

Why Is Finding a Low MOQ Clothing Manufacturer So Hard



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Clothing manufacturers set high minimum order quantities because dye lots, print set-ups, colour-by-size minimums and sampling all cost the same whether you order 50 pieces or 500. Low MOQ makers exist, but they charge more per piece. This post explains the causes and how to find a low MOQ maker through fairs, careful online search, visits or a sourcing partner.

The Short Version

- The MOQ is mostly set before the fabric reaches the factory, by dye vat batch sizes and print screens.
- Every colour in every size is its own minimum, so cut colours before you cut quantity.
- Buyers report about 200 to 500 pieces per style at established Indian knitwear factories, about 100 at small units and 1,000 from traders.
- Low MOQ makers take small orders but charge more per piece.
- Ask which company holds each certificate, since a trader's certificate covers the trader, not the factory.

Recently started an eCommerce brand and looking to directly source your stock from a manufacturer? If you've done your research, you must know it's almost impossible to find a manufacturer that doesn't have minimum order quantity (MOQ) restrictions.



Typically, manufacturers have high minimum order quantities. And businesses with a low budget struggle with finding **clothing manufacturers with no minimum order**. But are the high MOQ restrictions just a way for greedy factory owners to make money? Or is there an actual reason behind it?

Keep reading to know why you can't easily find a low MOQ clothing manufacturer and some tips on finding the right one for your business!

1. How Clothing Factories Operate

To understand why clothing manufacturers have high MOQs, you need to know precisely how they work.

First things first: factories aren't your local tailor's shop. You can't expect them to stitch a suit entirely and then add buttons or pocket squares to it

later once everything is done. That's because, in factories, every process occurs in an orderly chain. If any element of the process goes haywire, the entire process is disrupted.

Having said that, there are some other critical things about cloth manufacturers that are the root cause of high MOQs.

2. Why Clothing Manufacturers Set High MOQs

As a new business owner in the roughly 1.7 trillion dollar fashion industry (Euromonitor's 2021 figure, as quoted by FashionUnited), you need to be aware of some standard practices followed by manufacturers everywhere. These practices are the reason why factories have high MOQ requirements. Check them out below!

1. There's Plenty of Hidden Work

You might think manufacturing clothes is just about taking the fabric and stitching it into the desired shape. But that's not true when you consider a full-fledged cloth factory.

The process starts with taking a fabric, dyeing it in specific colours, finding the right threads, and finally stitching it. That is why, every time you order a new colour variant of the same design, the manufacturer has to repeat the entire process from scratch.



For example, as a small business owner, you might be looking for ways to skip or adjust the MOQ requirement. Often, you might think of meeting the requirement by ordering different colours of the same pattern. But the reason a factory will deny your request is that the process of making the cloth will include the same amount of work for the manufacturer.

Here's the part I didn't spell out when I first wrote this - the MOQ is mostly decided before the fabric ever reaches the factory. A dye house runs its vat at a fixed batch size, and below that it won't dye your shade at all. The screens for a print cost the same for 50 pieces as for 500. And every colour in every size is its own little minimum, so four colours in five sizes is twenty minimums, not one. Small custom fabric only really works in yarns the mill already has in stock, what mill people call "dyeables" (an industry explainer and mill-side voices on trade forums, 2025 to 2026). If you want a lower MOQ then cut colours before you cut quantity. A maker who "can't go below 500" across four colourways will often take 300 in one.

2. A High Order Quantity Makes Manufacturers Efficient

The way factories increase their profit margins is by making themselves more efficient. And one of the best ways to do that is getting used to what they're making.

Think of it this way: if you're asked to draw an apple for the first time in your life, you'll be slow and careful with your drawing. But if you're asked to draw 100 apples on 100 sheets of paper, you might be slow with the first few drawings, but you'll soon get used to it and gain speed.



The same happens with factory workers as well. If they have to manufacture just 100 shirts, they don't get enough time to become used to work before the order finishes. And with every new design involving such a low order quantity, they will be equally slow. This reduces the overall efficiency of the factory and makes their margins less.

In the case of large orders, however, the workers become used to the process within a few days and start working almost machine-like. This leads to more work done by every worker per day and, in turn, the better overall efficiency of the factory.

3. They Don't Have Time to Teach New Buyers

The internet has blessed us with a sea of information on almost everything imaginable. As a result, people who have done their online research think they know all they need to. As an apparel startup founder, you might think so too.

However, the real world doesn't operate as you were taught on YouTube or TikTok. People are selfish, do not like to waste time, and business is all about growth and revenue. And as a new business owner, you will need to learn all this the hard way. But factory owners or manufacturers aren't the people who'll train you.

For example, as a new business owner, you might not know the work that goes into stitching an extra button on a shirt you ordered. And instead of explaining that to you, the factory owner would refuse to take an order fearing such requests.

They simply don't have the time to tell you how things work. They also don't want the financial and logistical risks of working with someone inexperienced. As a result, many reputed clothing manufacturers have a no-startup policy under which they refuse to make deals with new business owners.



4. Sampling Is Effectively Free Work

Before you become a good client for a manufacturer, you'll take time to sample their pieces. And even though you might be paying for the samples, your manufacturer is doing more work than you think.

The samples are effectively free work because they don't make any profits unless you order bulk quantities.

Many manufacturers don't like this burden. They prefer taking bulk orders because they look to make profits on every order.

In India, at least, most makers ask for the sample to be prepaid, and buyers on trade forums say the same (2023 to 2026). The experienced ones often send it free and charge only the courier once they think you're serious. So sample fewer styles, with more care, and the whole argument about sample fees mostly goes away.

3. What You Can Do If You Don't Meet the MOQ

Even though you now understand high MOQs, you might still not have the budget to meet the requirements. So what do you do in that case? Keep reading to find out.

For what it's worth, buyers on trade forums (2024 to 2026) report about 200 to 500 pieces per style at established Indian knitwear factories, about 100 at small units, and 1,000 from traders. Those are what people report, not a rule. The next factory will differ.

Who makes it	Reported MOQ per style
Established Indian knitwear factory	About 200 to 500 pieces
Small unit	About 100 pieces
Trader	About 1,000 pieces

1. Be Professional in Your Approach

Before you speak to a clothing manufacturer, get advice from someone experienced in the industry. They'll teach you more about why the MOQ limits are in place and help you find the right way to talk to a manufacturer.

You can always hire an experienced professional for this. Another way could be approaching industry leaders over the phone or by email and setting up meetings to pick their brains. Most of them might not have the time, but you will still find a few ready to help.

Once you have understood the industry well, make a list of things you're looking for in your sourcing company. When you talk to manufacturers, be clear about your expectations. And instead of sounding confused about what you want to order, be confident. Ask questions that don't have obvious

answers, and let the manufacturer know how serious you are about business.

2. Build Enough Rapport to Have the Rules Bent for You

We break or bend the rules all the time for people we love. The same is true for manufacturers too. If you establish a good rapport with a manufacturer, they might be more willing to give your low MOQ order a shot.

Remember, you're working with people, not machines. If you've built a valuable connection with a factory owner, they would not mind taking risks for you. That's simply because they trust your work ethic.

So it's always important to work closely with experienced professionals in your industry and build a strong network involving them. As you try to pave your path, they'll be more willing to help you.

Some excellent ways to build connections include interning with or working at factories. Even if you aren't familiar with stitching basics, you can look for marketing or business development positions within the manufacturing firm. Your purpose is to gain experience and build meaningful relationships.

4. Pros and Cons of Low MOQ Clothing Manufacturers

Working with a low MOQ clothing manufacturer comes with its fair share of pros and cons. And you must know what these are.



The Benefits of Working With Low MOQ Manufacturers

1. They Work With Startups and New Business Owners

Naturally, low MOQ clothing manufacturers do not refuse to work with new business owners. That's because their main clients are startup owners with zero to little experience.

2. They Don't Require a Large Financial Commitment

This is the most obvious benefit of working with a low MOQ manufacturer. Such manufacturers, often also called custom clothing manufacturers, take small orders. This means that you don't need to spend exorbitantly just to get your first few stocks in.

The Downsides of Working With Low MOQ Manufacturers

1. The Cost per Piece Is High

Going with low MOQ clothing manufacturers for startups might seem appealing, but there's a huge downside. Such factories charge more for producing fewer items. So even though it looks like you're spending less, you're effectively spending more for less.

Since your cost price is going to be high, you'll have to keep your selling price high too. Doing this might even put you at a disadvantage in the market when it comes to competition.

5. How and Where to Find a Low MOQ Clothing Manufacturer

Explore Trade Fairs

Trade fairs are an excellent way to find low MOQ clothing manufacturers from around the world. International trade fairs are organised almost everywhere these days. You can check for one in your nearest city, and we keep a list of [trade fairs](#) with dates, including [India's fairs](#) and what each one offers visiting buyers.

In most such trade fairs, clothing factory owners are present with their samples. You can check out their rates, shipping times, and general samples thoroughly. Since many of these manufacturers are from countries like India, China, Bangladesh, etc., where labour costs are low, there are high chances you'll find the right low MOQ manufacturer at a reasonable price.

Internet Search

A Google search might be the simplest way to find a low MOQ manufacturer. You can easily find several advertisements from such manufacturers. However, before you trust these websites and do business with them, it's important to double-check their credibility.

If you encounter a manufacturer's website, check their client testimonials and certifications, and request more information from them until you're sure of their legitimacy. Do ask which company actually holds each certificate. Many of the firms you'll reach online are traders or merchant exporters, which is a perfectly normal way to do business, but a trader's certificate covers the trader and not the factory that makes your goods.

You can also check community spaces like Reddit, Quora, or Facebook groups to find low MOQ clothing manufacturers. There's a big advantage to using these over Google search results. You get community approval and plenty of customer experience comments without asking the manufacturer.

Visit the Manufacturer in Person

Once you've seen a manufacturer online or heard about them from someone, it's a good idea to visit them in person. On your trip, you might even be able to find additional low MOQ manufacturers who might offer more perks.

In-person visits are an excellent way to analyse everything yourself and gain experience. You are far less likely to be cheated and more likely to get better quality. One caveat from the forums: a visit tests intent more than skill. One founder who visited a dozen Indian factories in person still had three sampling failures. So visit, but sample anyway.

Some countries you can try include Bangladesh, India, Hong Kong, etc. Do not sign any contracts without having your legal team check them. Also, do not make cash payments if possible.

Just make sure you have a solid plan and itinerary in place before you finalise your travel plans. That way, you won't waste time and get the maximum out of your trip.



Get a Sourcing Partner

You might be new to the clothing industry, but there are plenty of sources to get help from. If you want someone on the ground in India to find and check a low MOQ manufacturer for you then [SourcingSync](#) does that.

Considering the startup networks of today, many companies that specialise in finding the right manufacturers for new businesses have emerged. If you're completely lost and have no idea who to make a deal with, you can contact one of these companies in your area.

Before you commit, read [why the sample was perfect and the bulk was not](#), [how to talk to Indian factories](#) and [the textile certifications buyers ask for](#).

6. Wrapping Up

I hope you now understand why many clothing manufacturers have high minimum order quantities. But after reading this article, it should be easier for you to find one with low MOQ requirements. Over time, as your sales increase, you can migrate to a high-MOQ supplier to reduce costs.

Have any more questions? Let me know in the comments below!