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## Get a make over for your wardrobe

For some, maxing out a credit card is child's play. But not everybody can waltz into a store and zero in on the one thing that deserves to be in their wardrobe, without breaking into a sweat. Luckily, there is a solution to this 'shopaphobia'.

A burgeoning crop of personal shoppers and bargain hunters who organise shopping tours are coming to the rescue of the aesthetically-challenged, whether it's orchestrating a complete wardrobe overhaul, or just scouting for the perfect party dress.

### One-on-one

Personal shopper Parul Shukla says that the current wedding season has seen business grow by leaps and bounds. "People usually shop for a formal occasion like a wedding, or an important party like a milestone birthday. They might be able to afford expensive clothes, but don't feel comfortable in high-end boutiques because the sales staff can be quite snooty," she explains. "When I'm there, I'm the one doing the talking, and since the staff at these places know me, the service improves."

Low self-confidence seems to be the main factor for people to turn to the services of a personal shopper. Teena Ahuja Kapoor, who has a large number of housewives between the ages of 28-60 come to her for make-overs, says, "They just want to be praised and be treated as the 'cool ones' in their friend circle."

Kapoor's offerings include make-up and styling tips, and she even takes them shopping for fabric before introducing them to her preferred tailors. "Most of the people that I bump into later have kept up to the look. They know spending money to have someone shop for you is not a joke."

The usual rates for a personal shopper start at Rs 1,000 per hour, and the areas they scour, whether street stalls or high-end designer boutiques, depend on the client's requirements.

### Group offers

For those who consider shopping a social exercise, here's a way to discover new bazaars and enhance your wardrobe. Sale-smart entrepreneurs now offer specialised tours, which focus on everything from gold hunts to sari scouting. "We usually cater to foreigners, but also welcome locals who're interested in having an expert guide them around famous bazaars," says Kunal Vahalia, of Namaste City Tour, adding, "We conduct about 10 tours a month, with no limit on the minimum number of people required."

Kanika Kapur of My Mumbai Shopping allows clients to select options from an online list of boutiques even before they begin the tour. She creates hunts for requirements as niche as finding the right scarf, with a chauffeur-driven car included.