

IN-STORE

Westfield London turns hotel suite into point of sale

April 13, 2016



Westfield London smart mirror

By SARAH JONES

Shopping center Westfield London is bringing the personal styling experience to affluent travelers with the help of virtual technology.

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The mall is setting up shop at the Sanderson Hotel through the installation of a smart interactive mirror, allowing guests to browse and purchase apparel from designers including Gucci and Armani. The mirror is making its trial run from April 18-21 in the property's Loft Terrace suite, with the possibility of extending it to other hotels in the London area.

"The virtual stylist is a wonderful service offering for people staying in a high-end hotel," said Dave Rodgeron, a retail business development executive at [Microsoft Canada](#), Toronto. "It's like having your own concierge who addresses your styling needs.

"Given that the hotel is located to nearby shopping, it allows the content to point guests to shops in the Westfield mall that carry the merchandise," he said. "It's a very clever relationship to develop between the retailers and the hotel."

Mr. Rodgeron is not affiliated with Westfield London, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Westfield London](#) was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Setting up shop

When unattended, the smart mirror will appear as a traditional reflection, making the technology less obtrusive. When the consumer activates the interactive device by pressing a button, two screens appear.

One screen contains a video feed with a personal stylist, while the other is a search engine powered by Google and Westfield's Product Search technology. The consumer can then browse with the help of their personal style guru.

An upscale mall, Westfield London includes stores such as Anya Hindmarch, Belstaff, Burberry and Louis Vuitton.



Westfield London offers styling consultations

After products are selected, the user can make their purchase from the screen. After an order has been made, it will arrive at the hotel in less than 90 minutes.

This service may help guests trying to dress for a last-minute event or making key wardrobe additions while they are away from their full closets.

The four-star Sanderson Hotel is owned by the Morgans Group, which also owns the Mondrian, and is known for its connections to design, technology and fashion.



Loft terrace suite at Sanderson

"Technology is at the forefront of the customer's retail experience and as technology evolves so too does the environment where we shop and crucially, how we shop," said Myf Ryan, CMO of Westfield, in a brand statement. "Technology, or enhanced assistance, continues to evolve in tune with customers changing expectations of what a shopping journey should feel like."

Westfield conducted an online survey in the United Kingdom, London, United States, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego.

Findings included the fact that 33 percent of consumers in the UK and the U.S. were interested in having a virtual reality fitting room experience show them how apparel would look on them. In the UK, 28 percent of customers would like virtual reality to help them gain information about what they are buying.

"From our recent How We Shop Now report we know there is a strong desire to trial virtual reality services that not only enhance the shopping experience but deliver speed and convenience," Ms. Ryan said.

"Westfield knows that shoppers are looking to physical retailers to go beyond the transaction and provide richer consumer experiences that can't be replicated online," she said. "The Virtual Stylist' delivers such an experience to the discerning customer who wants all the convenience of online shopping coupled with the personal service and human interactivity of a stylist selecting directly from the in-store range."

Increasingly, premium and luxury retailers are leveraging virtual technology to streamline the fitting room experience.

"Virtual technologies like this are starting to appear in many high end fashion retailers," Mr. Rodgerson said. "Rebecca Minkoff was one of the first to create virtual dressing rooms using this technology."

"It allows the shopper to try on a number of items without actually changing their outfit," he said. "They can see how different colors look, add accessories, even adjust the light to see how the item would look in different settings."

Room service

Through partnerships, hotel guests do not need to leave their rooms to shop.

The St. Regis Washington has partnered with retailer Neiman Marcus to offer guests a bespoke closet and personal shopping experience during their stay.

When traveling, affluent consumers seek out unique experiences ranging from branded shopping excursions to exotic tasting menus organized by the property at which they are staying. St. Regis' partnership with The Neiman Marcus Closet will allow the hotel to cater to the interests of its affluent guests ([see story](#)).

Online retailer Net-A-Porter has partnered with midtown Manhattan boutique hotel WestHouse to provide guests with bespoke shopping services.

Hotel guests can shop online via a tablet in their room or call a personal shopper from the retailer for assistance. WestHouse claims to be the first hotel to offer exclusive online shopping experiences to its guests ([see story](#)).

Beyond providing a service, this partnership will enable Westfield London to learn more about consumer behavior.

"The immediate benefit is the opportunity to drive sales, but even more importantly, the retailers will benefit from having a great pool of data from which to draw knowledge," Mr. Rodgerson said. "With this they can see what items and offers are attracting the most attention and have a better understanding of how merchandise selection maps to customer demographics."

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