

RETAIL

Nordstrom puts spin on see-now, buy-now with Tony Awards sponsorship

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Nordstrom Instagram photo

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Department store chain Nordstrom is ensuring it has ample visibility and accessibility at the 70th Tony Awards.

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In addition to styling the nominees and presenters, Nordstrom will make accessories available online as the performers are seen wearing them. Instantly gratifying viewers will likely cause a spike in sales as consumers seek to emulate their favorite stars.

"Nordstrom has been a long-time supporter of the arts and the Tony Awards are a wonderful way to celebrate theatre through this beloved event, especially as we lead up to our Manhattan store opening on Broadway and 57th in 2019," said John Bailey, spokesperson for Nordstrom.

Shopping the carpet

Nordstrom is returning as the official sponsor of the Tony Awards. The retailer, public relations firm KCD and the staff of Vogue will work together to make sure stars look their best on the red carpet.

KCD's office will host a suite where nominees and presenters are free to try on the clothing and accessories of designers the retailer carries, although the direct-to-consumer online channel will be limited to accessories.



Nordstrom Manhattan Flagship rendering

The awards ceremony will take place at the Beacon Theatre in New York City on June 12 and will air simultaneously on CBS. A live-stream of the red carpet show that takes place prior to the ceremony will also be available on Nordstrom's blog *The Thread* and the Web sites of *Vogue*, *People* and *Entertainment Weekly*.

Viewers enjoying the show on any of the channels will be able to shop stars' accessories as they watch, although details have not yet emerged as to how Nordstrom will communicate which items are immediately for sale.

"The continuum from product and personality to prospect and purchase in real time is a Herculean task to execute," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#). "Limiting items mitigates risk.

"Limiting items also protects the integrity of the show," he said. "It's not in anyone's best interest for the show to appear as a sales event or contrived due to product placement."

Brands frequently share photos on social media of stars wearing their products, knowing that some consumers will want to lift the look. Making accessories immediately available will intensify that desire and provide an immediate purchase outlet that provokes impulse buying.

An instant-gratification economy has accompanied the proliferation of social media and widespread Internet access. When an item is not immediately available, consumers can quickly peruse a competitor's stock for a similar item to purchase instead.



Nordstrom Instagram photo

"Nordstrom is buying the ability to connect dots to data to drive desire and sales," Mr. Ramey said. "Impulse buying is essential for fashion. The ability to measure those impulses is immense.; the ability to turn them into instant revenue is gold."

This effect has had tremendous implications for newly democratized runway shows and the rise of fast-fashion. Consumers are no longer content to wait six months after a reveal to purchase an item, and fast-fashion has exploited the interim period by mimicking luxury designs and retailing them sooner ([see story](#)).

While there is no direct equivalent for red carpet outfits and accessories, consumers' expectation that they should be able to order something as soon as they see it applies equally, and imposing a waiting period gives time for another product to catch the eye.

Changing the game

Several brands have responded to the see now, buy now mentality by changing their format. The administrative impact on a new fashion calendar will reverberate across all a brand's touchpoints.

British fashion house Burberry, one of the first to change its format, earlier this week unveiled its first advertising campaign since announcing its direct-to-consumer approach.

The campaign, simply titled Burberry 2016 rather than the fall season, marks the brand's transition from seasonal collections to a broader strategy that acknowledges its global consumer base and the rising expectation of see now, buy now commerce. Fashions featured in the campaign are from Burberry's fall/winter 2016 collection, presented on Feb. 22, which was its first line to be available for pre-order immediately following the show ([see story](#)).

Other brands have taken differing approaches, giving the consumer a way to make a red carpet item her own.

U.S. footwear label Stuart Weitzman has previously offered consumers the option to customize their own version of the pump sandal often seen on celebrities at red carpet events timed to synchronize with awards season buzz.

For one month only, consumers could create their own version of the brand's "Nudist" pump, choosing their own colors and heel height. This interactive shopping experience was also able to engage both consumers and aspirational fans of the brand, who could play with the design program on Stuart Weitzman's Web site ([see story](#)).

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