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With the men's clothing market growing at a faster rate than womenswear, it makes sense that more and more retailers are expanding their menswear lines and opening standalone menswear stores.

As the ninth instalment of London Collections: Men kicked off in June, the British Fashion Council announced plans to rename the biannual event 'London Fashion Week Men's' in a bid to make it more consumer facing. 'LCM has grown to be the best menswear club in the world,' said LCM chairman Dylan Jones at the opening event. 'As fashion weeks change and our businesses start showing to consumers, we need to open our doors to more consumer facing content, both here and international markets to support this move. Over the next six months LCM will embrace London Fashion Week Men's as a title to better engage with a consumer audience.'

The news came at the same time as Mintel released key figures showing that the menswear market is continuing to grow at a faster rate than womenswear.

According to the 2016 menswear report, the men's clothing market grew by 4.1 per cent to reach £14.1 billion in 2015, up from £11.4 billion in 2010. By 2020, this figure is expected to reach £17.2 billion.

'In response to men showing a greater interest in their appearance, retailers are expanding menswear ranges, and more designers are debuting men's clothing collections,' says Tamara Sender, senior fashion analyst at Mintel. 'As a result, the menswear market is reaping the rewards and growing at a faster rate than womenswear. However, as spend on clothing is increasingly competing with other areas, clothing retailers will have to work harder than ever to encourage men to part with their money. Tactics such as focusing on more stylish clothes for all ages, offering a wider range of larger sizes,

and combining retail with leisure to create destination shopping venues should prove successful for retailers moving forward.'

Earlier this year, Harvey Nichols unveiled its new menswear department following an extensive nine-month refurbishment. Located on the two lower ground floors of the store, the space moves away from the traditional shop-in-shop format and instead features a collection of specialised boutiques, including contemporary, international designers, off-duty, denim and tailoring, and accessories. It also incorporates a cafe, barbers and a new concept space housing the latest in gifts, technology, sunglasses and fragrance, as well as a curated series of installations and pop-ups.

Martin Reid, innovation researcher at GDR Creative Intelligence, believes that as more men embrace finding and honing their own personal style, further menswear store designs will reflect this yearning for individuality and exclusivity with more cultish, narrative-rich in-store details. In addition to the new menswear destination at Harvey Nichols, Reid cites KITH's NoHo expansion in New York, which treats its products like exhibits in an art gallery. 'The streetwear brand uses culturally significant design cues, such as wall hooks shaped like hands, and a ceiling installation of Nike Air Jordan shoes from the 80s, that only its select urbane customer base would recognise and appreciate. As well as expressing the brand's cultish values, these playful and polarising in-store details help customers build affinity and emotionally invest with KITH's products.'

American menswear retailer Bonobos, which launched in 2007 as an online-only





to strengthen its relationship with its customers. The store design takes a more masculine approach to materials and finishes, including blackened raw steel, wired glass with rusted steel, raw and polished concrete, and leather and aged copper details.

With the men's clothing market growing at a faster rate than womenswear, it makes sense for New Look, which is heavily biased towards womenswear, to focus more on its men's offering, claims Sender. 'The opening of standalone menswear stores and a revamping of its menswear departments in its mixed stores will help.'

In February, fashion label Joseph opened its first standalone menswear store, on London's historic Savile Row, and in March Whistles launched its first dedicated menswear store, in the heart of Shoreditch as the brand builds on the success of its menswear business.

The UK is now the global leader in men's fashion,' states Julie Oxberry, founder and MD at Household Design. 'Men around the world are buying from UK brands online and traveling to the UK to shop. In addition, the men's lifestyle sector is growing with a seemingly increased awareness between the link of looking good and achieving success.

'It could be said the resurgence of craftsmanship throughout the whole fashion industry has played a part,' adds Oxberry. 'Brands with strong heritage, quality and a Savile Row-esque heritage are all doing well, suggesting that men are willing to pay more and are investing in good style.'

Reid believes that the sophistication of omnichannel retail is the main accelerator

Top: The new menswear department at Harvey Nichols features 270 brands, a Style Concierge Suite, a contemporary cafe, a traditional barbers and a concept space called Project 109.

Left: The menswear floor at Michael Kors on Regent Street features custom seating and a full-size pool table.

Below left: Whistles opened its first dedicated menswear store in March, in the heart of Shoreditch.

Bottom left: New Look opened its first standalone menswear store in 2015 as the company looks to strengthen its relationship with its customers.

brand, is currently making waves in the US with its so-called 'Guideshop'. The concept store enables customers to browse the entire Bonobos assortment (while enjoying a beer), find the perfect fit and then place an order for free home delivery.

'More stores are treating their products as metaphors for a bigger lifestyle experience,' continues Reid. 'Retailers such as Ted Baker and Bonobos anchor the customer journey in fulfilling and complementing their customers' lifestyles, whether by the way they arrange their merchandise, zone the physical space or how they encourage staff to interact and get to the root of customers' needs.'

Last year, high street fashion retailer New Look opened its first standalone menswear stores as the company looks

of growth in the men's clothing market. 'Thanks to the variety of subscription services, personal shopping solutions and even in-store technologies facilitating discovery, curation and customisation, shoppers are less afraid to approach the category and they can find what they are looking for more easily,' he notes.

'For the most part, men are still functional shoppers,' claims Reid. '[But], with the right retail logistics in place, more men will be seeing shopping as a charm rather than a chore.' **Rf**