

Fung Group: Menswear Prices Down By Nearly a Third

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Menswear sales will outpace the women's apparel business by 2017, a recent study by The Boutique @ Ogilvy projected, rising by 8.3% to hit \$110.3 billion, versus the 4.2% growth rate expected in womenswear. But that's not to say the segment is immune to the pricing pressures that befell the rest of the clothing market in recent years.

Fung Global Retail & Technology teamed up with First Insight, a merchant recommendation platform, to analyze the results of customer surveys on men's apparel conducted between 2013 and last month. Among the results announced at a "Breakfast With the Disruptors" panel discussion at [Project New York](#) on Monday was the discovery that menswear prices fell by 27.8% over the last three years.

The report, which focused on nine categories, 19 brands and more than 17,000 items in the men's apparel and accessories market at major retailers and wholesalers, found that underwear was the only category that saw an increase in average price in that time period, growing by 34 percent on average.

Meanwhile, accessories experienced the sharpest decline, with prices plunging 52.4%, followed by sweaters (-44.1%), swimwear (-39.6%) and woven tops (-34.9%). Knit tops, shorts and pants fell, too, with prices dropping by 39.7%, 39.2% and 14.3% respectively.

"These decreases are consistent with what we have seen in retail overall—continued downward pricing pressure due to fast fashion, value shopping, off-price offerings, cheaper labor and more efficient manufacturing processes," the report said, later noting, "Fast fashion, a search for value, off-price brands, outlets and consignment are all driving consumer prices down and changing the retail landscape."

Something that's also changing is what items men are actually willing to pay full price for. First Insight found that knit

tops, outerwear, shorts, sweaters, underwear and woven tops are all trending up, while consumers are much less ready to spend on accessories, pants and swimwear. Instead, they often wait for a promotion or sale event before purchasing an item in one of those categories.

Why, then, are men so game to buy underwear, given the fact that its prices have been inching up over the last three years? The report said it's down to an increasing number of brands entering the market and innovating in the areas of comfort, performance, fit and style.

But that's not to say there's no hope for other categories. First Insight said the number of accessories (think: belts, hats, scarves, sleepwear, socks and ties) that clients have requested it to test has more than doubled since 2013. And as men become increasingly clued-in to trends, the category can only flourish. Another reason it might thrive: e-commerce, because consumers can shop without having to worry about fit.