for a drama and officially for Tee Jays, for four years.”
“For me fashion designing is a platform, that I express my views on society. It could be what happens. All my collection is based on the social issues that we go through. And fashion designing has given me that platform to do so. And that is also interpreted in my clothes. If I say I will make designs on Pakistan, Tee Jays has designed on Pakistan it’s not something that I would make a 10000 outfit for. The whole idea is to gap the bridges, and also giving them what they deserve-creative clothes because half of us cannot afford to go abroad, every season. Or maybe four years down the line, you cant. So why not make Pakistan, so efficient. My whole idea is to give that to my country in fashion design.”

“I can make outfits not cloth. I would love to design prints. Even though, I have never done that. I would rather have a range of prints at TeeJays that are only sold at Tee Jays because that’s where the competition becomes exciting. Your prints are not repeated. Your customers and clientele becomes more and more loyal. You cannot get the same print on the same outfit. You might get the same prints but not the same outfit now.”

“Be yourself. Know yourself. Believe me- before anything else, you are the most amazing find or discovery of any being. You discover lots of things that you want to do. How you can differentiate between each designer is how you are or how you interpret your style. I make clothes that I know I wear. That’s my style that I’m actually selling. That’s not something that I know that this person will wear. I will make sure that I sell you my style. And mashaAllah I have been really successful in doing that because the jumpsuits were a big risk for me. But now they’ve been in
stocks like our ‘Awami’ suits. People are buying it left right and center, and that’s something I saw and I felt that okay I have a market and when your couture designers are actually taking inspiration from me that’s a big deal. It should be the other way around. It should be couture designers showing off at Milan and retail designers actually copying it. But couture designers are copying my stuff off the ramp.”

“My father’s been fighting for this cause, for 30 years of his life. And textile and fashion should come together on one platform. That doesn’t mean that Al-Karam makes you, or any other big designers, sell Al-Karam outfits. It’s like you actually coming on the same platform and saying,'Okay! Al-Karam or Gul Ahmed making TeeJays’ outfits that are going to be only sold at Tee Jays.’ Abroad that happens, you don’t see a Roberto Cavalli outfit in a Gucci store, or a Roberto Cavalli print in Pucci store. Their prints are different because they have that textile market. That can only happen if the government gives subsidies to our textile mills.”