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Karur. Home textile exports, purpose-built.

Karur made a decision most Indian clusters never make: it chose one narrow product for one demanding market and built everything around it. Kitchen linen, table and bath made-ups for European retail — and very little else.

Made-ups

finished products, not fabric — the whole strategy

Europe

the market the cluster was built to serve

Narrow

the specialisation that produced the margin



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CHAPTER 01

What Karur makes

Karur produces finished home textile made-ups rather than fabric. That distinction is the whole commercial point — the cluster captures cutting, stitching, packing and design margin that a fabric seller never sees.

PRODUCT	NOTES
Kitchen linen	Tea towels, aprons, oven gloves — the cluster's signature export product
Table linen	Table cloths, runners, napkins and placemats
Bath linen	Towels and bath made-ups
Bed linen	Sheeting and bedding made-ups
Floor coverings	Rugs, mats and durries
Made-up conversion	Cutting, stitching, labelling and retail-ready packing

Fabric versus made-up. Selling a metre of fabric captures weaving margin. Selling a finished, labelled, retail-packed tea towel captures **weaving, cutting, stitching, design and packing margin**. Karur's entire strategy rests on that difference.

CHAPTER 02

How a small town became an export cluster

Karur's rise was not accidental. It came from a deliberate and sustained focus on one buyer type, one product family and the compliance those demand.

01 Handloom origins

The cluster began with handloom weaving of basic cotton products for the domestic market.

03 Product narrowing

Focus on kitchen and table linen rather than trying to make everything.

05 Compliance investment

Social and environmental audit compliance, which European retail requires absolutely.

02 Early export contact

Direct relationships with European buyers rather than selling through Mumbai merchants.

04 Made-up integration

Moving forward into cutting, stitching and packing to capture the full margin.

06 Design capability

In-house design so the cluster could offer collections rather than only capacity.

Karur's advantage is that it decided **what not to make**. Most Indian clusters never do.

CHAPTER 03

Leading names across the cluster

Karur has a concentrated base of established export houses, several of which have been supplying the same European retailers for decades.

HOME TEXTILE EXPORTERS

Made-ups for European retail.

01 Eastern Global / export houses
Established Karur home textile exporters

02 Kitchen linen specialists
Tea towel and apron manufacture

03 Table linen manufacturers
Table cloths, runners and napkins

04 Bath linen units
Towel and bath made-up production

05 Multi-product exporters
Broader home textile ranges

WEAVING

Fabric for the made-up base.

01 Integrated weaving units
Weaving within export houses

02 Powerloom weavers
Job-work fabric for the cluster

03 Handloom co-operatives
The surviving craft weaving base

04 Jacquard weavers
Design-woven table and kitchen linen

05 Yarn-dyed specialists
Colour-woven checks and stripes

PROCESSING & FINISHING

Dyeing, printing and finishing.

01 ZLD dye houses
Compliant processing capacity

02 Yarn dyeing units
Dyed yarn for woven designs

03 Printing units
Printed kitchen and table linen

04 Finishing services
Calendaring and finishing for made-ups

05 CETP operators
Common effluent infrastructure

MADE-UP CONVERSION

Cutting, stitching and packing.

01 Stitching units
Cutting and sewing operations

02 Packing houses
Retail-ready packing and labelling

03 Embroidery units
Value addition on made-ups

04 Quality inspection services
Pre-shipment inspection for buyers

05 Testing laboratories
Compliance and quality verification

CHAPTER 04

Why audits shaped the cluster

European retail buyers audit hard. Karur's decision to invest in compliance early is a substantial part of why it holds those relationships.



Karur, Tamil Nadu · Photograph: Vijaya231 — CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Social audit

BSCI, SEDEX and similar standards are baseline requirements, not differentiators.

Environmental

ZLD processing and documented chemical management.

Product certification

OEKO-TEX and organic certification depending on the programme.

Traceability

Chain of custody from cotton through to the finished packed product.

Compliance as a moat. Audit compliance is expensive and slow to build. Once established it becomes a genuine barrier — a cheaper competitor without audits simply cannot bid for the same European retail business.

CHAPTER 05

The cost of specialisation

Karur's narrow focus produced its margin and also its principal vulnerability. Concentration cuts both ways.

- **Market concentration.** Heavy dependence on European retail transmits any European downturn directly.
- **Product concentration.** A narrow product range offers little cushion if that category softens.
- **Buyer concentration.** Long relationships with a few large retailers create real dependency.
- **Currency exposure.** Euro and rupee movements affect competitiveness materially.
- **Competing origins.** Bangladesh, Pakistan and Turkey compete for the same shelf space.
- **Cotton exposure.** Input price volatility with limited ability to pass it through quickly.

CHAPTER 06

What limits the cluster

Beyond concentration risk, Karur faces the operating constraints common to Tamil Nadu textile clusters.

CONSTRAINT	DETAIL
Water	Processing capacity limited by availability and discharge regulation
Power cost	A persistent competitive disadvantage against some competing origins
Labour	Stitching and made-up work is labour intensive; availability is tightening
Duty access	Preferential trade access materially affects competitiveness in Europe
Scale	Units are mid-sized against very large competing manufacturers elsewhere
Freight	Inland location adds cost and time to export movement

CHAPTER 07

What is shifting

Karur's current effort is to reduce concentration risk without losing the specialisation that produced its position.

01 Market diversification

Building presence in North American and other markets beyond Europe.

03 Sustainable materials

Organic cotton, recycled content and lower-impact processing as buyer requirements.

05 Automation

Cutting and stitching automation in response to labour constraints.

02 Product extension

Broadening from kitchen and table into a wider home textile range.

04 Design investment

Own-design collections to move from supplier to partner in buyer relationships.

06 Domestic market

Growing attention to Indian home textile retail as a hedge.

CHAPTER 08

Buying from Karur

Karur is an experienced export cluster used to demanding buyers. It responds well to clear specifications and structured programmes.

01 Send a full product spec

Fabric, construction, finished dimensions, trims, labelling and packing. All of it.

03 Set shrinkage and fastness limits

With test methods named. Kitchen and table linen are washed constantly.

05 Plan the sampling calendar

Made-up development takes real time. Build proto and PP sample stages into the schedule.

02 Confirm compliance status

Which audits, valid to when, covering which units including subcontractors.

04 Agree the packing standard

Retail-ready packing is part of the product. Specify it as carefully as the fabric.

06 Check yarn and fabric sourcing

Understand where the base fabric comes from and whether it is made in-house.

How Shivpriya reads it. Karur is where we look for **finished home textile made-ups with export compliance already in place**. The cluster is set up for structured programmes rather than opportunistic buying, and it rewards buyers who work that way.

IN CLOSING

One product family. One market. Built to fit.

Karur is the clearest example in India of a cluster that specialised deliberately and captured the margin that specialisation allows. If you are sourcing kitchen, table or bath made-ups for retail, talk to us — this cluster is built exactly for that.

TALK TO US

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