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Net-A-Porter, Mr Porter offer commitment-free ecommerce to VIPs

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Net-A-Porter is launching Style Trial, similar to a trunk club for its EIP. Image courtesy of Net-a-porter

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Online retailers Net-A-Porter and Mr Porter are launching their updated “try-before-you-buy” service, featuring curated at-home shopping consultations for their most loyal customers.

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Despite embracing ecommerce, shoppers still prefer to get a real feel for luxury apparel before committing to purchases. Try-before-you-buy services often allow consumers to pass the burden of browsing onto personal shoppers and stylists as well for added convenience.

“As an ecommerce retailer, we strive to provide the ultimate in convenience to our customers, and offering them the opportunity to experiment without commitment was a natural next step,” said Lupe Puerta, head of VIP client relations at **Net-A-Porter**, London. “We bring the experience to the customer, often in person.

“Some of our customers are all about trends, while others are more about function,” she said. “However, one common denominator is they are all busy and need us to be there to make their lives easier, and to make shopping more convenient.”

Style trial

“Style Trial” is a new service that expands on the Richemont-owned retailers’ current offerings for their “Extremely Important People,” or EIPs.

The invite-only EIP designation is a means for Net-A-Porter and Mr Porter to reward their high-spending clients. These consumers get privileged perks, including a designated personal shopper, priority access to new arrivals, free shipping and invitations to events.



Shoppers have up to a week to review their potential purchases. Image courtesy of Net-A-Porter

Since 2017, EIPs have had access to a “You try, we wait” service on all same-day delivery orders.

Through that offering, a customer can try on new buys while a Net-A-Porter delivery person waits. Anything that is not wanted can then be sent back immediately with the individual, requiring no effort on the consumer’s part to make a return ([see story](#)).

Style Trial differs from the existing service because it gives EIP a seven-day period to try up to 30 different pieces of apparel before purchasing. Items can be chosen by consumers themselves, or by their designated personal shopper.

Stylists are also easily accessible to EIPs via text message or phone call to help facilitate every step of the process, from selection and ordering to delivery and returns.

The extended trial period offers consumers more convenience and less pressure to quickly decide on their order. Unwanted pieces can be collected, and shoppers are only charged for the items they keep.

Shopping services

Try-before-you-buy and trunk club services have been growing in popularity, but luxury retail has been slower to adopt these formats.

Three-quarters of consumers are interested in being able to see and try on merchandise before making a payment, according to a report from Klarna.

One of the biggest hurdles in getting consumers to buy via ecommerce is the inability to test out items before making a financial commitment. Try-before-you-buy has the potential to remove this concern, giving consumers the ability to receive and evaluate orders before deciding to pay and keep them ([see story](#)).

A number of services have launched in answer to this need.

Nordstrom-owned Trunk Club’s personal stylists pick out apparel for its stylish consumers based on profiles, rather than having clients shop themselves.

Once the consumer tells Trunk Club their size, style and fit preferences, stylists hand select pieces from more than 50 high-end brands, including John Varvatos, and ship them to the customer. The client keeps what he or she likes and returns the rest with a prepaid shipping label ([see story](#)).

Similarly, online retail giant Amazon further undercut the traditional bricks-and-mortar model with the introduction of a try-before-you-buy service.

Dubbed Prime Wardrobe, the service is available only to Prime customers. During an era where traditional department stores are facing declining sales and consumer disinterest, Amazon has only upped the ante on its fashion division’s happenings and service programs ([see story](#)).

“The Style Trial differs from current offerings in the market as it is a fully personalized service, organized by each EIP’s personal shopper,” Net-A-Porter’s Ms. Puerta said. “We cater to each client’s precise needs, and provide the utmost in personal attention, whether it requires hopping on a plane to hand-deliver an item same-day, or facilitating bespoke items directly from fashion houses, and the addition of these services will be no different.”

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